

Dwarf Shrub Heath



Current factors causing loss or decline

Information is limited on the former coverage of heath in the City area. The long history of agricultural management of rural areas over the years may have reduced the coverage (or quality of relics), but in more recent times, intensive agriculture and urbanisation, are likely to be the cause of further loss. Many of the surviving remnants are on marginal ground, some in urban areas, which has escaped intensification or development.

- Agricultural intensification – particularly fertilising, ploughing and drainage
- Over-grazing – heavy grazing favours grasses and can contribute to nutrient enrichment.
- Woodland planting – schemes often target the lower productivity marginal habitats.
- Neglect – encouraging the spread of scrub, notably Birch or Gorse, and Bracken.
- Built developments – causing direct loss of sites, both to urban fringe and local central sites such as old quarries.
- Recreational pressure – intensive treatment of relic heaths in parks and golf courses.
- Heavy burning – although encouraging heather can reduce heath diversity (not an issue in the City).

Current action

There is no direct action currently to preserve this diminishing resource. However, a number of the small pockets of heathland are included within City-wide Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) or within local sites (LSINCs).

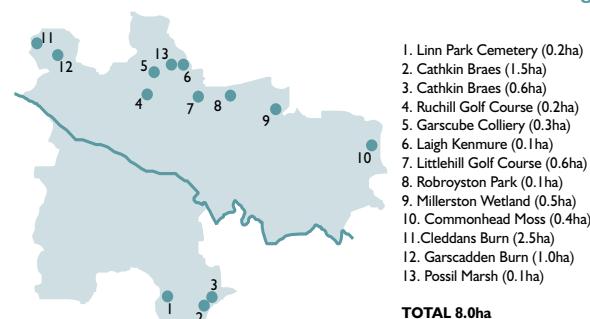
Current status

Dwarf Shrub Heath is characterised by vegetation dominated by members of the heath family (Ericaceae). Typically they occur on acidic soils of a low nutrient status. There are a number of different vegetation types recognised in Britain, many restricted to geographical areas (including upland or coastal locations), but in general there are two main sub-divisions: Dry and Wet Heaths. The former is characteristic of lowland areas, usually on freely draining, often sandy or gravelly soils, or rock outcrops. Wet Heaths are more typical of upland areas (moorland) with high rainfall or impeded drainage, and are associated with shallow peat formation. Both types share strong affinities with a parallel range of acidic grasslands, which are often derived from heathland precursors, (see Acid Grassland HAP).

Typically heathlands support a range of other habitats including acidic grasslands, mires and flushes (including rush pastures) and scrub (notably Gorse) or scattered trees (e.g. Birch and Rowan). Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Blaeberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) are the main shrubby dominants. However, a number of grassland species are also to be found such as Sheep's-fescue (*Festuca ovina*) and Wavy Hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) with a range of bryophytes (typically *Hypnum cupressiforme* s.l., *Pleurozium schreberii* and *Dicranum scoparium*) and lichens (notably *Cladonia* spp.). Wet heaths are distinguished by the presence of species such as Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Deergrass (*Trichophorum cespitosum*) and bog-mosses are usually present (e.g. *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. compactum*). Heathlands are also important for the associated fauna, notably invertebrates and birds (and in the south, reptiles).

In this plan for the City area, all areas supporting heather dominated vegetation are included, except where on deep peat (see Raised Bog HAP), although some occur in mosaic with acidic grasslands (see Acid Grassland HAP). There is a national plan for lowland heathland (areas below 300m) which is relevant to this plan, although some heathlands within the City, such as on the Cathkin Hills, are better described as wet heaths (or upland heath). Lowland heathland is a priority for nature conservation because it is a rare and threatened habitat. In England, which has the largest cover in the UK (55%), over 80% has been lost since 1800. The UK supports one fifth of the international total of this habitat.

Main Locations of Dwarf Shrub Heath in Glasgow



In the City heathlands are represented by a number of scattered sites most below 1 ha, and in total cover only approximately 8 hectares; this figure includes both wet and dry types. Many sites are associated with rocky outcrops or embankments, and two are notable for persisting on golf courses. Most, however, occur with acidic grasslands and their respective frequencies presumably reflects cropping regimes.

Objectives and targets

The UK costed HAP for Lowland Heaths has two main objectives: to “Maintain, and improve by management, all existing lowland heathland” and to “Encourage the re-establishment of a further 10% by 2005” (at various counties in England and Wales).

Objective 1: Establish extent and quality of surviving heathland and identify key sites.
Target 1: Survey and assess known areas of heath by 2005.

Objective 2: Ensure no loss in area or reduction of quality of the current heathland sites.
Target 2: Retain all existing sites and ensure no further damage occurs.

Objective 3: Increase area and quality of heathland through restoration and positive management.
Target 3: Introduce restoration work and sympathetic management over 25% of resource by 2006.

Objective 4: Promote awareness and value of heathland to landowners, managers and general public.
Target 4: Establish communication with interested parties and develop guidance literature.

Proposed Action with Lead Authorities

Action	Lead	Delivery	Objective
Policy and Legislation			
Ensure important heathland sites are noted in Local Plans, district and regional Structure Plans and landuse Strategy documents.	GCC-LS(CG)	GCC-DRS	2
Ensure the value and needs of existing heathlands are noted during woodland planting schemes.	GCC-LS(CG)	FC, GCC-DRS, SNH, TWISE	2, 3
Review agri-environment schemes to ensure that heathland receives due recognition.	GCC-LS(CG)	FWAG, GCC-LS, SNH	2, 3
Site Safeguard and Management			
Oppose developments for land use, forestry or agricultural activities that will adversely affect remnant heathland.	GCC-LS(CG)	FC, GCC-DRS, SNH	2, 3
Encourage landowners managers and farmers to implement sympathetic management.	GCC-LS(CG)	FWAG, GCC-LS, SNH	2, 3
Identify areas for restoration work and liaise with owners and users for feasibility.	GCC-LS(CG)	FWAG, GCC-LS, SWT	3
Develop conservation management plans or agreements at key sites.	GCC-LS(CG)	FWAG, GCC-LS(CG), RSPB, SWT	2, 3, 4
Advisory			
Develop and promote guidance notes for good management practice.	GCC-LS(CG)	FWAG, GCC-LS(CG), RSPB, SNH	3
Liaise with landowners, farmers and managers to promote sympathetic management.	GCC-LS(CG)	FWAG, GCC-LS(CG), SNH	2, 3
Future Research and Monitoring			
Survey existing heathland and assess status and conservation needs.	GCC-LS(CG)	GCC-LS(CG), SNH, SWT	1, 3
Establish monitoring plots to assess management work.	GCC-LS(CG)	GCC-LS(CG)	3
Identify potential areas for heathland restoration or creation.	GCC-LS(CG)	GCC-LS	3
Communication and Publicity			
Encourage public understanding, access and appreciation of heathland where appropriate.	GCC-LS(CG)	GCC-LS(CRS), RSPB, SNH	4
Liaise with Lead Agency for national Heathland Habitat Action Plan.	GCC-LS(CG)	GCC-LS(CG)	1, 2, 3, 4
Review the progress of this Action Plan by 2006.	GCC-LS(CG)	GCC-LS(CG)	1, 2, 3, 4

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Glasgow City Council: Development and Regeneration Services(GCC-DRS), Glasgow City Council: Land Services(Conservation Group) (GCC-LS(CG),

Glasgow City Council: Culture and Leisure Services (GCC-CLS), Glasgow City Council: Education Services (GCC-ES), Glasgow City Council: Land Services Countryside Ranger Service (GCC-LS(CRS)),

Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC), Greenspace for Communities(GIC), British Waterways (BW), Forestry Commission (FC), Farming Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), The WISE Group (TWISE)

Glasgow Natural History Society (GNHS), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT).

Clyde Amphibian and Reptile Group (CARG), Butterfly Conservation (BC), Concern for Swifts (CFS)