



## 2. Introduction - What is the Biodiversity Action Plan?

### 2.1 Biodiversity and its Importance

“Biodiversity” is simply a shorthand term for “biological diversity”- the variety of life on earth - from bacteria to whales, from the Amazon rainforests to your own back garden. It includes the variety of different ecosystems and habitats, species, and the genetic variation within species, and is therefore about the commonplace as much as the rare and unusual. More specifically in this document it refers to the full range of **wildlife habitats, species and ecological processes** (the way all of these species interact with their environment and each other) which we are fortunate to have in the Peak District.

The importance of conserving biodiversity as part of our natural environment is one of the cornerstone principles of sustainable development - the concept that development should meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The conservation of biodiversity is important to these needs in the following ways:

- The knowledge that we are exercising our ability to change the environment around us in a **responsible** manner which respects the needs of the other living things which share the Peak District with us
- The **pleasure** that many people derive from seeing the commonplace, rare and special wildlife of the Peak District, and from enjoying the mosaic of different habitats which go to make up the wonderful landscapes of the area (in a public opinion survey for the National Park Management Plan in 1999, landscape and wildlife were the equal top features which people felt merited protection in the National Park)
- **Economic benefits** such as sustainable sources of timber, “added value” produce associated with environmentally friendly management, tourism or direct grants for environmental maintenance
- The conservation of **local distinctiveness** and historical continuity, giving local people pride in the area where they live
- Conservation of **genetic diversity**, which may be important in the future development of drugs of medical importance, new crops, pest control etc

- The maintenance of the basic **life-support systems** of the planet such as climatic stability, regeneration of clean air and water, soil formation, plant pollination etc which we take so much for granted, but which depend on the diversity of organisms around us

For all of these reasons it is important that we take steps to maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the Peak District. Despite increasing recognition of the importance of conserving biodiversity, we have entered a new millennium with wildlife losses continuing in the Peak District at a significant rate. The mid-1980s to mid-1990s saw, for example, a 50% loss of flower rich hay meadows in the National Park and a 72% decline in lapwings on the Staffordshire Moors. Such figures illustrate the massive shortfall in meeting environmental conservation objectives at the present time and the need for a joint approach to conservation targeted on priority features. Without the safeguard of irreplaceable wildlife features and opportunities taken to maximise the wildlife benefits of all our activities our stewardship of the Peak District cannot be regarded as sustainable.

### 2.2 Thinking Globally...

At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, more commonly known as the “**Rio Earth Summit**”, the UK government was one of over 150 nations to sign the Convention on Biological Diversity. This committed each signatory nation to draw up its own national action plan for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. As a result the UK government published the **UK Biodiversity Action Plan** in 1994, which described the UK’s biological resource and its importance; identified the UK’s conservation strategy, programmes, problems and opportunities; and provided a forward work programme including the “**59 Steps**” to which the Government and its agencies would aim. The Government also set up a UK Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group, and in 1995 this group published **Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report**, which included proposals for a UK biodiversity database; recommendations for raising public awareness of biodiversity; and proposals for action at local level. Between 1995 and 1999 the Steering Group produced a

series of **national Habitat and Species Action Plans** for priority habitats and species. It also recommended the production of **Local Biodiversity Action Plans** which should have two main objectives - to reflect and help implement the national priorities identified in the UK Action Plans, and to identify and address local priorities and local distinctiveness. The Steering Group produced guidelines for the production of Local Biodiversity Action Plans in 1997.

At regional level a series of Regional Biodiversity Forums have been established. The Peak District falls geographically within four regions, but with the East Midlands acting as the focus for the Peak District. In 1999 the East Midlands Regional Biodiversity Forum published **Sustainability and Biodiversity - Priorities for Action in the East Midlands**.

## 2.3 ...And Acting Locally

The production of a draft Local Biodiversity Action Plan for the Peak District has been guided by the **Peak District Wildlife Executive Group**, comprising representatives from wildlife conservation organisations. Five **Habitat/Species Biodiversity Groups**, working under the guidance of the Wildlife Executive Group, have drafted a series of individual Habitat Action Plans and Species Action Plans. These Groups have been chaired by relevant land-use organisations and involved both landowning/management interests and conservation organisations, and they will be the focus for overseeing implementation and monitoring of the individual Habitat and Species Action Plans.

As the drafting of the Biodiversity Action Plan drew to a close a **Peak District Biodiversity Partnership** was established to help guide the future process of production, implementation and monitoring of the Plan. This partnership comprises representatives from government agencies, farming interests, landowners, sporting interests, recreation interests, mineral companies, wildlife conservation organisations, local naturalists' groups, Local Authorities and the National Park Authority, and is open to expressions of interest from other organisations who may wish to participate (a list of current participants is given in Appendix 8.3). Members of this partnership have been consulted on a draft of the plan and have been invited to sign up to it.

The overall structure which has been established for overseeing the Biodiversity Action plan process is shown in Appendix 8.2 and the current composition of the various Groups is listed in Appendix 8.4. The composition of the Wildlife Executive Group is currently being reviewed and it is also envisaged that the Habitat and Species Groups will co-opt other individuals or representatives of particular organisations or groups of organisations for particular purposes from time to time.

## 2.4 The Objectives of the Plan

The objectives of this plan are sixfold (see below).

The Plan is in two parts. The first part is the **Action Plan** itself, which focuses on the objectives, targets and actions for biodiversity conservation. The second part is a series of **Audits** for individual habitats and species, setting out in some detail what is known about the current extent, importance, trends and problems faced by those habitats/species in the Peak District. The audits are available separately from the National Park Authority, either as a set or as individual habitat or species audits.

The core of the Action Plan is a list of **25 key actions** to help deliver these objectives across the whole range of habitats and species in the Peak District, together with a series of individual **Habitat and Species Action Plans**. Each of these plans sets out conservation objectives for that habitat/species in the Peak District and specific targets for how much we hope to achieve by particular dates. They go on to identify a programme of actions to achieve those targets, with lead organisations, partners and a target date against each action.

### The Plan's Objectives

- To conserve and enhance the rich variety of wildlife habitats and species in the Peak District, with particular priority to those which are of international or national importance, those which are particularly characteristic of the Peak District, and those which are endangered, vulnerable or declining in the Peak District
- To redress historic wildlife losses by the restoration of habitats and species and (re-) creation of a network of wildlife habitats
- To help deliver and demonstrate socio-economic benefits to local people through wildlife conservation. This will be done by encouraging sustainable development, attracting increased resources to the area, strengthening local distinctiveness and encouraging economic benefits for "wildlife-friendly" farming, forestry and other land management
- To build partnerships between a wide variety of people and organisations in order to agree and deliver shared objectives which benefit wildlife
- To enhance public enjoyment, appreciation and understanding of the biodiversity of the Peak District in a sustainable way
- To set out the current status and increase our knowledge of key habitats and species in the Peak District and agree targets against which progress towards achieving objectives can be monitored



## 2.5 The Area Covered by the Plan

Because wildlife does not respect administrative boundaries, English Nature has identified a series of “Natural Areas” covering the whole of the country. Each of these is defined by a distinctive and characteristic mosaic of wildlife habitats and species which sets it apart from other areas of England and contributes considerably to the feeling of local distinctiveness. The Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan is therefore based on the three Natural Areas - the Dark Peak, White Peak and South West Peak - which together form the area generally recognised as the Peak District. This area extends beyond the boundaries of the National Park, notably in the White Peak around Brassington/Wirksworth, Buxton and Cauldon Low/Weaver Hills; in the South West Peak around the Ipstones Ridge, Macclesfield Forest and Whaley Bridge; and in the Dark Peak around Stalybridge, Hayfield and Matlock Moor.

In addition to these three Natural Areas the plan also takes in one or two adjacent areas not otherwise covered by Local Biodiversity Action Plans. These are the small area at the southern tip of the National Park around Fenny Bentley, which falls within the Needwood & South Derbyshire Claylands, and a small part of the Manchester Pennine Fringe around Glossop, up to the Derbyshire county boundary. It also includes the

### The Area Covered by the Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan

- The whole of the Dark Peak, White Peak and South West Peak Natural Areas
- AND
- Those parts of the Peak District National Park lying outside these three Natural Areas
- AND
- Those parts of High Peak Borough lying outside these three Natural Areas
- AND
- Outlying Lead Rakes around Ashover

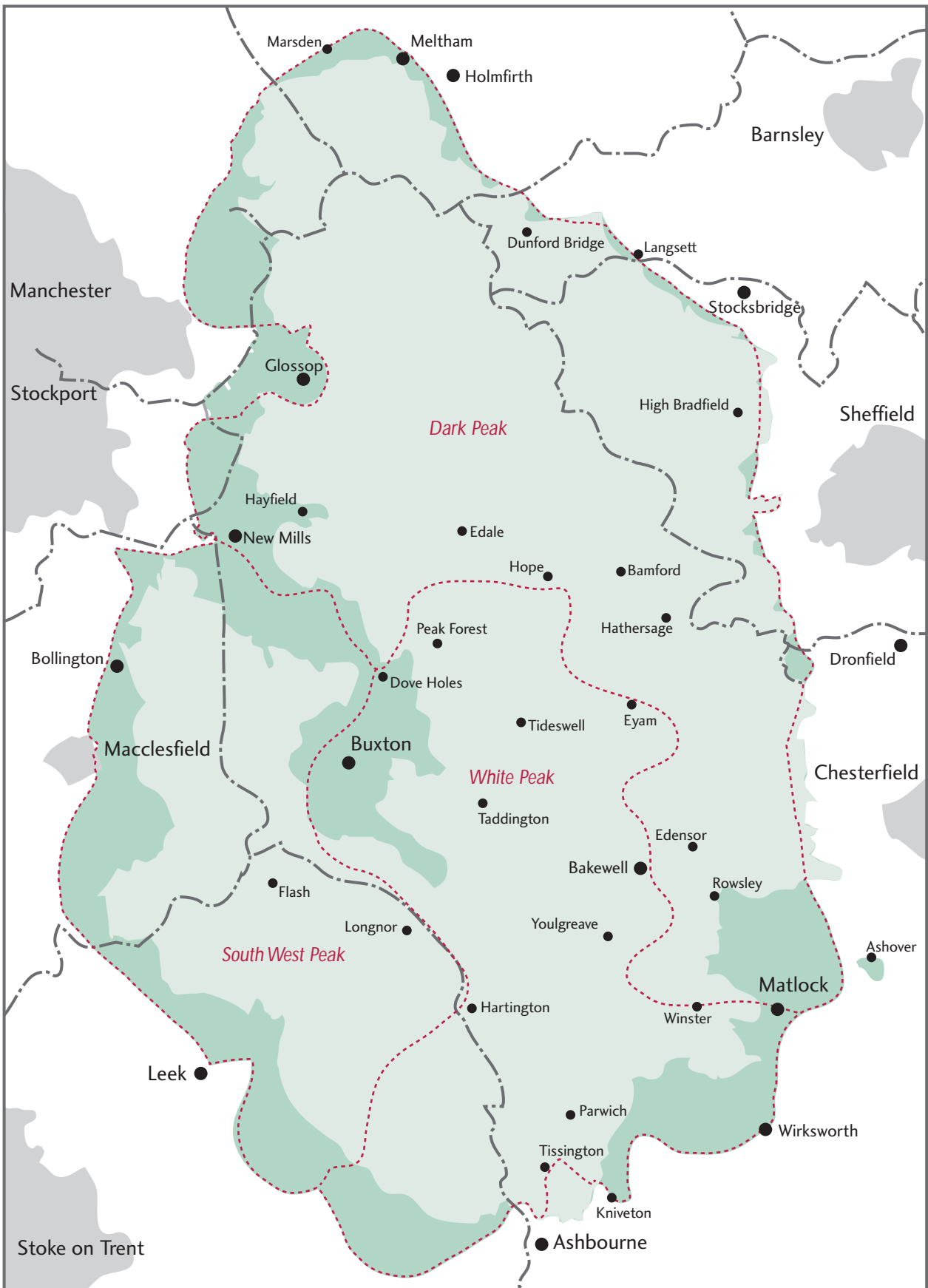
outlying Lead Rake habitats (but not other habitats) around Ashover, to provide comprehensive coverage of the South Pennines Lead Mine orefield.

The area covered by the Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan is therefore shown overleaf.

In some areas there is partial geographical overlap with other Local Biodiversity Action Plans, whilst in others the areas covered by different Plans adjoin. In either case there is a need for close liaison between different Local Biodiversity Groups to ensure duplication is avoided and opportunities for co-operation are explored where appropriate. In addition several organisations have produced their own corporate Biodiversity Action Plans which will be relevant to the Peak District. Liaison mechanisms will be established between the Wildlife Executive Group and other relevant corporate and area-based BAP Groups.

### Other Local Biodiversity Action Plans Overlapping or Adjacent to the Peak District

- East Midlands Region - The East Midlands Regional Biodiversity Forum has produced “Sustainability and Biodiversity - Priorities for Action in the East Midlands”. This covers the East Midlands Region and the National Park, providing an important regional framework for biodiversity conservation
- Cheshire - covers the whole county and therefore overlaps with those areas which are in the Peak District
- Greater Manchester - covers the whole of the Greater Manchester area and therefore overlaps with those areas which are in the Peak District
- Kirklees - covers the whole of the metropolitan borough area and therefore overlaps with those areas which are in the Peak District
- Barnsley - covers the whole of the metropolitan borough area and therefore overlaps with those areas which are in the Peak District
- Staffordshire - covers the whole county outside the National Park and therefore overlaps with those areas of the South West Peak Natural Area which are outside the National Park (Ipstones Ridge area)
- Lowland Derbyshire - Adjoins the southern boundary of the Peak District BAP - no overlap
- Sheffield - Adjoins the eastern boundary of the Peak District BAP - no overlap



### Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan

- BAP Area {
  - Peak District National Park
  - Peak District National Park
- County and Unitary Authority
- Natural Area Boundary

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