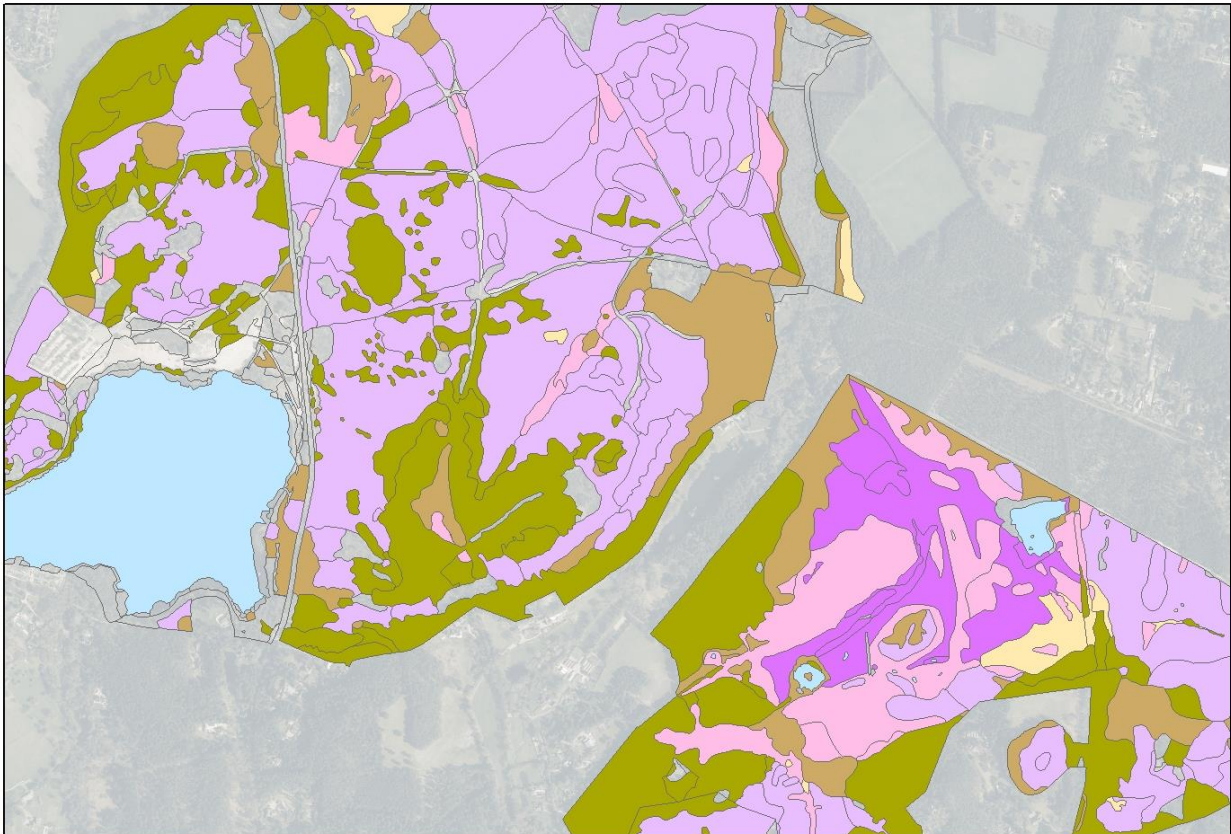# User Guide for Natural England's Priority Habitats' Inventory Version 3.0

November 2022

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What is the Priority Habitats Inventory?

Natural England's Priority Habitats' Inventory (PHI) is a spatial dataset that describes the geographic location and extent of 25 priority habitats in England. It maps most of the terrestrial semi-natural habitat types that were identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP).

The original list of UK BAP priority habitats was created between 1995 and 1999. In 2007 a revised list was produced following a 2-year review of UK BAP processes and priorities. The selection of UK habitats for the priority list followed consideration by expert working groups against a set of criteria, based on international obligations, risk, and the importance for key species.

All BAP Priority Habitats occurring in England are identified as habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity under section 41 of The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act.

What changes have been made to the PHI for version 3.0?

Over the past year we have been working to improve our systems for managing and updating the habitat data within the PHI. This has resulted in a number of significant changes and improvements, including:

- A new automated update process which will allow the PHI to be updated more frequently, accurately and easily
- A new attribute structure with fewer, clearer attributes which reflect the new update process
- Cleaner spatial data with fewer slivers and fewer unnecessary boundaries breaking up patches of continuous habitat
- The ability to map overlapping habitats where priority habitat definitions allow different priority habitats to coexist in the same place
- The ability to add supplementary information or subclassifications for habitats (such as woodland sub-types) as this becomes available

These changes have allowed us to increase the area of priority habitat mapped whilst reducing the overall size of the dataset. As a result, we have been able to publish version 3.0 of the PHI as a single data layer, in place of the 3-way geographic split used for previous versions.

Which habitats are included in the PHI?

The PHI currently maps 25 terrestrial priority habitats across England. It also includes four habitat classes which are not priority habitats, but which hold potential importance for conservation of biodiversity in England. These can indicate a mosaic of habitat which may contain priority habitats, have restoration potential and/or contribute to ecological networks. Where evidence indicates the presence of unmapped or fragmented priority habitats within such polygons, these are attributed as additional habitats.

Priority Habitat Name	HabCode
Blanket bog	BLBOG
Calaminarian grassland	CALAM
Coastal & floodplain grazing marsh	CFPGM
Coastal saltmarsh	SALTM
Coastal sand dunes	CSDUN
Coastal vegetated shingle	CVSHI
Deciduous woodland	DWOOD
Limestone pavements	LPAVE
Lowland calcareous grassland	LCGRA
Lowland dry acid grassland	LDAGR
Lowland fens	LFENS
Lowland heathland	LHEAT
Lowland meadows	LMEAD

Lowland raised bog	LRBOG
Maritime cliff & slope	MCSLP
Mountain heath & willow scrub	MHWSC
Mudflats	MUDFL
Purple moor grass & rush pastures	PMGRP
Reedbeds	RBEDS
Saline lagoons	SLAGO
Traditional orchards	TORCH
Upland calcareous grassland	UCGRA
Upland hay meadows	UHMEA
Upland heathland	UHEAT
Upland flushes, fens & swamps	UFFSW
Non-Priority Habitat Name	
Fragmented heath	FHEAT
Grass moorland	GMOOR
Good quality semi-improved grassland	GQSIG
No main habitat	NMHAB

Attributes of the PHI

In version 3.0 of the PHI we have introduced a new simplified set of attributes which are described in the table below

Alias	Field name	Example Values	Description
Main habitats	MainHabs	Deciduous woodland, Wood pasture and parkland	Name(s) of habitat(s) present in the polygon.
Habitat codes	HabCodes	DWOOD, WPPRK	Code(s) representing main habitat(s) present in the polygon
Habitat feature descriptions	FeatDesc	Wet woodland, Ponds	Additional information about the nature of the habitat or features present
Habitat feature codes	FeatCodes	WETWD, PONDS	Comma separated list of codes corresponding to the habitat feature descriptions
Other habitat classifications	OtherClass	Annex1(H91EO), UKHab(w1d)	Additional habitat classification information relating to main habitats

Additional habitats present	AddHabs	LFENS, LHEAT	List of codes for additional priority habitats that may be present within the polygon
Primary data sources	PrimSource	New Forest NVC Survey-2020(DWOOD), Aerial Photography(WPPRK)	A list of primary sources for the main habitats present in the polygon. With corresponding HabCode in brackets
Area in hectares	AreaHa	5.1	Polygon area in hectares rounded to one decimal place
Publication version	Version	Oct-22	Date of publication for the current PHI update: Month-Year
Unique ID	UID	PHIDXXXXXXXXX_YYYYYYYYYYY	Unique ID for the polygon based on XY location coordinates

Feature Descriptions and Codes

For some polygons the PHI contains additional information about the main habitats in the form of feature descriptions and corresponding feature codes. These are new fields to the PHI and currently only sparsely populated. We expect the use of these fields to expand over coming updates with new features and codes.

Features Description	Feature Code
Lowland beech and yew woodland	LBYWD
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	LMDWD
Upland birchwoods	UPBWD
Upland mixed ashwoods	UMAWD
Upland oakwood	UPOWD
Wet woodland	WETWD
Ancient semi natural woodland	ASNW
Planted ancient woodland site	PAWS

Further Information

If you have any questions or feedback regarding the Priority Habitats' Inventory, or if you have data you would like incorporated into the dataset, please contact the Habitats' Inventory Project Team at the following email address.

HabitatInventories@naturalengland.org.uk