



Brada Hill SSSI © NBP Photographer John Williamson



Working with Wildlife

Coastal Heathland Habitat Action Plan

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|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Plan Co-ordinator | Coastal Group |
| Plan Author | Sarah Coles & Steve Pullan |
| Plan Lead | Natural England |
| Latest version | January 2008 |

Description

Maritime cliff and slope vegetation exists as far as the limit of sea spray influence. Coastal heathland is heathland located adjacent to the coast but inland from that sea spray influence. Coastal heathland is composed of heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and bell heather (*Erica cinerea*) and occurs in dune systems on stretches of fixed acidic sand that has stabilised and become acidic through leaching. It is also on formed sand which is naturally acidic i.e. washed glacial sands which were deposited at the end of the last ice age. Coastal heathland also occurs over rock and thin soils in transition/mosaic with grassland and has strong links to maritime cliff and slope communities.

Historically coastal heathland may have been more extensive on the landward side of dune systems where sand has leached and become acidic. This land has been lost to agricultural improvement, fairway creation, and coastal roads and railways.

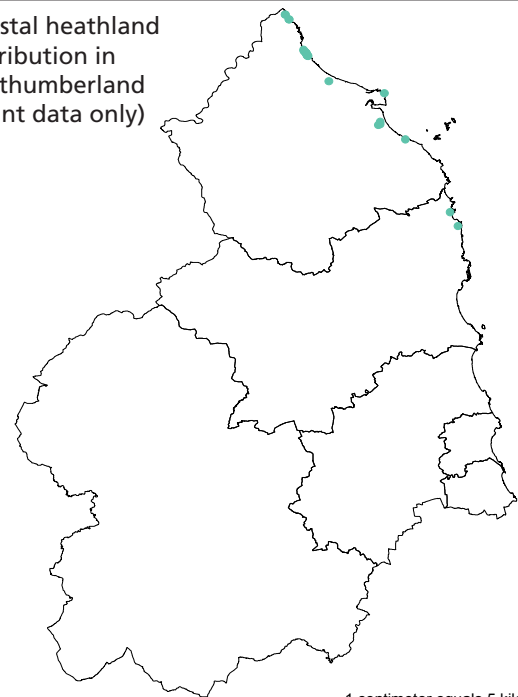
Conservation Status

Habitats Directive, Annex I
UK Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat
North East Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat

Current Extent in Northumberland

Heath is locally extensive in patches on the glacial sand of Ross Links sand dune system, part of Lindisfarne SSSI and the North Northumberland Dunes SAC. Heather is also present on Goswick golf course on the dune closest to the road. On Bamburgh golf course, part of Bamburgh Coast and Hills SSSI, the coastal heathland is associated with whin grassland. Heather patches also occur on the sandstone rocks between Cocklawburn and Spittal and is associated with maritime cliff communities.

Coastal heathland distribution in Northumberland (point data only)



1 centimeter equals 5 kilometers

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Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline

- Inappropriate cutting regimes
- Overgrazing
- Scrub and bracken encroachment

Associated Action Plans

Maritime Cliffs and Slopes
Sand Dunes

Further Information

This coastal heathland action plan links to the lowland heathland UK BAP action plan, whose lead partner is Natural England.

Lunn, A, 2004, Northumberland, New Naturalist Series, Collins, UK.

Coastal Heathland Habitat Action Plan

Targets

Maintain the current extent of coastal heathland in Northumberland by 2010

| Code | Priority Actions | Date |
|--------|--|---------|
| CH A01 | Identify the locations of the current coastal heathland resource | 2007 |
| CH A02 | Survey the extent, soil conditions, plant communities and habitat condition of the existing coastal heathland resource to inform improved management schemes | 2009 |
| CH A03 | Utilise the survey results to quantify the maintain extent target | 2009 |
| CH A04 | Identify possible locations for coastal heathland restoration and creation utilising the survey results from existing sites and create targets for achieving condition and increasing extent for coastal heathland | 2010 |
| CH A05 | Work with the land manager to increase the structural diversity of the heath at Ross Links and increase extent through appropriate grazing and bracken control | 2010 |
| CH A06 | Work with land owners and managers to maintain and expand the extent of heath on golf courses | 2010 |
| CH A07 | Raise awareness about the importance and management of Northumberland's coastal heathland and its associated species through publicity material, events and training | ongoing |