

Company: Various companies
Location: Sandy, Bedfordshire, UK

Objective To understand the potential contribution of mineral sites in England to UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets for habitat creation.

Context Mineral sites are often ideal for creating wildlife habitats such as wetlands, heath, grasslands and woods. Whilst excellent examples showed the high-quality habitat that could be created on mineral sites, the scale of the potential contribution to national biodiversity targets was previously unclear. In 2005, the RSPB began investigating the potential for habitat creation on active mineral sites across England.

Solution Assessing the potential for creating priority habitat on each of 1300 sites was no easy task, but a Geographical Information System (GIS) made analysis on this scale possible. Information about active mineral sites was collected from across England, and combined with information about soil types and land-use in a GIS model which predicted the habitats that could be created on each of the sites.

A survey of mineral planners, industry and other stakeholders provided an insight into the factors preventing habitat creation on mineral sites, and possible solutions for overcoming these. The Quarry Products Association participated in the stakeholder engagement stages of the scheme.

Result It was found that significant areas of habitat could be created, with habitat creation targets potentially exceeded for nine of eleven priority habitats investigated. However, comparison of this potential with current end-use plans showed that quarries were to be restored to different end-uses.

The Nature After Minerals report presents these results, supported by recommendations of the changes required to facilitate further habitat creation on mineral sites. Easy access to essential information is one of the most important ways of encouraging habitat creation, and www.afterminerals.com was launched for that purpose. This website allows users to select any of the 1300 active mineral sites in England, see the habitats that could be created there, and how to implement their creation. A series of case studies emphasise the possibilities through real-life examples, many of which were provided by QPA members.

The next stage will be to support and facilitate delivery of this potential. The Nature After Minerals programme is a new partnership between the RSPB and Natural England. The two organisations will work with mineral planners and industry to help nature after minerals. Together, we will make substantial contributions to the habitats and species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets.

Partners The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Natural England.

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