

Urban habitats

(Built up areas and gardens)

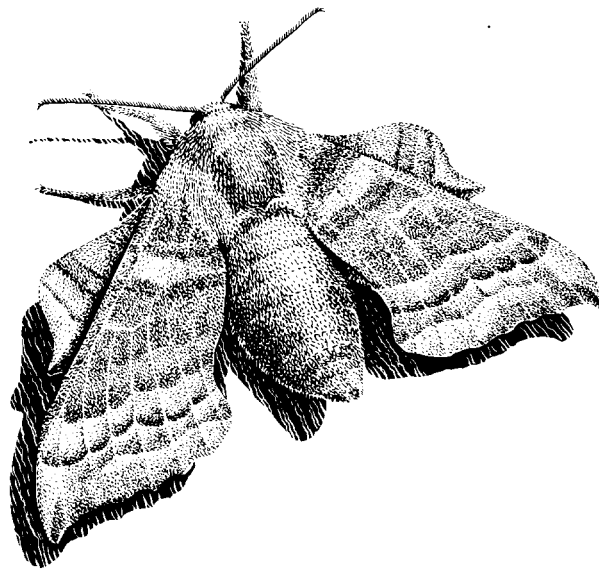
Biodiversity Action Plan





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1. Introduction

The challenge is to protect and enhance the diversity of wildlife in our urban environments, and to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of wildlife and the relationships between species.

The diversity of nature is an important measure of the quality of life, which should be designed into the fabric of our built up areas for its own sake and for the benefit and enjoyment of people.

2. Vision

People will recognise that they coexist with nature and that open spaces of all kinds are important in fostering biodiversity and enhancing human health and well being.

Built up areas meet our living, consumer and business needs and allow everyone direct contact with the natural world.

Everyone living and working in built up areas has easy access to a network and range of open spaces with a variety of wildlife. People participate in caring for their local environment.

3. Scope of the Urban Habitats Biodiversity Action Plan

An important characteristic of urban areas is the presence of a mosaic of habitats that can be found within sites and across the urban landscape. Areas of open land, water, buildings and hard surfaces are all capable of supporting life, and provide places for animals to shelter and forage. Urban habitats are also an important resource for people living and working in the urban environment and provide direct contact with nature.

The definition of urban habitats below is based on one which can be found in the UK Steering Group Report.

Urban habitats (Built up areas and gardens) includes urban and rural settlements, farm buildings, caravan parks and other man-made built structures such as industrial estates, retail parks, waste and derelict ground, urban parkland and transport infrastructure within the planning boundary of a settlement as defined in the Local Plans. It also includes domestic gardens, allotments and amenity grassland.

Important urban habitats in the County have been identified in the framework document Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Action Plan — A Way Forward . Therefore this action plan covers the following habitats:

- c Allotments;
- c Shelter belts; (linear planted features of varying width predominantly composed of trees)
- c Gardens;
- c Orchards;
- c River corridors;

- c Canals;
- c Wetlands (wet grassland, fen, marsh & carr);
- c Ponds, lakes and ditches;
- c Woodland scrub and parkland;
- c Hedgerows;
- c Veteran and street trees;
- c Heathland;
- c Grasslands (acid, neutral & calcareous);
- c Churchyards and cemeteries;
- c Parks and open spaces;
- c Playing fields and playgrounds;
- c School grounds;
- c Railway land;
- c Buildings and other urban structures such as walls, bridges;
- c Incidental planting along transport and service corridors, public plantings in town centres, industrial, commercial and residential estates;
- c Sites awaiting development.

Woodland, scrub and parkland is covered in more detail in the action plan for Woodland habitats. Hedgerows and neutral grassland is included in the Farmland habitats action plan. Heathland, Acid grassland and Calcareous grassland are subject to their own individual action plan because they are geographically defined due to the underlying geology.

All of the above wetland habitats are covered in the Biodiversity Action Plan for Waterways and wetlands. References to ponds and ditches in the agricultural landscape can be found in the Farmland Biodiversity Action Plan.

Key species of Urban habitats

Urban habitats of Bedfordshire and Luton provide refuges for some of the species that are under pressure in rural areas. They may also allow some species such as great crested newts to meet all their requirements in a small area. This habitat action plan will be supported by a number of species action plans. Those species which will have action plans written for them have been listed in the Complementary Plans section at the rear of this document.

A variety of species can be found within the urban area, a selection of which are below. The list contains those that are national priorities for conservation action, highlighted in bold.

Myotis daubentonii Daubenton s bat
Plecotus auritus Brown long-eared bat
Nyctalus noctula Noctule bat
Pipistrellus pipistrellus Pipistrelle bat
***Lutra lutra* Otter**
***Arvicola terrestris* Water vole**

Continued.....





***Dianthus armeria* Deptford pink**

Bunium bulbocastanum Great pignut

Alcedo atthis Kingfisher

Aythya ferina Pochard

Falco tinnunculus Kestrel

***Emberiza schoeniclus* Reed bunting**

Riparia riparia Sand martin

Gallinago gallinago Snipe

Aythya fuligula Tufted duck

Rallus aquaticus Water rail

Picus viridis Green woodpecker

Luscinia megarhynchos Nightingale

Locustella naevia Grasshopper warbler

Vanellus vanellus Lapwing

***Carduelis cannabina* Linnet**

Alauda arvensis Skylark

***Turdus philomelos* Song thrush**

Sturnus vulgaris Starling

Charadrius hiaticula Ringed plover

***Muscicapa striata* Spotted flycatcher**

Prunella modularis Dunnock

Passer domesticus House sparrow

Brachytron pratense Hairy dragonfly

Platynemesis pennipes White legged damselfly

***Triturus cristatus* Great crested newt**

Natrix natrix Grass snake

Lacerta vivipara Common lizard

Rana temporaria Common frog

Aspicilia subcircinata a lichen

Caloplaca variabilis a lichen

Lepraria lesainii a lichen

4. Current status of Urban habitats

Urban habitats are diverse in nature. For convenience they have been divided into four broad categories (refer to the definitions below). There is much overlap between the categories a single site may contain any number or combination of habitats. For example, an urban park could contain areas of encapsulated woodland and neutral grassland, amenity grassland, a ponds and or stream.

1. **encapsulated countryside**
2. **managed greenspace**
3. **naturally regenerating habitats**
4. **urban wetlands**

Current National status

Urban habitats can support quite high biodiversity in relatively small areas. Blocks and linear corridors of habitat provide important linkages between habitats for mobile species, allowing movement within an otherwise hostile environment and sometimes connecting with larger areas of semi-natural

habitat in the wider countryside. This also provides people with a link to wildlife that might otherwise be unavailable.

The character of urban areas is continually changing and urban habitats should be recognised, valued, protected and managed as a vital component of the urban landscape.

The conservation importance of urban habitats therefore, lies as much in the opportunities that they provide for people to have close contact with wildlife as in the protection of scarce species.

Encapsulated countryside

Areas of semi-natural habitat that persist from a more rural past. Tracts of encapsulated land include woodland, scrub and parkland, hedgerows, heathland, grasslands (acid, neutral and calcareous) and wetlands, which through appropriate management continue to support essentially wild plants and animals.

Many areas of encapsulated land are now in sympathetic management and exist within a framework of formally designated public open space. They may have survived by chance or design. Once encapsulated the habitats are subject to different pressures such as increased disturbance from recreational activities and the ecology of sites may alter. However it is still possible to see from previously encapsulated countryside such as **commons** and **old parkland** an indication of its history through relic flora, which have persisted under more recent management regimes.

Managed greenspace

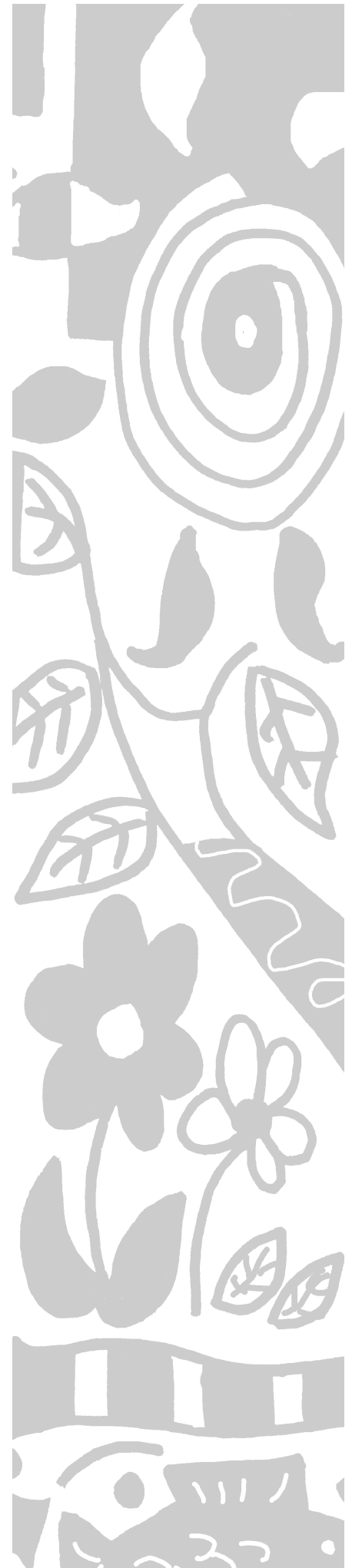
Managed greenspace refers to areas managed for recreation or amenity. Some managed greenspace is privately owned. Areas open and accessible on foot to large numbers of people are referred to as **Accessible natural greenspace**.

Managed greenspace includes a variety of habitats from allotments, parks, and private gardens to the less intensively managed parts of school grounds, golf courses and incidental pocket sized plots alongside waterways, transport and service corridors, and planting in public spaces.

Often deliberately landscaped and planted managed areas can support diverse wildlife communities. This can be enhanced through the adoption of more sensitive and informal management.

Urban **parks** for example with lawns that are mown frequently have little value to biodiversity yet a change in the cutting regime or corners left uncut can enhance the biodiversity value. Increasingly areas are being less intensively managed for their wildlife interest with interpretation for the public to explain why the change from a tidy landscape. **Parks** often contain large numbers of trees (some veteran) both native and non-native depending on the land use history, which are important for invertebrates and bats. **Old individual trees, semi natural and ancient woodland** are significant in terms of habitat and genetic diversity.

Domestic gardens, school grounds, community areas and housing developments provide opportunities for many species. The mosaics of lawns, shrubberies, rockeries, trees, vegetable patches, fruit trees, bushes, hedges, walls, ponds and compost heaps vary in size, age and structure and provide tracts of rich habitat for finding shelter and food. These areas provide numerous nectar and pollen sources for insects and in turn good hunting





grounds for birds and bats. Other species which frequently use managed greenspace are foxes, hedgehogs, songbirds, frogs, newts and grass snakes. Nationally domestic gardens are thought to account for approximately 1 million hectares of lawns, hedges, flowerbeds, fruit trees and ponds illustrating their value to biodiversity.

Road verges are abundant in an urban context yet much literature concentrates solely on rural verges. In urban areas verges are severely affected by pollution from car exhausts de-icing salt and over management for safety reasons. The opportunity to enhance their value for biodiversity exists.

Street trees both native and non-native support many species of invertebrate and birds. They also moderate the urban climate, filter pollution and dust, reduce noise and provide a direct contact with nature. Trees suffer from pollution and drought stress, root damage as a result of cable installations and utilities repair.

Allotments can cover notable areas of land in the urban area and are found almost everywhere. They are important for birds, insects, small mammals, slow worms and grass snakes which use compost heaps as breeding sites. The associated buildings and boundary walls or hedges are also valuable.

Churchyards and cemeteries include areas of old grassland and woodland surviving with newer communities of plants. The mixture of old and new habitats, closely mown grass, overgrown corners and stone based habitats provide and support a rich variety of wildlife. Churchyards are particularly noted for mosses and lichens.

Naturally regenerating habitats

Naturally regenerating habitats occur on disturbed ground, which have been colonised spontaneously by plants and animals.

The value of habitats along **canals** and **railways** are being recognised. Plant communities comprising of native and exotic species have colonised the rubble of demolition sites, disturbed ground and industrial wastes. The new habitats and species assemblages that are arising provide a rich wildlife resource.

Land left for redevelopment is being colonised naturally by garden escapes and natives. Many sites are valuable for supporting pioneer plant and animal communities however temporary they may be. Succession to scrub and secondary woodland may occur. Insect life can be abundant and sites can provide refuges for species declining in rural areas such as song thrush and great crested newts. Attitudes are changing and the potential biodiversity of these sites is being recognised. However information and criteria to assess them are not always available.

Urban wetlands

Waterways link areas of other semi-natural habitat and form mixed habitats through urban environments. Their value to biodiversity will depend upon water quality, quantity and human disturbance. **Canals** are also a valuable wildlife resource and represent some of the oldest structures in towns.

Fen, carr, wet grassland and **marshes** associated with the river corridors may have been encapsulated. They add to the diversity of urban habitats and may support scarce species or those usually found in a more rural setting.

Amenity lakes and **reservoirs** can be under heavy recreational demand but support a wide range of wildfowl throughout the year especially in winter. **Ponds**, either created or encapsulated can be of significant wildlife value. Due to the decline of ponds in the agricultural landscape urban ponds have become valuable breeding grounds for the common frog and species of newt.

Current Local status

All of the urban areas in the County contain a range of habitats but they will vary in their importance, size, structure and value to people and biodiversity.

Information is available for Bedford and Luton where surveys have been undertaken, other urban areas have not been subject to the same level of survey and data do not exist. The urban area of Bedford was surveyed in 1989 and sites of nature conservation importance identified. Bedford has 5 urban Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), 7 County Wildlife Sites (CWS) and 1 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

An urban Phase I habitat survey was completed for Luton in 1995 and over 30 key sites were surveyed to Phase II standard. Luton Borough has a total of 16 CWSs and 2 LNRs; one of which is a SSSI. Both Bedford and Luton Borough Councils have Nature Conservation Strategies outlining policies for the protection and enhancement of sites.

Encapsulated countryside

Development has in the past encapsulated countryside across the county. The current rate and the area being encapsulated are unknown, but with the need for more housing, development pressure is likely to increase.

Examples of encapsulated land include

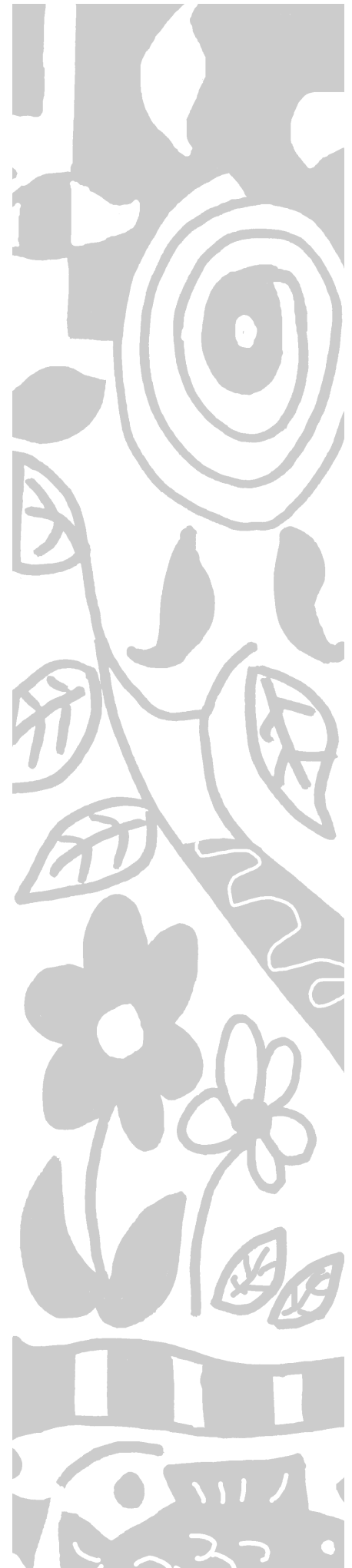
- c 82 ha of calcareous grassland can be found around Luton. Warden and Galley Hills (47ha), Dallow Downs (39 ha) and Bradgers Hill (10ha). A hedgerow survey carried out in 1995 identified 90 miles of hedgerow within the urban area. Luton Borough also has areas of woodland for example Bramingham Wood (17.5 ha) and Slaughters Wood (4 ha).
- c Leighton Linlade Town Council own 30 acres of flood meadow along the River Ouzel.
- c Heathland at Cooper's Hill CWS, Ampthill approx. 30 acres. Ampthill Park, Ampthill approx. 160 acres contains large areas of acid grassland.
- c Fenlake Meadows LNR, Putnoe Wood LNR, Mowsbury Hill LNR, Foster Hill Cemetery CWS and Cleat Hill CWS. Stretches of the River Great Ouse CWS also exist in a semi-natural state through the urban area. In total these areas amount to approx. 53 ha. The length of surviving hedgerow in Bedford is unknown.

Managed greenspace

The extent and status of managed greenspace in the County is unknown. However it is clear that there are many different types of habitats in existence suitable for a range of species.

Examples of managed greenspace include

- c Luton has approx. 584 ha of open space of which approx. 331 ha has nature conservation value. Within Luton parkland accounts for largest habitat totalling 125 ha, Stockwood Park incl. golf course (99 ha), Wardown Park (20ha) and Peoples Park (6 ha). Cemeteries and churchyards account for 10 ha, Church cemetery (5 ha), General cemetery (4 ha), Biscot Churchyard (1 ha). Street trees, allotments and private gardens have significant value for wildlife in the urban area.
- c Biggleswade has approx. 54 ha of urban greenspace the largest a school (approx. 11 ha).
- c Bedford has approx. 435 ha of open space including 6 major parks, 2 country parks, 45 play areas and a Victorian riverside embankment with formal garden. Mowsbury golf course (61 ha) has significant biodiversity interest and the street trees of Bedford are also a significant feature of the town.





Naturally regenerating habitats

The extent of this type of habitat is also unknown. The value to biodiversity is recognised but a comprehensive audit and assessment is unavailable.

These types of sites are often subject to re-development proposals and in the absence of accepted criteria to assess them for protection, many sites have been lost.

- c The size and quality of naturally regenerating habitats within Luton is unknown. However, these types of areas may have developed over many years and have well established communities of significant wildlife interest in the urban area.
- c Numerous sand pits can be found around Leighton Linlade town and are good examples of naturally regenerating habitats.
- c Bedford has extensive areas of railway land supporting rich ruderal communities. Old railway lines converted into cycletrack provide a corridor of regenerating habitat. Old allotment sites contain mosaics of grassland and scrub e.g. Park Wood LNR and Cut Throat Lane. Hill Rise LNR (1 ha) has been established on a former building site.

Urban wetlands

Bedfordshire and Luton has four river catchments, Great Ouse, Ivel, Flit and Hiz, Lea and Ouzel. A variety of associated wetland habitats can be found along them. Sections of the main river and their tributaries pass through urban areas adding to habitat and species diversity of those areas.

Examples of urban wetlands include

- c Luton has various lakes, ponds, open water and water edge associated with the River Lea and its tributaries. Wardown Park Lake is approx. 1 ha in size and river margins account for approx. 28 ha. Wetland habitats account for approx. 12ha, notable sites are Leagrave Marsh CWS (1.5 ha) and Cowslip Meadow CWS (1.5 ha).
- c The River Ouzel and Grand Union Canal is an important wildlife corridor through Leighton Linlade, supporting a range of associated wetland habitats. Other examples include Clipstone Brook and Tiddenfoot Waterside Park CWS.
- c The River Great Ouse and its associated backwaters form a major habitat corridor through Bedford. Associated habitats include Queens Marsh, a large reedbed, pond and sedge bed on contaminated land, and marsh at Austin Cannons Meadow CWS. Major wetlands include Fenlake Meadows LNR (20 ha) a traditional flood meadow and Priory Country Park (100 ha) of mature flooded gravel pits and riverine habitats. Bedford also has numerous urban and garden ponds and ditches.

5. Current factors affecting Urban habitats

Factors or issues affecting urban habitats and species in Bedfordshire and Luton:

- c Lack of knowledge about the status and value to biodiversity of urban habitats especially naturally regenerating sites;
- c Lack of a centralised accessible database to collect, handle, manage, analyse and communicate survey data;

- c Limited statutory protection of sites which are not of national significance within the Local Plans. The difficulty in protecting some urban areas and lack of accepted criteria to assess sites of local importance;
- c Poor public perception of the biodiversity value of sites especially those on open and disturbed ground;
- c Public awareness — not all messages are communicated effectively. It is important to raise awareness to improve community involvement and dispel misconceptions. Informal and formal education channels can be used to gain understanding. Providing opportunities for people to be involved in managing their natural environment is vital;
- c Public and corporate commitment to the protection and management of urban habitats;
- c Over management and simplification of urban parks to produce a tidy landscape including misconceptions of the public that areas managed for wildlife are neglected;
- c Conflicting pressures for land use in particular housing leading to the loss and fragmentation of urban habitats;
- c Impact of new development on the flood plain including the use of water resources and flooding risk;
- c Pollution of the air, land and water;
- c Lack of human, financial and site resources;
- c Inappropriate management of existing sites and features;
- c Invasive species and inappropriate plantings;
- c Social problems including fear of personal safety, litter, vandalism and dog fouling;
- c Removal and/or renovation of built structures that offer nesting or roosting sites for birds and bats;
- c Lack of contact with private landowners of County Wildlife Sites in order to promote sympathetic management;
- c Access problems associated with too much or too little. The need to improve access in some areas to ensure that the population have a local natural greenspace has to be balanced with the management of access in other areas to limit damage and disturbance to wildlife. This can refer to physical access, interpretation requirements and equal opportunities of access;
- c Allotment forestry and economic management of agricultural land e.g. grazing, coppice, an opportunity to enhance urban biodiversity and quality of life;
- c Wildlife gardening an opportunity to promote wildlife benefit, involve local communities, and increase peoples contact with and awareness of nature.





6. Current action

Site protection

Nationally important sites are given protection as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are declared by the Local Authority and are managed for wildlife and public amenity. County Wildlife Sites (CWS) are assessed against set criteria and identified. These sites have no statutory protection but are given a degree of security by including them in the Local Plans. Green corridors such as road verges and hedgerows, are identified in some urban areas as important links to wider countryside.

The 1995 Environment Act saw the introduction of the Hedgerow Regulations in 1997. This provides a means for Local Authorities to prevent the destruction of important hedgerows under a number of selection criteria that take account of historical and ecological features. These regulations are currently under review and one aspect being considered is the protection currently offered to urban hedgerows and how it could be improved.

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are probably used more often in urban areas and are an invaluable way to protect important trees and woodland.

Management

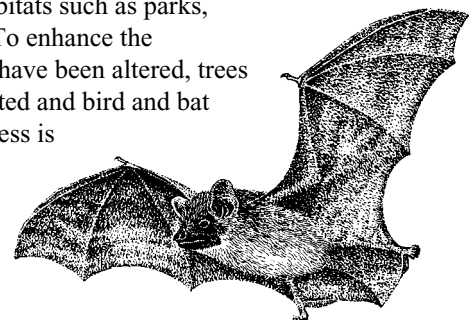
Bedfordshire and Luton are fortunate to have a variety of sources of potential advice and assistance. The Wildlife Trust, BTCV, The North Chilterns Trust, Landscape 2000, Ivel Valley Countryside Project (IVCP) and The Greensand Trust can offer advice on the management of urban habitats. These organisations also improve access to and provide opportunities for individual and local communities to become involved in management of local areas.

Bedford Borough Council has been very successful in setting up Friends Groups to encourage the local community to manage local greenspace. BTCV and Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity encourage local people to become involved and take responsibility for Millennium Greens and Village Design Statements.

Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs) exist for the Upper Lea and Upper and lower reaches of River Ouse. These plans include initiatives for the conservation and creation of habitat, sympathetic flood defence and integrated river basin management. The Environment Agency also provides information and advice in flood control, pollution and conservation.

The Local Agenda 21 process has been progressed well in Bedfordshire and both Luton and Bedford have produced Local Agenda 21 Action Plans. The Big Challenge part of this process has led a number of campaigns aimed at the public to raise awareness of biodiversity, water, waste and energy conservation.

A number of statutory and non-statutory bodies have encouraged the sympathetic management of urban habitats such as parks, churchyards, woodlands and ponds. To enhance the biodiversity of areas, cutting regimes have been altered, trees have been pollarded, new habitat created and bird and bat boxes erected. Education and awareness is important and many organisations have provided interpretation to explain habitat management regimes, produced leaflets and information packs and organised events, guided walks and talks.



7. Action plan objectives and targets

The objectives in the action plan are broad, cover habitat conservation, restoration and expansion, and underpin the Vision.

The targets should be measurable and specific to enable the monitoring of the proposed actions. The development of far more reaching targets depends on further investigation, a key element of the action plan programme.

Objectives

- A. Enhance the extent and biodiversity value of urban habitats through appropriate and long term sustainable management;
- B. Promote the creation of new habitats and the linking of habitats;
- C. Identify and protect important sites within the urban area for people and biodiversity;
- D. Monitor and evaluate the success of the actions in this plan in meeting its targets;
- E. Increase accessibility to greenspace and use by local people;
- F. Increase community involvement in and raise awareness of the value of urban biodiversity.

Targets

The first three targets have been extracted from English Nature's leaflet, A Space for Nature 1996. (Also referred to English Nature's Research Reports 153 and 256).

***Accessible natural greenspace is land, water or geological features which have been naturally colonised by plants and animals and which are accessible on foot to large numbers of people (English Nature 1996)**

- A. An accessible informal greenspace* less than 300 metres (in a straight line) from home;
- B. Statutory Local Nature Reserves provided at a minimum level of 1 hectare per thousand people;
- C. At least one accessible 20 hectare site within 2 kilometres of home; one accessible 100 hectare site within 5 kilometres of home; and one 500 hectare site within 10 km of home.
- D. 60% of schools to have their own wildlife area by 2010;
- E. 50% of churchyards and cemeteries managed for biodiversity by 2010;
- F. One new green burial site to be established in each open cemetery;
- G. Increase the number of hours spent working on urban sites by volunteers for biodiversity by 25% by 2005;
- H. 25% of the total area of amenity land to be managed for biodiversity by 2005;
- I. Increase by 10% the number of appropriate trees in urban areas by 2010 with a minimum of 1 tree per 100 population;
- J. Every accessible informal greenspace over 1ha to have interpretation by 2005;
- K. All Local Authority County Wildlife Sites to become Local Nature Reserves by 2010.



8. Proposed action

Representatives from the organisations listed below have signed up to undertake work that will help contribute to the actions put forward by the Urban BAP Group:

Abbreviations

ATC	Amphill Town Council
BBC	Bedford Borough Council
BCC	Bedfordshire County Council
BLWWG	Bedfordshire and Luton Wildlife Working Group
BM	Bedford Museum
BNHS	Bedfordshire Natural History Society
BTCV	BTCV
DTC	Dunstable Town Council
FMV	Forest of the Marston Vale
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
GST	The Greensand Trust
IVCP	Ivel Valley Countryside Project
LBC	Luton Borough Council
MBDC	Mid Bedfordshire District Council
NCT	North Chilterns Trust
RSPB	RSPB
WWT	Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs, Northants and Peterborough

Action

Implemented by

Action	Implemented by
a) Safeguard all SSSIs, LNRs and CWSs by ensuring they are included and protected in the Local Plans	BBC, BCC, LBC, WT
b) Safeguard non-designated sites which may have nature conservation value in local strategies and plans	NCT
c) Ensure long term commitment to private and public partnerships, secure sufficient resources and use them effectively	
d) Lobby to reduce fragmentation of expertise and improve enforcement.	
e) Lobby for nature conservation strategies and record centres to be statutory functions of the Local Authority.	
f) Create areas of greenspace in association with new development that incorporates wildlife habitat features where appropriate.	BBC, DTC, GST, MBDC, NCT, LBC
g) Identify areas of greenspace deficiency	
h) Secure habitat compensation for loss through development and incorporate appropriate habitat retention and creation where justified as a direct result of development	BBC, FMV, MBDC
i) Encourage Local Authorities to develop environmental policies in the Local Plan to tackle urban issues especially in relation to development of brownfield sites	

Action	Implemented by
j) Lobby Government for improved protection for non-statutory sites during re-development discussions to prevent damage and destruction	
Site safeguard and management	
a) Develop conservation management regimes for ecologically important road verges	GST
b) Use native species that have been sourced locally in new planting and landscaping proposals	GST, NCT
c) Increase the number of urban trees and ensure existing trees are managed sympathetically	BBC, MBDC, NCT, LBC
d) Develop guidelines to protect street trees subject to root disturbance from pavement and road works	BBC, MBDC
e) Enhance existing areas of semi-natural habitat through sympathetic management	BBC, GST, IVCP, NCT, LBC
f) Improve habitat quality and diversity on managed greenspace	BBC, GST, NCT, LBC
g) Create new habitats in urban areas where opportunities arise	BBC, GST, LBC, MBDC, NCT, WT
h) Improve habitat quality of urban wetlands for biodiversity through management, planning and advice	BBC, GST, IVCP, NCT, LBC
i) Promote the benefits to biodiversity of wildlife gardening	BBC, BM, BNHS, BTCV, NCT
j) Incorporate biodiversity objectives into the management of allotment land	BBC, NCT, WT
k) Collect biological and non biological survey data for the identification and management of important sites	BBC, GST
l) Identify and liaise with land owners/managers, to promote sympathetic management and provide advice	GST, IVCP, LBC, NCT
m) Identify important urban wildlife sites and habitat corridors	BBC, GST, NCT, LBC
n) Encourage industry and business to develop areas of greenspace in their grounds	GST, IVCP, NCT
o) Develop and promote guidelines for enhancing biodiversity value of new and existing public open space	BBC, BCC, NCT
p) Promote good management practice of urban habitats through demonstrations and visits	BBC, NCT
q) Develop and promote guidelines for the creation and management of urban drainage systems to enhance biodiversity	NCT
r) Revisit management plans for formal parks and influence policies to incorporate more sensitive management	DTC, LBC
Advisory	
a) Co-ordinate advice available to landowners/managers, local businesses, householders etc on important urban habitats and species	IVCP, LBC, MBDC, NCT, WT
b) Provide guidelines for developers on protected species	NCT
c) Offer advice, support and information on environmental areas and study to schools	
d) Offer advice, support and information on managing areas for biodiversity to churchyards and cemeteries	

Action	Implemented by
e) Provide advice on the management of urban wildlife sites and greenspace	BBC, BM, DTC, IVCP, NCT, WT, LBC
Future research and monitoring	
a) Undertake a comprehensive audit of habitats and species in all urban areas prioritising sites and species at risk	BBC, DTC
b) Develop the County Wildlife Site criteria to include criteria for identifying 3rd tier Local Wildlife Sites, brownfield/ruderal habitats and microhabitats e.g. wasteland sites, trees etc.	BLWWG
c) Monitor on a regular basis a range of key habitats and species	BLWWG
d) Develop and maintain a centralised database to aid monitoring and land use planning	BLWWG
e) Establish a rationale for an audit of biodiversity in urban areas and the development of a centralised database of survey data to inform the site identification and planning process	
f) Develop a means to evaluate the impact of development on the carrying capacity of existing sites	
g) Survey accessible natural greenspace within 5km of all residents	
h) Complete detailed surveys (using standardised criteria) of key sites and habitats within all urban areas with populations of more than. Re-survey every 5 years once complete	LBC
i) Define and develop indicators of quality of life and a means to measure them	
Communication and publicity	
a) Raise political awareness of biodiversity issues in the urban environment in Local authorities	DTC, MBDC, NCT, LBC
b) Establish a directory of urban environmental contacts and examples of good practice	NCT
c) Raise awareness of biodiversity and promote community action in habitat management	BBC, BTCV, BNHS, GST, IVCP, NCT
d) Improve public awareness and perception of the management of long grass areas	BBC, IVCP, NCT, LBC
e) Empower local people to take responsibility for local/wild areas	BBC, FMV, GST, IVCP, MBDC, NCT, LBC
f) Develop accessible information on and at local sites	BBC, BM, IVCP, NCT
g) Encourage local schools, colleges and universities to use their local environment in their education	DTC, NCT, LBC
h) Promote the value of green corridors through the urban areas	NCT
i) Raise awareness amongst the public, land managers, local authorities and statutory bodies of the importance of and threats to urban habitats and species and the need for conservation action	ATC, BM, IVCP, NCT, WT

9. Monitoring the Action Plan

Monitoring the action plan is important to ensure future progress can be measured.

It is proposed that the Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre will be used as a mechanism to collect and collate information.

The Urban Habitats Biodiversity Action group will be brought back together on a regular basis by the Convenors Bedford Borough and Luton Borough Councils.

10. Complementary plans

Urban habitats are not national priorities for conservation and no National Action Plan exists however a habitat statement for Urban habitats has been written.

Cambridgeshire have produced biodiversity action plans for the Built environment and derelict sites, Gardens, Churchyards and cemeteries, Parks, shelterbelts and open spaces and Allotments.

Hertfordshire and **Buckinghamshire** have action plans for Urban Habitats and **Northamptonshire** will have a plan for Towns and Villages.

This Urban habitats Biodiversity Action Plan for **Bedfordshire** and **Luton** should be read alongside action plans for Woodland Habitats, Farmland Habitats and Waterways and wetlands. Plans also exist for Heathland, Lowland acid grassland, Calcareous grassland, Community involvement and public awareness and Data and monitoring.

To complement the Urban BAP a number of **Species Action Plans** for the following will be available.

Bats
Water vole
Otter
Great pignut
Song thrush

11. Acknowledgements

Illustrations courtesy of S Halton and English Nature.

12. References

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