



Heathland is characterised by the presence of plants such as heather *Calluna vulgaris*, dwarf gorses *Ulex spp.*, and cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*. Areas of good quality heathland should consist of heathy plants of varying heights and structures with some areas of scattered trees and scrub, bare ground, gorse, wet heaths, bogs and open water. The presence and numbers of characteristic birds, reptiles, invertebrates, vascular plants, bryophytes and lichens are important indicators of habitat quality.

Lowland heathland is a priority for nature conservation because it is a rare and threatened habitat. In England only one sixth of the heathland present in the 1800s now remains. The UK has some 58,000 ha of lowland heathland of which the largest proportion (55%) is found in England. In Herefordshire there are small isolated pockets, often within woodlands such as Haugh Wood, Lea Bailey End, Mortimer Forest and Queenswood Dymock. Many of these sites were used to establish conifer plantation woodland so the removal of conifers can result in a restoration of this habitat. Some commons also contain elements of heathland, for example Dorstone Common and Bromyard Downs.

Threats

- Agricultural intensification including over-grazing
- Encroachment by trees and scrub
- Lack of appropriate management such as light grazing, controlled burning and cutting
- Browsing by expanding deer populations
- Fragmentation and disturbance
- Nutrient enrichment, particularly nitrogen from intensive livestock farming

Current Action

- Some sites are designated as SSSI (NE)
- Advice to land managers through CN, AES, HMN, & FH (NE, CFE, HWT, WUF)
- Restoration following conifer plantation felling (FE)
- Heathland restoration on sites such as the Malvern Hills, Bromyard Downs and Ewyas Harold (MHAONB, HWT, BDCA)

	Objective	Action
A	Locate and map existing habitat	3
B	Maintain and increase the total extent and distribution	1,3,5
C	Assess condition of sites through biodiversity surveys	4
D	Undertake appropriate management	2,5

	Action	Target
1	Reestablishing heathland on conifer plantations in appropriate locations	Annual
2	Maintain, restore and create sites through Agri-Environment schemes, other funding and the planning process	Annual
3	Map extent of habitat	2020
4	Undertake biodiversity surveys	2020
5	Increase awareness and produce advisory material	2020

Lead Partner	FC, NE
Key Partners	HWT, HART, DI, FE