



Project title: Dorset's Heathland Heart

<https://naturebftb.co.uk/>

Project Duration: July 2017-June 2020

Funders: Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), People Postcode Lottery

Partners:

CORE- Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bat Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation, Plantlife, Natural England, RSPB

DELIVERY- Dorset Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, National Trust, QinetiQ, Dorset Bat Group, Bat Conservation Trust and private landowners

Project Summary: The Dorset heaths are one of the most biodiverse areas of Britain yet many traditional usages of the heathlands have declined and consequently so to have the microhabitats and species associated with these practices. The project will target management on sites where rare species occur or have been lost from, to recreate and connect microhabitats essential for these rare species and a large range of associated species. This project will deliver a programme of public engagement that is planned to enhance knowledge, understanding and awareness. The structure of the activities will ensure that there are multiple opportunities for people to have contact with the project, get involved at project sites and other heathland areas and to progress and deepen their engagement with the heathland landscape in Dorset.

Project Aim: The project will recreate and connect microhabitats which historically were provided by traditional usage of heathlands and are necessary for a large number of scarce and declining species. The future conservation of these species cannot be achieved by habitat management work alone: promotion of the value of the habitats and species on the heaths to local communities is key to conservation efforts. The project will aim to involve and enthuse the public, be they new to natural history, interested amateurs or professional recorders, in some of the 'less fashionable' heathland species.

Project Objectives:

1. To **restore, expand and create eight microhabitats within the Dorset heaths** for assemblages of declining plants and animals, through an extensive programme of **on-site works**.
2. To deliver **integrated action and advice on species assemblages** and provide **skill sharing** opportunities.
3. To undertake a major programme promoting the culture and ecology of the heathlands, focusing particularly on rare species, microhabitats and ecosystem processes, **to increase people's awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the heathlands**.

Project Target species and habitats

3.1 Primary target species

Threatened species that the project actions will measurably improve the conservation prospects of, either listed on Section 41 and/or at risk of extinction by 2020. The current location of each species on the recovery curve is detailed along with the anticipated location by 2020 as a result of the project's actions.

Taxon name	Common name	Recovery curve 2014	Recovery curve 2020*
Vascular plants			
<i>Chamaemelum nobile</i>	Chamomile	1	7
<i>Cicendia filiformis</i>	Yellow Centaury	1	7
<i>Illecebrum verticillatum</i>	Coral Necklace	1	7
<i>Lycopodiella inundata</i>	Marsh Clubmoss	1	7
<i>Mentha pulegium</i>	Pennyroyal Mint	2	7
<i>Pilularia globulifera</i>	Pilwort	1	7
<i>Platanthera bifolia</i>	Lesser Butterfly Orchid	1	7
<i>Scleranthus annuus</i>	Annual Knawel	1	7
<i>Viola lactea</i>	Pale Dog-violet	1	7
Bryophytes			
<i>Lophozia capitata</i>	Large-celled Flapwort	1	7
Mammals			
<i>Myotis bechsteinii</i>	Bechstein's Bat	4	6
Birds			
<i>Lullula arborea</i>	Woodlark	6	7
Reptiles			
<i>Lacerta agilis</i>	Sand Lizard	6	7
Invertebrates			
<i>Andrena tarsata</i>	Tormentil Mining Bee	1	7
<i>Bombylius minor</i>	Heath beefly	2	7
<i>Cicindela sylvatica</i>	Heath Tiger Beetle	5	7
<i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i>	Southern Damselfly	1	7
<i>Plebejus argus</i>	Silver-studded Blue	6	7
<i>Pseudepipona herrichii</i>	Purbeck Mason Wasp	1	7

* Figures for 2020 are on a local rather than national scale.

3.2 Secondary target species

Other S41 species that will benefit from this project.

Taxon name	Common name
Invertebrates	
<i>Alopecosa fabrilis</i>	Great Fox-spider
<i>Altella lucida</i>	Dorset mesh-weaver
<i>Anthophora retusa</i>	Potter flower bee
<i>Asilius crabroniformis</i>	Hornet robberfly
<i>Chrysotoxum octomaculatum</i>	Broken-banded wasp hoverfly
<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Small heath
<i>Eresus sandalitus</i>	Ladybird spider
<i>Erotettix cyane</i>	Pondweed leafhopper
<i>Hipparchia semele</i>	Grayling (butterfly)
<i>Homonotus sanguinolentus</i>	Bloody spider-hunting wasp
<i>Meloe proscarabaeus</i>	Black oil beetle
<i>Meloe violaceus</i>	Violet oil beetle
<i>Poecilus kugelanni</i>	Kugelann's ground beetle
<i>Stethophyma grossum</i>	Large Marsh Grasshopper
<i>Thyridanthrax fenestratus</i>	Mottled beefly
Reptiles	
<i>Coronella austriaca</i>	Smooth snake
<i>Vipera berus</i>	Adder

3.3 Target habitat (*S41 Priority Habitats that will benefit from this project*)

Lowland dry acidic grassland
Lowland heathland
Ponds
Purple Moor-grass and rush pasture

Detailed Project Overview

The project aims to deliver the effective targeted conservation of 18 S41 species by focusing on the management of eight microhabitats across the Dorset Heaths. The Primary Target species are very localised across the heaths and highly targeted actions will be undertaken to increase these particular populations. Other declining but more widely scattered species will benefit wherever appropriate management work takes place including at least 16 other S41 species as well as many more scarce or rare species that characterise the Dorset heaths.

The sites to be worked on and areas within these have been selected according to the presence of target species, whether current or in recent history. Most of the target species are reliant on early to mid successional habitats, now rare as large-scale conservation efforts almost inevitably overlook such requirements for details. Provision of these through mechanical means, mimicking traditional usage of the heaths, be this turf paring, seasonal pool creation or bare sandy ground creation will benefit the species solely reliant on these habitats; not just the target species but whole species assemblages. All of the sites selected are already managed for their heathland interest and any additional works through the project will be carried out in close cooperation with these activities.

To ensure heathland and the species become accepted as valuable, interesting and worth conserving as part of our natural and cultural heritage not just by those already interested in natural history, a variety of audience engagement activities will be designed to capture the imagination of the wider public and enthuse new audiences.

These will range from general nature walks, talks and family activities for those new to heathland and casually interested in nature, through more specialist training days focusing on target species and groups to encourage amateur naturalists to build up their skills and contribute to the citizen science project to be carried out in conjunction with the National Trust, building on their expertise with the Cyril Diver Project.

The end result of communities understanding and valuing 'their' heaths and becoming involved in looking at and caring for the heaths will be essential in conserving the habitats and species in the future.

Project sites/Locations



Figure 1: Map of project sites, including three contingency sites (Holt Heath, Stoborough Heath (NE) and Higher Hyde Heath).