



Mineral Products Association

# **Building on our legacy** ... realising our potential the MPA Biodiversity Strategy



The mineral products industry has a proven legacy of high quality restoration and has further significant potential to protect and enhance biodiversity,

including common as well as rare and threatened species and habitats. Continuing good site management, restoration and after-use of minerals sites is expected to contribute significantly to the achievement of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and MPA members have a unique role to play.



### Context

Mineral products are essential to our construction and manufacturing industries, to our economy and to our everyday lives. Of the two billion tonnes of all materials we use every year in the UK, mineral flows (at 280 million tonnes or 14 per cent) are the biggest material flow.

The UK's diverse geology provides us with high-quality materials and supports a wide range of habitats and species. Maintaining a secure and adequate supply of materials, while reducing environmental impact and maximising environmental benefits is central to delivering sustainable development.



### Importance of biodiversity

'Biological diversity - or biodiversity - is a term we use to describe the variety of life on Earth. It refers to the wide variety of ecosystems and living organisms: animals, plants, their habitats and their genes.'<sup>1</sup> Biodiversity is important in its own right, in providing 'ecosystem services' (e.g. nutrient recycling, carbon sequestration and flood defence), and adding to our enjoyment and quality of life.

#### Policy and Legislation

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is the UK Government's response to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which sets out action plans for the most threatened species and habitats. The shared vision for UK Biodiversity conservation is documented in 'Conserving Biodiversity - The UK Approach'.

Local BAPs identify how and where national and international targets, as well as more local priorities can be delivered, and help inform policy, funding and investment decisions.

<sup>1</sup> Source: International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).



### Impact and potential of extraction

The extraction of minerals, particularly by surface methods, inevitably results in changes to the characteristics of the land where it takes place. These are often temporary and careful site management, restoration and after-use has already created a legacy of rich biodiversity, although further potential remains.

Recent research by the RSPB indicates that mineral sites could meet 100% of the targets for nine out of 11 priority habitats in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (see Table 1 opposite).

**Table 1** Proportion of BAP habitat creation targets for England by 2015 that could be met by sites where existing habitat is within 1km or adjacent to a mineral site *Source: Nature After Minerals/RSPB.*

Priority habitats	% of BAP target met by		
	BAP target (ha)	Mineral sites <1km of existing habitat	Mineral sites adjacent to existing habitat
Lowland dry acid grassland	276	>100*	>100
Native woodland	53,000	18	6
Lowland wood-pasture and parkland	120	>100	>100
Lowland calcareous grassland	8,426	25	12
Lowland heathland	7,600	>100	>100
Purple moor grass and rush pastures	151	>100	>100
Wet reedbeds	1,715	>100	>100
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	1,250	>100	>100
Saline lagoons	100	>100	32
Lowland meadows	256	>100	>100
Upland hay meadows	72	>100	0

\*Indicates potential to deliver more than 100% of the UK BAP Target



## Delivery

Improvement of wildlife habitats has long been a priority for the industry's land management and restoration work.

MPA members have been steadily improving standards of restoration and after-use at their sites and the MPA and predecessor organisations have been running an industry restoration awards scheme for forty years. Even at active sites land management has focused increasingly on maximising nature conservation opportunities.

Restoration and after-use should concentrate on making the best use of sites, taking account of the views of local residents, landowners, special interest groups and decision makers. This can deliver significant benefits to wildlife and people. To date MPA has identified the establishment of at least **two National Nature Reserves, 22 local nature reserves, 15 field study and education centres and 13 nature trails within its membership but this picture is so**

**far incomplete. MPA members manage or control an area of land of over 115 square miles; equivalent to a National Park such as the Norfolk Broads.**

Site restoration and after-use options are being considered which look beyond what might be simply a good local fit to how to host habitats and species of principal importance for conservation on a national scale.

Landscape-scale approaches to managing the natural environment, that 'think big and join up' and go beyond site-based measures<sup>2</sup>, can deliver multiple social, environmental and economic benefits. Extensive ecological networks and mosaics of habitats will be more diverse, easier to manage and resilient to change. The mineral products industry is a key partner in delivering this bigger-picture approach through managing and restoring its sites, and through contributing to off-site conservation work.

Keeping track of performance and the contribution mineral products industries are making to biodiversity is crucial. Using biodiversity indicators we will measure the industry's contribution to UK BAP targets for priority species and habitats.

National and local policy makers need to continue to recognise the role that the industry can contribute to biodiversity objectives, for example through the planning system and by securing adequate funding for positive initiatives.

*Nature After Minerals* is a successful initiative designed to help identify and deliver biodiversity opportunities on former minerals sites. It is run by Natural England and the RSPB, and is actively supported by MPA. The project aims to capitalise on the opportunities provided by quarry restoration to make a significant contribution to national biodiversity targets.

<sup>2</sup> As recommended in the Natural Environment White Paper (DEFRA 2010) and 'Making Space for Nature' - A review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network (September 2010).



## The MPA Biodiversity Strategy - what will MPA do?

- 1 Extend** our knowledge of the wildlife interest and potential on and adjacent to active sites and how best to manage this, and maximise benefits through restoration and after-use, including initiating a comprehensive field study in 2011.
- 2 Share** best practice between our members and partners around the country through regular briefings and a specific working group.
- 3 Develop** our partnerships with conservation organisations, decision makers and individuals to ensure that we are delivering both what people want and wildlife needs. To support this work we will organise a biodiversity exchange in 2011 of all organisations with an interest in improving biodiversity associated with minerals operations.
- 4 Celebrate** our successes through an annual members' award for Biodiversity Achievement starting in 2011 and sponsored by Natural England.
- 5 Understand** our contribution to delivery of local, national and international biodiversity, including Biodiversity Action Plan targets and future improvement using a range of indicators.
- 6 Increase** our influence through contact with policy makers at all levels, including engagement with European initiatives in association with European Trade bodies.
- 7 Promote** biodiversity education using industry assets such as restored sites and field study and education centres to encourage out of classroom learning and to make the most of first-hand experiences of the natural environment.



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The Mineral Products Association is the trade association for the aggregates, asphalt, cement, concrete, lime, mortar and silica sand industries

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