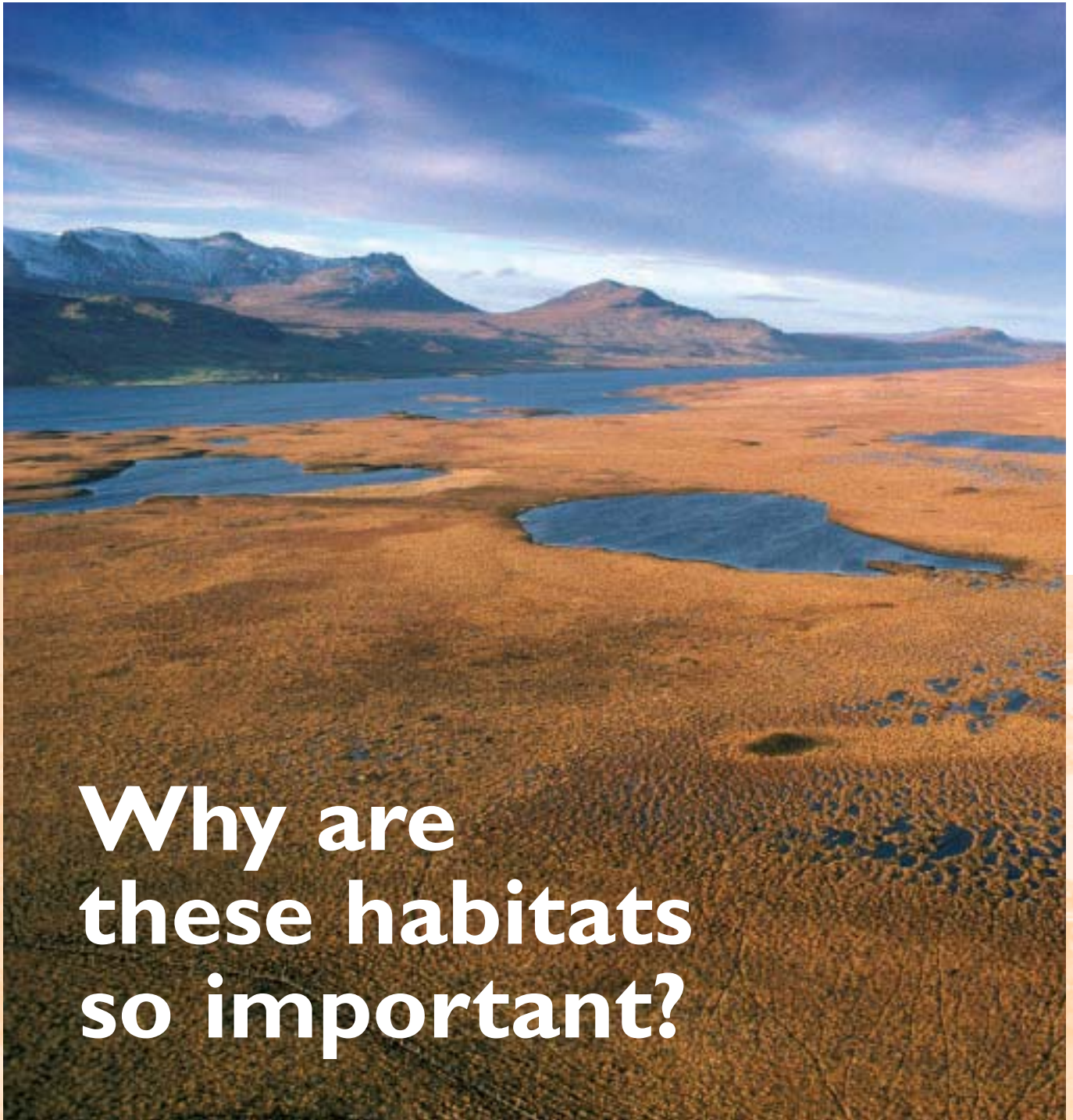


Caring for our uplands

Delivering the UK Upland Habitat Action Plans



Why are these habitats so important?

Covering around a third of the UK's land surface, upland habitats form the bulk of our wild, semi-natural countryside. These are the 'open' habitats found in mountains, moors, heaths, bogs and rough grasslands.

The UK's cool, wet and windy climate has given rise to many plant communities which are globally rare and distinctive.

There are outliers of arctic tundra and fell-fields, extensive heather-clad moors and miniature 'rainforests'

of fern- and moss-dominated communities. Some of the upland birds nest at exceptionally high densities.

Each part of upland UK is special, with a distinctive mix of landscapes, habitats and wildlife.

Under the European Community Habitats and Birds Directives, upland habitats and species are protected within 177 candidate Special Areas of Conservation and 55 Special Protection Areas in the UK.



Issues?

Historically, the uplands have suffered large losses of natural and semi-natural habitats, rare plants and some of the most characteristic birds and mammals.



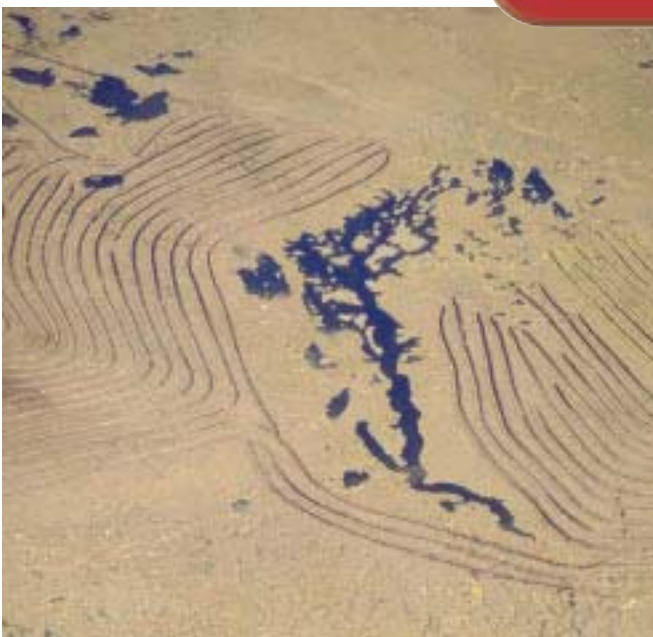
Adverse changes include:

- Long history of deforestation and heavy grazing by livestock and deer
- Agricultural ‘improvement’ – ploughing, draining, re-seeding and use of fertilisers
- Afforestation with exotic conifers during the 20th century
- Bracken spread
- Uncontrolled fires, through accidents and poor muirburn practices
- Open cast mineral extraction
- Commercial and domestic peat extraction
- Air pollution and climate change
- Poorly managed recreation pressure
- Wildlife persecution
- Badly routed and constructed access tracks
- Development of structures such as windfarms and telecommunication masts in areas sensitive to disturbance



Two key actions are needed to address these issues:

- EU and UK government policies and practices with environmental sustainability and biodiversity at their heart
- A better, more effective dialogue between landusers, managers and conservationists



What are we doing to protect these habitats?

The UK Government published three **Habitat Action Plans** for the uplands (as part of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan). These cover:

- **Blanket Bog**
- **Upland Calcareous Grassland**
- **Upland Heathland**

Together, these plans cover more than 4 million hectares in the UK.

Other plans exist for woodlands, wetlands, limestone pavements and other habitats which occur in parts of the uplands.



Blanket bog

Areas for action:

- Policy and legislation
- Protecting and managing designated sites
- Advice and sharing 'good' practice
- Monitoring and research
- Communication and publicity

Action Plans' targets:

- Maintain extent and quality of what is already present
- Restore poor quality habitat
- Recreate habitats that have been lost



Upland heathland



Upland calcareous grassland



Habitat Action Plans are being implemented in the UK and in each Country, and also through Local Biodiversity Action Plans. **Information on both national and local plans can be found at www.ukbap.org.uk**

These Upland Habitat Action Plans are the start of a much longer term process, which should be embraced by everyone involved with the care, management and use of the uplands.

Progress so far...



Government Agencies and Non-Government Organisations have formed a **UK Upland Habitat Action Plan (HAP) Steering Group** to guide the implementation of these plans, and to coordinate work to help nature in these areas.



The UK Upland HAP Steering Group is:

- Encouraging more integrated and environmentally sustainable management in the uplands
- Providing a common voice to government on the sorts of policy changes needed to deliver more for wildlife and people in the uplands
- Producing up-to-date maps for each habitat, and assessments of habitat condition
- Promoting guidance and expertise on good management practices
- Identifying key research needs and means of providing the best outcomes for work already done
- Helping to direct partners to sources of funding in order to enhance upland Britain
- Enabling organisations to work together to raise the profile of the richness, importance, beauty and needs of the uplands

Upland habitats are included within Biodiversity Strategies prepared by each country to facilitate the implementation of Habitat and Species Action Plans. Information on these can be found on the following websites:

England

www.ukbap.org.uk/EBG/

Scotland

www.scotland.gov.uk/about/ERAD/CANH/CF/00014870/page962967264.aspx

Wales

www.wales.gov.uk/subienvironment/content/biodiversity/bio_e.htm

Northern Ireland

www.ehsni.gov.uk/natural/biodiversity/hap_ni.shtml

The **UK Upland Habitat Action Plan Steering Group** is made up of Government and Non-Government Organisations concerned with upland nature conservation and land use:

Association of National Park Authorities
Countryside Council for Wales
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rural Development Service)
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (Northern Ireland)
English Nature
Environment and Heritage Services (Northern Ireland)
Forestry Commission
Game Conservancy Trust
Joint Nature Conservation Committee
National Assembly for Wales
National Farmers Union
National Trust
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Rural Property and Business Association

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