

*b i o d i v e r s i t y*



ACTION PLAN FOR LEEDS



## *A VISION FOR BIODIVERSITY IN LEEDS*

A range of habitats, characteristic of the landscapes of Leeds, supporting both typical and rare species, contributing to regional and national biodiversity and providing an attractive and sustainable natural environment for leisure, education and work



# *b i o d i v e r s i t y*



## ACTION PLAN FOR LEEDS

### *F o r e w o r d*

Biodiversity is one of the buzz words associated with sustainable development. Whilst many people perceive biodiversity to be a 'good thing' a lot of uncertainty surrounds it - what, exactly, is it?

Put simply, biodiversity is the 'living' part of the environment. It is the wealth and variety of all living things, including animals, fungi, plants and micro-organisms.

Today, more people are getting actively involved in caring for their local environment than ever before. Enjoying and conserving wildlife is a major pastime for many and is even the focus of many people's holidays.

The challenge for any local biodiversity action plan is to forge the linkages between the policies and scientific evidence, requiring plans and programmes of action, and the deep concern and appreciation that so many people have for a healthy, attractive and sustainable natural environment.

This biodiversity action plan is about that challenge. It is not a treatise, pondering all aspects of biodiversity in Leeds. It is about action, about achieving real physical changes to conserve the natural environment around us, to halt the decline of key habitats and species, and make good past losses.

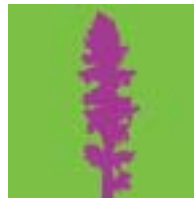
As much as the success of this plan will be measured by numbers of plants and animals or areas of habitat, it must also be assessed by the opportunities we have to enjoy countryside rich in wildlife and a city with accessible wild oases.

The challenge of this plan is not simply one to which conservationists, farmers and planners must respond. Through the implementation of the present detailed plans and the development of others, there will be opportunities for members of all the communities of Leeds to contribute to and achieve gains for their local environment and for themselves.

COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH MINKIN  
Executive Member  
Development and Sustainability



**A Vision for Biodiversity in Leeds**



**Foreword**



**Introduction**

What is Biodiversity  
 Biodiversity in Leeds  
 The national and international contexts  
 Purpose of the BAP  
 Biodiversity and sustainability  
 Setting priorities for action  
 Responsibilities and resources  
 Roles of the Steering Group Members



**Natural Areas in Leeds**



Coal Measures  
 Southern Magnesian Limestone  
 Southern Pennines  
 Pennine Dales Fringe



**Habitat Action Plans**

Magnesian limestone grassland  
 Reedbed  
 Lowland wet grassland  
 Hedgerow and field margin



**Species Action Plans**



Pasqueflower  
 Thistle broomrape  
 Harvest mouse  
 Pipistrelle bat  
 Atlantic stream crayfish  
 Great crested newt



**Appendices**



Contact addresses  
 Candidate vascular plant species  
 Candidate birds species  
 Bibliography  
 Glossary

### What is biodiversity?

***The term 'biodiversity' has become commonly used in recent years, yet many people remain uncertain as to exactly what it means.***

Put simply, biodiversity is the 'living' part of the environment.

It is the wealth and variety of all living things, including animals, fungi, plants and micro-organisms, but also the communities and habitats they form together. It includes not only the variety that exists between different species but also the variation and differences between individuals of the same species.

The species and habitats that make up global biodiversity represent vital natural resources because of the foodstuffs, medicines and materials they provide and the genetic resources offer. Even more fundamental is the role that living things play in regulating the atmosphere and climate and in breaking-down and recycling waste. The aesthetic and spiritual value of the living world is also important and there is wide acceptance of the obligation to pass on to future generations the natural wealth that we have inherited. In addition, there is a moral argument to conserve biodiversity for its own sake.

Biodiversity is not just about rare or threatened species and habitats - it is equally concerned with ensuring that widespread and common species remain an integral part of a sustainable natural environment.

### Biodiversity in Leeds

***The biodiversity of Leeds is a major component of the district's varied landscapes. From the limestone ridge in the east, to the open moorland in the north-west and the urban core of Leeds itself; each landscape supports its own distinctive habitats and species which contribute much to local distinctiveness and character.***

These broad areas, which are characterised by different suites of habitats and species, extend beyond the Leeds district. English Nature, the government body responsible for nature conservation, has produced a map of such zones, or 'Natural Areas', for England as a whole and this provides a framework for identifying the local significance of particular species and habitats, putting them into a wider geographical context.

Within Leeds there are parts of four Natural Areas: the Coal Measures; the Southern Magnesian Limestone; the Pennine Dales Fringe; and the Southern Pennines. A brief profile of each of these Natural Areas in Leeds is given in section 2 together with a list of key features and notable species.

### The National and International Contexts

***Ultimately, the preparation of local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) reflects the need for action that has been recognised at the international level.***

Under Article 6A of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which the UK Government signed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, each Contracting Partner is required to 'develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity'.

In January 1994, the first UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) was published as a major step toward meeting this commitment.

The UK BAP outlined the scope of action within the UK, and by the UK abroad. It identified 59 broad targets to be pursued over 20 years. However, this document is not the final, definitive statement on biodiversity in the UK but serves as a starting point for an on-going process. Of particular significance is the development of action plans for individual species and habitats. The implementation of such plans and the achievement of their targets depends on local action. Local BAPs provide the mechanism for realising such action.

The UK Steering Group Report, published in 1995, identified a total of 1250 species, now categorised as of national 'conservation concern', with just over 400 of these classed as 'priority species'. These species lists and the lists of key habitats have been used in conjunction with the Natural Area profiles and other local survey information to identify priorities for action in Leeds. The initial tranche of action plans deals with some of these, including those where programmes of work are already well progressed; further species and habitats will be dealt with in later tranches.

### *Purpose of the BAP*

*Although 'biodiversity is a relatively new concept, much of the work involved in biodiversity action plans is already central to nature conservation in the UK. Biodiversity action plans provide a new, target-led focus for nature conservation and seek to include a wider range of active partners. As such, the BAP approach provides a new opportunity to pursue clearly defined targets for specific habitats and species through planned programmes of action.*

The publication of the Biodiversity Action Plan for Leeds is the launch of an on-going process. Further tranches of action plans will be produced for local priority species and habitats, adding to the initial ten plans. The BAP will also be updated with progress on the implementation of the individual plans.

At the heart of the biodiversity process is recognition of the need to take positive, practical action to reverse declines in species and habitats and restore them as key elements in a healthy, diverse and sustainable environment, across rural and urban areas.

The Leeds BAP identifies the action that is needed and the role of lead agencies. The species and habitats identified are of national, regional or local importance, but all are of special significance within the Leeds area. For some, the proposed work will have an impact primarily on their condition or status. For others, there will be wider benefits for both people and wildlife, due to associated environmental improvements.

### *Biodiversity & Sustainability*

*Biodiversity is a vital component of a sustainable environment and therefore a key test of sustainable development.*

Sustainable development can be regarded as having three complementary aspects: environmental, social and economic. Besides the environmental importance of biodiversity, it is also important for, and relevant to, social and economic interests.

There is an increasing appreciation of the benefits of contact with nature in terms of people's well-being, including health, emotional and developmental benefits. The use of the natural environment as a major component of education for sustainable development is also

well established. In Leeds, the economic benefits of biodiversity are largely linked to the value of high quality environments, both where people live and where they work.

### *Setting priorities for action*

*A major role of the BAP is to maximise the effectiveness of resources. The species and habitats included are those for which action is needed where resources will have greatest effect. This does not mean that species and habitats not identified in the plan will be ignored. Rather, they will continue to form part of the wider remits of the Steering Group members.*

Auditing is a key part of the process of identifying local priorities for biodiversity action. Audits of local biodiversity are inherently imperfect because of the number of species, the extent of the area to be assessed, and the dynamic nature of the environment. A good deal is already known about many aspects of biodiversity in Leeds. Phase I Habitat Survey, providing a broad overview of the habitats of the whole Leeds district, has been carried out twice, most recently in 1986/7. Many areas have subsequently been surveyed in more detail and information for key sites and habitats is periodically reviewed. A long tradition of natural history recording has culminated in a number of important publications, including the West Yorkshire Plant Atlas (1994)



and the Atlas of Breeding Birds in the Leeds Area 1987-1991 (1994). In addition, the reports published by organisations such as the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union and the Leeds Birdwatchers' Club provide regular updates and summaries of records.

Where the local extent or status of priority habitats and species is unclear, survey and monitoring will be important elements of the appropriate local action plans.

National priority habitats and species that are found within the region are identified in the Biodiversity Audit of Yorkshire and the Humber (1999). Besides these, other, locally-occurring species are of importance because of the proportion of the national or regional populations they represent, or because of their geographical significance in a wider distribution.

Many species will benefit from action to conserve and restore key habitats. For example, many rare or scarce wildflower species will benefit from the management and conservation of magnesian limestone grassland, as will many insects and other invertebrates. However, in some instances, species are so rare (or even locally extinct), or are subject to such pressures, that additional, specific measures are required. This is true of the pasqueflower, which is unlikely to achieve a viable population again in Yorkshire without direct intervention to increase its numbers. It is also true of species such as thistle broomrape, which, although associated with magnesian limestone, is generally found in rank grassland of low conservation value that is not a candidate for a habitat action plan.

### Responsibilities & Resources

***The development of a BAP for Leeds is not the start of an entirely new process. It is building upon a broad base of activity, including the wealth of community-based groups of local people working as volunteers to improve their local environment, and the fostering of sympathetic management of the farmed countryside through schemes such as Countryside Stewardship.***

The challenge is to further develop the linkages between these initiatives and the setting and achievement of targets for biodiversity that are locally meaningful, as well as regionally and nationally relevant.

The BAP process involves a more empirical approach to measuring the success and progress of work on habitats and species. But allied with this must be a full appreciation of the significant, but often nebulous, benefits that achieving targets for biodiversity will bring.

To succeed, the BAP for Leeds must secure the resources for each consecutive tranche of plans. This will involve not only maximising the availability of resources from traditional sources, but engaging new partners, such as local businesses, in the biodiversity action process.

Ultimately, the BAP for Leeds is about local people achieving local action for their local wildlife.



### Roles of the Steering Group Members



English Nature is the statutory body that advises government and others on nature conservation. It has an involvement at a national level in drawing-up action plans for species and habitats identified as of national priority, and is acting as the lead body for some of these. English Nature sees Local Biodiversity Action Plans as playing a key role in the implementation of national plans, as well as raising local awareness of issues and setting targets for locally important species and habitats. English Nature is committed to the support of local biodiversity groups and has allocated officer time and some limited funds to the development of such groups in the region.



### ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

The Environment Agency is committed to playing a full and active part in the implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. A wide range of Agency activities at both a national and local level contribute to Biodiversity Action Plan targets. These range from general environmental protection afforded by day to day regulatory operational and advisory activities, through to initiatives and projects with the specific objective of benefiting a particular species or habitat.

Strategic programmes of environmental protection and improvement will deliver benefits for biodiversity in general and for priority species such as the native Atlantic stream crayfish. More specifically the Agency undertakes a range of practical conservation measures, surveys and site enhancements, often in collaboration with others, to deliver particular requirements of individual species and habitat action plans, for example creation of reedbed habitats. The Agency also has an ongoing programme of R&D projects including studentships and PhD studies to address research needs identified in the action plans. Other work in support of BAPs includes raising awareness and the production of information leaflets.



### LEEDS

#### CITY COUNCIL

Leeds City Council has a direct role to play through the management of parks, open space and woodland across the district. It is responsible for a large proportion of the district's designated nature conservation sites, from internationally and nationally important sites to those of regional or local importance.

In carrying out its responsibilities as a local planning authority, the City Council is in a position to make a significant contribution to implementing the Biodiversity Action Plan for Leeds. Government Planning Policy Guidance (PPG9: Nature Conservation) requires nature conservation interests to be taken into account where relevant to local decisions. Nature conservation objectives are reflected in the Revised Draft Unitary Development Plan and can be a significant material consideration in determining many planning applications.

Site and species protection policies, negotiation as part of the development control process and the use of planning conditions and agreements all provide mechanisms to protect, manage and enhance existing habitats of wildlife importance and establish new areas for wildlife.

The City Council can also contribute to action for biodiversity through life-long learning and initiatives to achieve sustainable development in areas such as drainage, housing and development. Community planning provides an opportunity to build biodiversity into such work at the local level.



*Planting at Golden Acre Park*





**Royal Society for the  
Protection of Birds (RSPB)**

The RSPB has been greatly involved in the biodiversity process for many years. It is one of the six voluntary conservation bodies that comprised the Biodiversity Challenge Group, which published the first edition of Biodiversity Challenge in 1993 as a contribution to the production of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, published by the Government in 1994. The RSPB is also closely involved in the Local Agenda 21 initiative and is part of the UK Biodiversity Steering Group. It provides the lead partner role for 26 UK BAP Species Action Plans: 24 bird, one invertebrate and one vascular plant species. Although the RSPB's work clearly has a bird focus, it embraces the requirements of all flora and fauna in policy and practice - most visibly through its reserves network.



*Newton Ings, part of Fairburn Ings Nature Reserve*



**Yorkshire West Riding Farming and Wildlife  
Advisory Group (FWAG)**

FWAG's role is to provide, free, first advisory visits to any landowner within the Leeds District that requests it, to discuss the conservation of wildlife and the landscape. It will do this by tailoring farm conservation advice to target the species and habitats set out in the Leeds Biodiversity Action Plan in key habitat areas such as the magnesian limestone, where a promotional flyer and farm walks have been used to encourage farm visits in key areas.

FWAG provides one-to-one, on-site advice, covering the whole farm, to help landowners identify opportunities for conservation on their holdings, guiding them through the process of appropriate grant applications if necessary.

FWAG has a vital role to play in promoting the Leeds Biodiversity Action Plan in the wider countryside. Because of its charitable status and specialism in conservation advice to farmers, it is in a unique position to provide the advice necessary to help farmers implement the Plan on their land. Farmers are the main landusers of the wider countryside around Leeds and their support is crucial to the successful implementation of the Plan.

**Statement of support**



**Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food**

MAFF supports the National UK Biodiversity Action Plan and sees Local Plans as the means of delivery of the National Plan. MAFF's main means of delivery of biodiversity within the Leeds area will be through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Wherever possible Countryside Stewardship will aim to deliver BAP targets wherever these meet those of the Target Areas but it should be noted that the scheme is dependent upon voluntary uptake and fixed resources. Wherever possible, Countryside Stewardship will take into consideration Local Biodiversity issues where these do not differ widely from the aims of the Scheme or National Biodiversity Action Plan. Biodiversity habitats or species now contribute towards the site scoring and evaluation of Countryside Stewardship applications and hence aid important sites in the selection process.