

## Grazing Regime Evaluation Case Study:

### Site 7 – Peak District

- 40 ha of degraded dry dwarf-shrub heath
- Restoration by sheep exclusion followed by summer cattle grazing



#### Background

The site is located in the Kinder Estate, which is a high upland gritstone plateau, most of which stands at around 600 metres above sea level. The high plateau is eroded blanket bog, with dry heath on the slopes. The estate (1267 ha) was purchased by the National Trust in 1982, and is situated within the Peak District National Park. Part of the Trust's management plan was to reduce sheep numbers on the moorland with the objective of restoring dwarf shrub heath, especially in areas that were fragile or eroding.

The Peak District's Moorland Erosion Project showed that the blanket bog was fragile and eroding. This was due to fire damage and poorly controlled heavy grazing by sheep. Sheep grazed the area at an average of 2.5 ewes ha<sup>-1</sup> (>0.37 lu ha<sup>-1</sup>). In 1983, sheep stocking ceased under the Peak District Moorland Management Project and trespassing sheep were gathered regularly and removed. In the early 1990s, the 40 ha site was fenced to exclude sheep completely, under agreement in the North Peak Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme. After cessation of sheep grazing, *Calluna* and *Vaccinium myrtillus* gradually recovered, but *Nardus* became more dominant. To control *Nardus*, from 1997 the area was grazed by 16 cattle (0.4 lu ha<sup>-1</sup>) in summer (June-September). In 2004, sheep and cattle grazed the site as a temporary measure due to movement restrictions. Cattle grazing has started to reduce *Nardus* biomass but full restoration of dwarf shrub heath is only expected to be achieved in the long-term.

#### Habitat condition assessment

The dry dwarf shrub heath is in unfavourable condition with respect to plant species composition due to previous heavy grazing, being largely dominated by *Nardus*. It is now improving with bryophytes and lichens present throughout the site but there are only a few sample points with dwarf shrub indicator species. Only 40% of the sample points had adequate cover of indicator species, and only 30% of the sample points had at least two indicator species. Pioneer regrowth is also inadequate at all sample points.

The heath is in favourable condition with respect to current browsing levels, disturbance and invasive species with all sample points passing the criteria. There is no sign of any burning in sensitive areas, or of bare ground due to disturbance. Signs of browsing are sparse at all sample points.

#### Farm business and livestock

No data were available for cows; no sheep are grazed on the site.

#### Other management

No other management is carried out.

#### Shooting, recreation and landscape

There is no shooting or associated management carried out on the site. There is public access with stiles and gateways maintained for easy access. The paths are used heavily causing erosion on the paths.

Landscape is uniform in appearance with intact walls and boundaries. Neither the flowering *Eriophorum* spp. nor *Calluna* are visually striking.