

LIFE in the Ravines

Restoration of ravine woodland in the Peak District Dales SAC to mitigate effects of ash dieback

LIFE in the Ravines is a five-year partnership project to restore ravine woodland of European importance. The project focuses on the Peak District Dales Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in Derbyshire.

The project will achieve

- Woodland restoration through woodland management, tree planting and promoting trees showing natural tolerance to ash dieback – benefitting over 800 hectares of the SAC.
- Pioneering specialist techniques, including using drones for the first time in the Peak District to aid planting on the steep, rocky slopes of the Dales.
- Sharing lessons learned from the project – these will be useful for others battling ash dieback across Europe, especially in other ravine woodlands in the UK such as those of the Mendips.



Figure 1: project location

Ash dieback

Ash dieback disease, caused by a fungus lethal to ash trees, arrived in the Peak District in 2015. The area's ravine forests are dominated by ash, so the whole woodland area could be devastated without intervention. The woods already have high levels of infection and have lost mature trees. The loss of ash threatens all the woodland wildlife, from rare beetles and moths to birds such as redstarts.

LIFE in the Ravines (LIFE19 NAT/UK/000147) has received funding from the LIFE Programme which is the European Union's funding instrument for the environment. Funding is awarded to best practice, innovative and demonstration projects that contribute to the objectives of Natura 2000 (a network of the very best areas for wildlife across Europe).



Ravine woodland

The ash-dominated ravine woodlands found in the SAC's iconic steep limestone dales are the largest example of this European priority habitat in the UK. Though ash-dominated now, historically these woodlands would have been natural dominated by trees such as small and large-leaved lime, ash and wych elm, providing diverse woodland cover. Planting taking place through the project will restore these species, building resilience and adding to the diversity of wildlife in the woods.



Figure 2: Area of tree planting at Lathkill Dale

Sharing best practice

We will demonstrate successful restoration techniques for woodlands with ash dieback, including tree establishment in extreme site conditions and trialling tree seed spreading by drones.

Improving understanding and awareness

The Peak District's scenic ravines are treasured by locals and visitors alike. We will promote better understanding and awareness of the importance of the ravine woodlands and the impact of tree diseases, to a variety of audiences.



Figure 3: Tree planting on the steep slopes of the SAC

Contact

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Working in partnership with:



Figure 4: Visitors enjoying the scenery of Lathkill Dale

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