DORSET LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY HABITAT ASSEMBLAGES

Habitat assemblage:	Species wet heath and grass-heath
Broad Habitat type:	Heathland
S41 and Priority Habitat type:	Lowland Heathland
Composite species assemblages:	Invertebrates of wet heaths and grass-heaths Plants of wet heaths and grass-heaths Plants of open, peaty, winter-wet hollows on wet heath Lichens and bryophytes of open slow-succession heaths

Habitat assemblage description:	Wet heath a distinctive zone of lowland heathland normally found on flat ground between the dry heath and valley mires but can also occur on slopes where drainage is impeded. Cross-leaved heath typically dominates over ling and is joined by sundews spp., deer-grass and bog-mosses. In parts of Purbeck the rare Dorset heath can be as abundant as cross-leaved heath. It is the main habitat for marsh gentian, marsh clubmoss and brown beak-sedge for which the Dorset Heaths are nationally important. There are specialist invertebrates found in wet heath most notably silver-studded Blue and the ground beetle *Carabus nitens*. Succession is slower than on dry heath and bare, damp peaty ground provides a habitat for a range of heathland specialist lichens.

Other related assemblages:	Species of open valley mires and acid flushes Species of dry and humid heath

Pressures and Threats	
PA04	**Removal of small landscape features for agricultural land parcel consolidation (hedges, stone walls, rushes, open ditches, springs, solitary trees, etc.)**
	Heathland is a landscape that more many centuries by as pastoral system of grazing and human use of the local resources, such as small-scale sand, gravel and clay pits, trackways, animal drinking ponds, scrub and fallow land. With the cessation of that traditional management has led to a loss of these small-scale features which considerable diversity to heathland and support many scarce and threatened species.
PA05	**Abandonment of management/use of grasslands and other agricultural and agro-forestry systems (e.g. cessation of grazing, mowing or traditional farming)**
	Cessation of traditional heathland management such as grazing, winter burning and turbary by the end of the 19th Century has led to many heaths becoming overgrown, particularly in wet heath by purple moor-grass. Periodic disturbance to create bare ground features is important for a number of specialists, e.g.

	marsh clubmoss and brown beak-sedge which require bare peaty hollows that are flooded in the winter but dry out in the summer.
PA07	**Intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock**
	Prolonged and / or heavy grazing can result in short, homogenous vegetation with little structure and can significantly reduce the abundance of flowers which are particularly important for foraging bumblebees and also the new growth that is favoured by the larvae of Silver-studded Blue.
PA08	**Extensive grazing or under-grazing by livestock**
	The loss of grazing mentioned above has to a large degree has been solved on most of the larger blocks of heath where extensive grazing has been re-introduced. However, some smaller sites may be difficult to graze especially in urban areas.
PI02	**Other invasive alien species**
	Wet heath receives less pressure from invasive species that dry heath, non-native species are mainly represented by self-sown seedlings and sapling of maritime pine and Scot's pine which if left will help dry out the wet heath and shade out species that generally require open, well-illuminated conditions.
PI03	**Problematic native species**
	Purple moor-grass can be abundant and dominate over areas that receive little or no grazing and this can be compounded by enrichment (eutrophication) from low level atmospheric pollution.
PJ03	**Changes in precipitation regimes due to climate change**
	Changing weather patterns will affect plant communities. Regular or prolonged droughts could lead to a reduction of wet heath if the water table lowers. Alternatively, a wetter regime could lead to an expansion of valley mire and wet heath vegetation. Warmer winters also prolong the growing season, especially in the autumn, which in the long term will hasten succession and reduce the amount of bare ground especially when coupled with deposition of nitrogen compounds.
PK04	**Atmospheric N-deposition**
	Atmospheric deposition of Nitrogen and Ammonia compounds has a fertilizing effect especially on very nutrient-poor vegetation such as heath. This promotes growth of species such as purple moor-grass which can out-compete smaller species. Bryophytes and lichens are poor-competitors and require acidic and nutrient-poor conditions. While low level atmospheric deposition will not it eliminate the bryophytes and lichen directly, it has a fertilizing effect on the vegetation resulting in more growth of species such as purple moor-grass and a reduction in bare ground.

Micro-habitat assemblage: Invertebrates of wet heaths and grass-heaths

Group	Species	Common Name	IUCN GB	IUCN Eng	IUCN other	Criteria	Threats / Pressures							
Beetles	*Hydroporus scalesianus*	Mr Scales' Diving Beetle	VU	n/a	n/a	**1**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Bugs	*Micracanthia marginalis*	a shore-bug	VU	n/a	n/a	**1**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Bugs	*Rhopalus maculatus*	a Rhopalid bug	n/a	n/a	n/a	**3**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Wasps	*Mimumesa spooneri*		R	n/a	n/a	**3**	PA05	PA08	.	.	.	.	.	.
Butterflies	*Plebejus argus*	Silver-studded Blue	VU	n/a	n/a	**1**								
Moths	*Chlorissa viridata*	Small Grass Emerald		n/a	n/a	**3**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Moths	*Idaea muricata*	Purple-bordered Gold		n/a	n/a	**3**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Moths	*Scopula emutaria*	Rosy Wave				**5**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Moths	*Coleophora genistae*	Petty Whin Case-bearer		n/a	n/a	**4**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Moths	*Dasystoma salicella*	Spring Reveller; Spring Tubic		n/a	n/a	**4**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Spiders	*Scotina palliardii*	a running foliage spider	EN	n/a	n/a	**1**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Spiders	*Trochosa spinipalpis*	a ground spider		n/a	n/a	**4**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Spiders	*Zora armillata*	a ghost spider	CR	n/a	n/a	**1**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Micro-habitat assemblage: Plants of wet heaths and grass-heaths

Group	Species	Common Name	IUCN GB	IUCN Eng	IUCN other	Criteria	Threats / Pressures							
Plants	*Erica ciliaris*	Dorset Heath	LC	LC	n/a	**3**	PA05	PA08	PB01	PK04	.	.	.	.
Plants	*Genista anglica*	Petty Whin	NT	VU	n/a	**1**	PA05	PA08	PK04	.	.	.	.	.
Plants	*Gentiana pneumonanthe*	Marsh Gentian	LC	NT	n/a	**2, 3**	PA04	PA05	PA08	PJ03	PK04	.	.	.
Plants	*Gymnadenia borealis*	Heath Fragrant Orchid	LC	DD	n/a	**4**	PA05	PA08	PK04	.	.	.	.	.
Plants	*Juncus capitatus*	Dwarf Rush	VU	EN	n/a	**1**	PK04	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Plants	*Platanthera bifolia*	Lesser Butterfly-orchid	VU	EN	n/a	**1, 4**	PA05	PA08	PK04	.	.	.	.	.

Micro-habitat assemblage: Plants of open, peaty, winter-wet hollows on wet heath

Group	Species	Common Name	IUCN GB	IUCN Eng	IUCN other	Criteria	Threats / Pressures							
Plants	*Lycopodiella inundata*	Marsh Clubmoss	EN	EN	n/a	**1**	PA04	PA05	PA08	.	.	.	.	.
Plants	*Rhynchospora fusca*	Brown Beak-sedge	LC	LC	n/a	**3**	PA05	PA08	PK04	.	.	.	.	.

Micro-habitat assemblage: Lichens and bryophytes of open slow-succession heaths

Group	Species	Common Name	IUCN GB	IUCN Eng	IUCN other	Criteria	Threats / Pressures							
Liverworts	*Odontoschisma denudatum*	Matchstick Flapwort	LC	n/a	n/a	**4**	PA05	PA08	PK04		.	.	.	.
Mosses	*Campylopus brevipilus*	Compact Swan-neck Moss	LC	n/a	n/a	**3**	PA05	PH04	PK04	.	.	.	.	.
Mosses	*Dicranum spurium*	Rusty Fork-moss	LC	n/a	n/a	**3**	PA4	PA8	PK04	.	.	.	.	.
Lichens	*Cladonia strepsilis*		n/a	n/a	n/a	**3**	PA05	PA08	PH04	PK04	.	.	.	.
Lichens	*Cladonia zopfii*		n/a	n/a	n/a	**3**	PA05	PA08	PH04	PK04	.	.	.	.

Lichens	*Pycnothelia papillaria*		n/a	n/a	n/a	**3**	PA05	PA08	PH04	PK04	.	.	.	.