



TREND IN THE PEAK DISTRICT:

Lack of comprehensive information but decline in quality is likely.

ESTIMATED EXTENT IN THE PEAK DISTRICT:

Estimate not possible with current information.

NATIONAL BAP HABITATS:

Lowland Calcareous Grassland, Upland Calcareous Grassland and Lowland Acid Grassland (priority habitats). Inland Rock (broad habitat type).

ASSOCIATED NATIONAL BAP PRIORITY SPECIES:

Brown hare, black grouse (extinct), grey partridge, linnet, skylark, juniper, a waxcap fungus (*Hygrocybe calyptriformis*) and an earth tongue fungus (*Microglossum olivaceum*).

ASSOCIATED PEAK DISTRICT AUDITS:

Calcareous Grassland, White Peak Acid Grassland, Acid Pastures on Gritstone/Shale, Neutral Grassland and Grass Moor.

INTRODUCTION

This action plan covers all extensive areas of rough grazing which are primarily unimproved, including: the extensive pastures of the limestone hills such as Chrome and Parkhouse Hills and Eldon Hill; the rough grazings of the shale and gritstone hills such as Mam Tor and Lose Hill; and the extensive areas of rough grazings on the moorland edges, such as the flanks of Kinder plateau and the edges of Ollersett Moor and Abney Moor.

It excludes rough grasslands within a moorland unit (covered by the Heather Moorland Action Plan), rush pasture (covered by the Rush Pasture Action Plan) and the extensive grasslands of the limestone which occur within the system of dales (covered by the Limestone Dales Action Plan). Lead rakes occur within some of these rough grazings but these are covered in the Lead Rakes Action Plan.

The areas of rough grazing are a rich and varied resource of unimproved and semi-improved grasslands providing habitat for a range of different plant communities and their associated populations of insects, birds (for example wheatear) and small mammals (field voles). A host of different vegetation types are found on the rough grazings, such as dry acid grassland, rock and scree, calcareous grassland on the limestone, areas of remnant dwarf shrub, scrub and, in wetter areas, flushes and rush dominated grassland. These areas of primarily semi-natural habitat are an extremely important part of the landscape, often denoting the character of distinct areas of the Peak District.

There have been no systematic surveys of rough grazings in the Peak District. A number of sites have been surveyed as part of surveys for other specific types of grassland or by the Peak District National Park Authority as part of surveys relating to agri-environment and conservation schemes and casework. Unlike other grasslands the losses to direct agricultural improvement are likely to have been limited since many areas are inaccessible to machinery. However, some sites will have declined in quality as a result of increases in stock numbers.

Rough grazings have a separate action plan to other unimproved pastures because of the different emphasis of the actions. Potentially rough grazings could be targeted by habitat restoration and creation schemes within other action plans. In particular there is scope for the restoration of limestone heath on some of the limestone hills. In the Dark Peak and South West Peak, moorland restoration may be a priority for some areas. Having these extensive rough grazings as a separate action plan ensures that their future is clarified and that the interest of this habitat in its own right is not overlooked.

The rough grazings are often important in the landscape, occupying a prominent position. Frequently there is public access in the form of footpaths, bridle-ways, and locally, open access, and they are much used for walking and other recreational activities.

ADVERSE IMPACTS	Historic	Current
Land Management		
Agricultural intensification - ploughing, re-seeding, drainage, and the application of artificial fertilisers, herbicide and slurry.	✓	✓✓
Application of paper pulp.		✓✓
Inappropriate stock type, such as the expansion in sheep numbers relative to cattle	✓	✓✓
Inappropriate grazing levels, including over-grazing and neglect.	✓	✓✓
Pollution		
Disposal of sheep dip.		✓
Use of Ivermectin and its associated effects on invertebrates.		✓
Others		
Motorbike scrambling and 4x4 trials.		✓
Division and enclosure of rough grazings.		✓
The use of hollows etc for disposal of waste from building works.		✓
Tree planting schemes.	✓	✓

Quarrying.		✓		✓
Bracken encroachment.		✓		✓
		<i>An impact</i> ✓		<i>Significant impact</i> ✓✓

CURRENT ACTION

Designated Sites

- Important rough grazings include Chrome and Parkhouse Hills SSSI (298.8 ha) and Castleton SSSI (823.9 ha) which includes Eldon Hill (although this is principally a geological SSSI).

Sites Owned and Managed by Conservation Organisations

- The NT owns and manages significant areas of rough grazings, including Mam Tor and Wetton Hill.

Sites Within Conservation Agreements

- 420 ha of steep grassland are being traditionally managed by landowners within the PDNPA's Farm Conservation Scheme (FCS). A proportion of this will be rough grazings.
- Significant areas of rough grazings are being managed by farmers, with support from MAFF, within the South West Peak and North Peak Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) and within the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS).

ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

National Targets

There is no National Action Plan for rough grazings but the following relate to this Action Plan:

Lowland Calcareous Grassland, Lowland Dry Acid Grassland and Upland Calcareous Grassland

- Arrest the depletion throughout U.K.
- Agree favourable management on all the resource in unfavourable condition within SSSIs by 2005 and achieve favourable condition wherever feasible by 2010.
- Secure favourable condition over 30% of lowland calcareous and acid grassland by 2005 and as near 100% as practicable by 2015. Secure favourable condition over 75 % of upland calcareous grassland outside SSSIs by 2005.
- Re-establish 1000 ha of lowland calcareous grassland and 500 ha of lowland dry acid grassland by 2010 and initiate pilot attempts to re-create at least 200 ha of upland calcareous grassland by 2005.

A Vision for the Peak District

The extensive areas of rough grazings are a unique part of the Peak District landscape. Ecologically they are a varied resource and the plan recognises that each site will need to be individually assessed. The targets below reflect this importance but are intended to be realistic, recognising that each site will be unique in terms of its conservation requirements. For example, restoration of upland heath may be appropriate at certain sites. Others, important for their grassland but perhaps in poor condition may need challenging and innovative solutions to management problems. It is recognised that farming has not only created these extensive rough areas, often on prominent and striking hills, but it is also essential to their future. To take these targets forward into real action will require co-operation from wide ranging organisations and land managers.

OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

A number of rough grazing sites may be targeted by the Heather Moorland, Rush Pasture and Limestone Heath Action Plans for the integrated restoration of these priority habitats.

Objective 1

Bring all areas of importance into favourable condition. Given the variability in the types of rough grazings, this could include a range of criteria - botanical interest, bird interest, fungi and/or invertebrate interest.

Target

Initiate management to bring 30% of rough grazings into favourable condition by 2005, and 50% by 2010.

Objective 2

Restore areas of poor quality rough grazings (where the grassland habitat is the priority) to increase the area and quality of key communities.

Targets

Assess the need for restoration of rough grazing land and target priority areas as appropriate.

Initiate the restoration of 50 ha of heavily grazed rough grazings to richer habitat (species and landscape) by 2010.

Objective 3

Link or extend areas of rough grazing (e.g. between two isolated limestone hills) by the creation of appropriate mosaics of semi-natural habitats.

Target

Identify the opportunities for creation of rough grazings by 2010.

Main Factors Likely to Affect Achievement of Targets

Land Management

Implementation of the Rural Development Regulation and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Effectiveness of agri-environment and conservation scheme prescriptions.

The added complications arising from managing a number of rough grazings as commons.

The move away from headage payments (may be a favourable influence on the management of rough grazings).

Resources and Financial Incentives

Limited rewards from agri-environment and conservation schemes (though less of a problem on this inaccessible marginal land).

Availability of funding for survey, negotiations and agreements.

High land prices – forcing intensive management following purchase of land.

Planning Policy and Regulations

Planning policy.

Lack of planning controls for agricultural operations – Permitted Development Rights (PDR) allow in-filling and levelling of hollows within a farm holding.

Others

The demand for limestone and resulting quarrying activity.

Lack of safeguard or effective conservation mechanisms outside of SSSIs. It is often at the time of change of ownership that rough grazings, as with other grassland habitats, are most at risk. At present there is no systematic procedure or mechanism for conservation bodies and local authorities to have an opportunity to safeguard such land.

The impact of access, including the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, which gives right of access on foot across open country. This could include some areas of rough grazing.

ACTIONS

Key to the future of this habitat are the actions relating to survey and negotiations of conservation agreements (Actions RG4 and RG17 - 20). Actions relating to the control of paper pulp (RG 27) and the interface with recreation interests (RG 11) will add to the success of the plan, as will considering a review of agri-environment and conservation scheme prescriptions and payments (RG 16). Crucial is a balanced and pragmatic view to the overlap with the limestone heath, rush pasture and moorland habitats.

ACTIONS	TIMESCALE	LEAD AGENCY & Partners	
DATA COLLATION AND SURVEY			
Data Collation			
RG1	Collate existing information on rough grazings to include PDNPA database, WT data, NT records, SSSI and ESA information. (Objective 1 and 2)	Winter 2001	PDNPA/EN/WTs/NT LAs/MAFF/Voluntary Sector
RG2	Compile a register of rough grazings including classification into types, level of importance (including 'Wildlife Site' status), condition, ownership, important species and conservation status, and initiate a programme for regular updating. (Objective 1 and 2)	Winter 2001	PDNPA/EN/WTs/NT LAs /MAFF
RG3	Ensure that the site register and collated information is easily available for use and updating by relevant organisations. (Objectives 1 and 2)	Winter 2001	PDNPA/EN/WTs/NT LAs/MAFF
Survey			
RG4	Carry out a detailed habitat survey of rough grazings where current information is inadequate – liaise closely with other grassland and moorland surveys. (Objectives 1 and 2)	Summer 2002 - 2003	PDNPA/EN/NT/LAs WTs
EVALUATING THE IMPORTANCE AND CONDITION OF SITES			
Evaluating Importance and Identifying Key Sites			
RG5	Agree methodology for the evaluation of rough grazings including definition of key sites and priorities for conservation action. To include consideration of nationally and locally important species. (Objectives 1 and 2)	Winter 2001	PDNPA/GBAPG
RG6	Produce a list of key sites for targeting for conservation action and restoration management. (Objectives 1 and 2)	Winter 2001	PDNPA/GBAPG
Defining Favourable Condition			
RG7	Agree definitions of favourable condition for the complete range of sites in the Peak District. (Objectives 1 and 2)	Winter 2001	EN/GBAPG
RG8	Agree guidelines for the conservation of rough grazings, to include the range of appropriate management needed to achieve favourable condition. (Objectives 1 and 2)	Winter 2001	EN/GBAPG
RG9	Agree guidelines for the restoration of rough grazings. This will include: *The identification of priority areas for restoration based on type of site, location, potential for enhancement and relationship to key species - targeting sites which are potentially important for their grasslands *Guidance on conservation priorities and a review of		

restoration techniques This will involve close liaison with Limestone Heath, Rush Pasture and Heather Moorland Action Plans. (Objectives 1 and 2)	Winter 2001	PDNPA/GBAPG
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RESEARCH

RG10 Ensure that the results of research into the effects of Ivermectin on invertebrate communities associated with animal dung are implemented at a local level. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	WEG
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PUBLIC ACCESS

RG11 Agree and implement both general and site specific approaches to the management of access on rough grazing land that enables public enjoyment of the environment but prevents significant damage. (Objective 1)	2001 onwards	PDLAF/NT/EN/WTs PDNPA/LAs
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MONITORING

RG12 Agree methodology for and implement effective monitoring of rough grazings. Ensure that the results of the process are collated and used to update the register. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	PDNPA/MAFF/EN WTs/NT
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AWARENESS RAISING

RG13 Share information on the wildlife importance and management needs of key conservation and restoration sites with the landowners/managers, including feedback from surveys. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	PDNPA/NT/EN/WTs MAFF/FWAG/LAs
RG14 Make guidance on rough grazing conservation and restoration available to landowners/managers and conservation organisation staff. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2002 onwards	PDNPA/GBAPG

CONSERVATION ACTION AND INCENTIVES

Designations

RG15 Review desirability and opportunities for establishment of further key sites as NNRs or LNRs and establish if appropriate. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2005	EN/LAs (joint leads) WTs/NT/PDNPA
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Grant Schemes

RG16 Consider recommending a review of all agri-environment and conservation schemes to ensure that: *Targeting at a national, regional and local level gives adequate priority to rough grazings *Management prescriptions are reviewed to include flexible site-specific measures *Payments for rough grazings are increased to at least the level of profits foregone and include consideration of a cattle grazing supplement (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	MAFF/EN/PDNPA WEG/GBAPG
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Negotiation and Review of Agreements

RG17 Review management of all sites within SSSIs. Where necessary agree revised management regimes with owners/managers, through appropriate mechanisms, to		
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	ensure maintenance or restoration of favourable condition. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2003	EN
RG18	Negotiate appropriate agreements with landowners and managers of all key sites for conservation or restoration, outside of SSSIs or existing agreements, in order to achieve maintenance or restoration of favourable condition. (Objectives 1 and 2)	Summer 2002 - 2010	PDNPA/NT/WTs/FWAG LAs/MAFF
RG19	Review management of rough grazings in existing agreements, outside of SSSIs. Where necessary agree revised management regimes with owners and managers to ensure that favourable condition is being maintained or restored. (Objectives 1 and 2)	Spring 2002 - 2005	PDNPA/MAFF/FWAG WTs/NT
RG20	Review whole holding agreements which include unprotected rough grazings. Consider the opportunities for amending the agreement to incorporate their safeguard and enhancement. (Objective 1 and 2)	2002 - 2005	MAFF/NT/WTs PDNPA/FWAG
Land Acquisition			
RG21	Consider negotiating purchase/lease of priority rough grazings where this would be the most effective way of achieving conservation objectives and where a negotiated conservation solution has not succeeded. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	PDNPA/EN/WTs/RSPB NT
Direct Action			
RG22	On land owned by public or conservation bodies, ensure that: *Management maintains and where possible enhances the value of rough grazings *Options for restoration of rough grazings are considered *Opportunities for involvement of local communities in site management are taken where possible (All Objectives)	2001 onwards	PDNPA/EN/LAs/FC/NT WTs

REGULATION

Planning

RG23	Ensure all planning applications and General Development Orders are adequately assessed in relation to their impact on rough grazings; that loss or damage is avoided and that opportunities are taken for enhancement. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	PDNPA/EN/LAs/WTs
RG24	Consider the opportunities for the creation of rough grazings in relevant planning decisions, including quarry restoration schemes. (Objective 3)	2001 onwards	PDNPA/EN/LAs/WTs
RG25	Encourage a review of Permitted Development Rights that currently allow potentially damaging recreational activities for 14 days per year – such as 4 wheel drive trials. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	PDNPA/EN/LAs/WTs
RG26	Ensure that the impact of disposal of waste from new buildings is addressed in the planning process. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	PDNPA/EN/LAs/WTs

Pollution Control and Waste Management

RG27	Review procedures and consultation processes in relation to the spreading of paper pulp. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001	EA/EN/PDNPA/NT WTs
RG28	Ensure good practice is followed in disposing of sheep-dip, avoiding rough grazings. Implement by continuing with an awareness raising strategy amongst land managers; continuing the programme of licensing; extending consultation procedures for disposal applications to the whole of the Peak District and, where necessary, by enforcement action. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001	EA/LAs/PDNPA
Other regulatory mechanisms			
RG29	Ensure that all woodland planting proposals consider the adverse effects of planting on rough grazings. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	FC/LAs/EN/WTs

RESOURCES

It is envisaged that many of the actions proposed will be carried out by the relevant organisations using current resources. These include:

- the continuing investment by landowners and managers managing their land sympathetically for wildlife;
- EN's programme of reviewing SSSI management and designation and its grant and management agreement schemes;
- MAFF's Countryside Stewardship and Environmentally Sensitive Area Schemes;
- the PDNPA's advisory and grants service for landowners/managers and its rolling programme of special conservation projects;
- FWAG and the WTs' advisory services;
- continuing management of rough grazing land owned by conservation organisations and public bodies (LAs, PDNPA, EN, NT, WTs) and WCs.

Additional resources are likely to be required:

- for survey of rough grazing land (2002 - 2003) and negotiation of agreements (2002 - 2005);
- to provide adequate financial incentives for the conservation and restoration management of rough grazings (2001 onwards);
- to aid in the production of the proposed registers (2001 onwards);
- to implement effective monitoring (2001 onwards).

The PDNPA and EN are currently seeking resources to continue a Pastures Project aimed at surveying and securing high quality sites within appropriate agreements. Similarly, the RSPB, PDNPA and EN are currently seeking resources for a Ground-nesting Bird Habitat Project (to run from 2001 - 2004) which would also have implications for rough grazing conservation.