



PEAK DISTRICT BAP FORUM 2008 Workshop Summaries

Workshop 2 – White Peak Habitats

The White Peak plateau has been extensively given over to relatively intensive pastoral farming, with limited semi-natural habitats remaining. What opportunities are there for increasing biodiversity (notably of grasslands) here, and how can we address them?

The first group discussed some of the difficulties:

- How to achieve and measure the condition of non-SSSI land
- How do we know what habitats there are and what condition they are in
- There is a perception amongst the public that the White Peak is 'well cared-for' because it is green and tidy, this may create a 'nice' landscape but it is poor for biodiversity
- A large part of the White Peak is well-drained accessible grassland which is well-farmed, this doesn't fit easily into HLS
- Securing enhancement of the rest of the grassland would require less intensive farming which is not easy to get farmers to do
- What happens when farms go out of business?
- Long-term farmers who are selling up often have greater biodiversity on their holding because of less intensive farming methods than new owners, larger farm businesses or recreational/equestrian small-holdings

And some ways forward:

- There is a need to get the less-improved grassland into HLS
- Minerals operators are significant landowners in the White Peak with opportunities to restore land for biodiversity and to manage non-operational land appropriately, this requires greater engagement with minerals companies

The second group discussed options for making changes:

- Historically effort has been focused on the Dales and dalesides, these could be used as a basis for expanding habitats onto the plateau
- A huge change or project would be required to bring plateau land into different management
- Can local resources/funding be used to effect that change, rather than waiting for national initiatives such as agri-environment schemes to take effect
- Progressive, incremental or more modest targets could bring biodiversity benefits and be more achievable, i.e. aim for gradual change from improved to better diversity rather than aiming straight for species-rich grassland/hay meadow
- Make use of key species as flagships to secure interest/funding/policy change
- Enrich the experience of the public to change the perception that bright green is good, the trails could provide a useful focal point
- Need to 'think outside the box' using incentive schemes to encourage biodiversity standards, an emphasis on local production and trade to reduce transportation costs and associated carbon emissions and achieve economies of scale (note that the Peak District Environmental Quality Mark (EQM) scheme has this focus)