



Biodiversity Project Officer's Progress Report March - October 2009

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1. Linkages to national and local BAPs

1.1 UK BAP

Copies of newsletters were passed to the UK BAP officer to keep them informed of local progress and issues. The Project Officer and Chair attended a workshop in Reading on 8th June to discuss and explore the future of LBAPs and their part in taking forward the England Biodiversity Strategy. The meeting was attended by the majority of the LBAPs from the 'southern' counties. A similar event for 'northern' LBAPs is planned for 6th October in York to coincide with the LBAP and UK BAP Partnership conference. The Project Officer will attend this meeting and feed back relevant information to the Partnership. Early indication shows that Natural England is keen for LBAPs to take a landscape-scale approach to LBAPs in any future reviews. No indication was given on Natural England's financial commitment to LBAPs beyond April 2011. The Project Officer will be attending the LBAP and UK BAP partnership conference in York on 6th-8th October.

1.2 Regional

The Project Officer has attended a number of regional meetings within the period including East Midlands Biodiversity Full Partnership and the Steering Group as the chair/representative of the regional LBAP officers group. The regional LBAPs met in May and August to discuss common issues such as the Natural England Memorandum of Agreement, BARS and the promotion of the NERC Biodiversity Duty. Concern has been raised by other LBAPs in the region regarding sustainable funding for LBAP co-ordination, the Project Officer has shared information on the financial support which has been received from the local authorities and other partners to the Project Officers post.

1.3 Links with neighbouring LBAPs

Close contact and liaison has been maintained with the Peak District and National Forest LBAPs as well as Nottinghamshire and Staffordshire LBAPs. The Project Officer attended the launch of the National Forest strategy document in March. It has been agreed that the Project Officer will digitise the BAP habitats from Derbyshire National Forest Tender Schemes in that latter part of the financial year.

1.4 Greenprints

The Project Officer attended two Chesterfield Greenprint Steering Group meetings providing an overview of county-wide matters to prevent duplication of work.

The Bolsover Biodiversity Network (BBN) has continued to be successful with key partners and groups working towards the targets. The Project Officer chaired one meeting in April and organised two summer site visits to local sites where local groups showed other partners around their site and discussed various site based issues. Comments were fed to officers at Bolsover District Council on the progress towards the actions and targets in the Greenprint and the Project Officer attended an internal Greenprint meeting at Bolsover District Council to discuss progress and a future review of the document.

The Project Officer provided further comments on the last update for the North East Derbyshire Greenprint. It is hoped that the document will be finalised and launched in the new year.

2. Local Feedback

2.1 Annual Forum

Following some difficulty regarding securing a date at Derby University, the programme for the 2009 Annual Forum was finalised for Saturday 24th October. Speakers and accommodation were confirmed and the programme was sent out to partners and local community groups in late August. Booking since has been swift with 95 of the possible 250 places taken by the beginning of October. A press release has been written and was sent out by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust so that members of the public could hear about the event and book if they wished. The theme of event is *Wildlife Recording* and the programme contains four talks and a choice of nine workshops covering a variety of recording topics including garden birds, lichens, mammals, invertebrates, and climate change. The event will be opened by the Deputy Mayor of Derby and so far bookings include a Derby City Councillor, some Parish Councillors, environmental students from Derby University as well as the usual mix of partners and community groups.

2.2 LBAP Steering Group

The Steering Group of the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership met on 14th July. Six members of the partnership were represented and participated in discussions. Reports were received from the habitats groups, Greenprints, partners on recent projects and achievements. The Project Officer gave a presentation on the GIS mapping project.

2.3 Servicing and expanding the partnership

In the report period more local groups and organisations have formally joined the LBAP partnership within the period:

- Aldercar and Langley Mil Parish Council
- Melbourne Civic Society

There are now 94 partners in the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership, including 36 community groups, 30 Parish/Town Councils and one landowning estate.

During the report period, the Project Officer has visited, or communicated with, a number of LBAP partners and local groups to discuss various issues including current and future projects and funding. LBAP Partners visited include, Lea Valley Project, Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire, Friends of Mickleover Meadows, Findern Footpaths Group, Moss Valley Wildlife Group, Derbyshire County Council, Derby City Council, Pleasley Pit Nature Study Group, Ogston Bird Club, Derby City Pond Warden Association.

3. Making the LBAP accessible

3.1 Communication strategy

Since the Communications Strategy was written, the subject of issuing partnership press releases has been raised and is due to be discussed with Derbyshire County Council's publicity department in October.

3.2 Website

The usage of the Derbyshire Biodiversity website has remained high with an average over the 6 months of 77 people accessing the site per day (Table 1). The statistics package continues to show a high usage, especially more during evenings and over weekends. The species and habitats pages are still the most visited part of the site followed by the Lowland Derbyshire LBAP page.

Table 1: Website usage October 2008- October 2009

Month	Unique visitors	No visits	of	Average no of visits per day	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Oct 2008	1382	2020		65.16	6298	33199	1.25GB
Nov 2008	1378	2072		69.07	6046	27238	1.16GB
Dec 2008	1228	1740		56.13	5853	18873	1.19GB
Jan 2009	948	1291		41.65	3631	16428	784.7MB
Feb 2009	1125	1636		58.43	4162	21996	614.9MB
March 2009	1463	3037		97.96	11160	51159	1.43GB
April 2009	1385	2564		85.46	9630	36487	1.26GB
May 2009	1212	2028		65.42	6704	25561	859.27MB
June 2009	1038	1492		49.73	3779	14635	458.54MB
July 2009	1168	1815		58.54	6891	19496	1.61GB
August 2009	1099	1715		55.32	5539	17924	929.73MB
September 2009	1152	1747		56.35	5804	19460	767.21MB

3.3. Newsletter

Quarterly newsletters were produced and distributed in April and July. The next newsletter is due out in mid-October. Contributions have continued to come in from LBAP partners as well as local community groups. Feedback from LBAP partners and local groups has continued to be very favourable.

3.4 Talks

The Project Officer gave two talks in the last six months:

- Derbyshire's Biodiversity – Chesterfield College environmental students (29th April)
- NERC Duty Presentation – Little Eaton Parish Meeting (22nd July)

As part of Derby City Council's Wildweek on ponds the Project officer gave a radio interview on Radio Derby on the significance of ponds and the LBAP achievements of the week.

3.5 Annual Report

Information for the 2008/9 Annual Report was requested for all partners and many community groups. Information was received from over 85 organisations and has been compiled into a report. The report requires finalising, desk top publishing and printing in time for or just following the LBAP Annual Forum on 24th October.

The executive summary is listed below:

- LBAP Partners created, or signed agreements to create, 100.82ha of woodland, 17ha of species-rich grassland, 21 ponds and 3,058m of hedgerow
- LBAP Partners restored, or agreed to restore and manage, 85.66ha of woodland, 11.45ha of wood-pasture/parkland, 174.77ha of species-rich grassland, 8 ponds and 2,731m of hedgerow
- 55% of the habitat targets are on target to be completed by 2010; 25% have been achieved already
- Biodiversity projects received more than £675,000 of external funding
- 93.1% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the LBAP area are now in favourable, or recovering, condition
- Volunteers carried out more than 7,800 days worth of practical conservation work during 2008/9
- More than 20,000 people attended 250 biodiversity related outdoor events
- Over 7,000 people attended 155 biodiversity related indoor talks

The report will be distributed to all partners, and local groups as well as interested parish councils.

4. Implement Habitat Action Plans

4.1 Woodland

The Woodland Group did not meet during the period, continued on the development of the landscape project within the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site. The Woodland Group organised, advertised and ran an afternoon and evening drop in session event on woodland grant schemes, with an emphasis on the new woodland bird grant. Speakers included RSPB, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission and Natural England. More than 20 landowners were represented, including a parish council.

4.2 Grassland and Heathland

The Grassland Group met on 18th June. The meeting included site visits to look at the work of the Ashover Heathlands Project and a site within a Higher Level Stewardship scheme which was due to undertake some grassland restoration work. Higher Level Stewardship schemes continue to contribute towards the LBAP targets, many other HLS applications are currently being drawn up, most of these will have grassland elements to them. The Project Officer visited and wrote a report for a landowner who was potentially interested in grassland restoration.

4.3 Wetland

The Wetland and Riparian Species Group met on 23rd September. A number of wetland projects are active within the LBAP area, some of these are small-scaled and led by community groups.

Members of the wetland group were involved in making responses to the Humber River Basin Management Plan consultation which was led by the Environment Agency.

4.4 Farmland

The Farmland Group has not met in the last six months, but further progress has been made surveying hedgerows in Chesterfield. An application to complete the hedgerow survey for the Moss Valley area was successful and the hedgerow survey has now been completed. The Project Officer attended the UK BAP Hedgerow Conference where information was distributed on generic products available from Hedgelink the UK BAP Hedgerow website resource. This information will be included in the next Derbyshire Biodiversity news.

5. Implement Species Action Plans

Liaison was made with the county special interest groups/recorders to respond to a consultation on the regional species list. The Project Officer represented the partnership at a regional workshop to compile the list with an accompanying set of actions.

The Peak District LBAP was successful in gaining funding for a crayfish ark project. This project will potentially involve two sites in lowland Derbyshire either as donor or receptor sites. Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is continuing to monitor otter and water vole populations through its volunteer monitoring programmes. The Project officer facilitated a meeting between Derbyshire County Council and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to discuss the spend of £20,000 of Local Transport Plan money on opportunities to make provision for otters under key bridges in Derbyshire.

6. Increasing capacity of partners in key sectors to implement HAPs and SAPs

6.1 BAP Audits

The Project Officer has carried out a biodiversity audit on land managed by the parks/leisure department for Chesterfield Borough Council and Bolsover District Council. These audits quantify the amount of BAP habitats owned by LBAP partners, and therefore calculates the contributions that partners can make to LBAP targets. A site visit was also made with officers from North East Derbyshire District Council to look at a number of key sites that the parks dept manage.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

7.1 BARS

The Project Officer, along with other LBAP officers, has continued to raise concern regionally and nationally regarding the national reporting of BAP information that is not disaggregated at a local level. In Lowland Derbyshire, however, we are fortunate that the local Natural England and Forestry Commission officers are able to do this. Nationally a review paper on BARS is expected. Comments will be made by the Project Officer when this is sent nationally from Natural England.

7.2 Spatial recording

Work has continued in adding information to the LBAP target GIS layers. To date information has been added from Higher Level Stewardship schemes, existing Countryside Stewardship Schemes, land owned by Derbyshire County Council, National Trust and Severn Trent Water.

Following agreement from the February Steering Group the Project Officer developed an application for a project to digitise and quantify the LBAP targets that have been, are being and will be achieved through agreed land restoration schemes. The project was endorsed by all the appropriate aggregate companies and submitted to the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF) in April. In September the LBAP Partnership heard that the ALSF that the application was successful and following the completion of the necessary paperwork the project began on 29th September.

Coal extraction sites are not included within the ALSF project but the Project Officer has visited four former coal extraction sites with Derbyshire County Council staff recording the LBAP contributions. This information will be added to the appropriate GIS layers.

8. Community Strategies, Development Plans and similar strategic partnerships.

8.1 Local Strategic Partnerships & Local Area Agreements

The Project Officer has continued to keep in touch with the officer responsible for NI188 for the Local Area Agreement and attended meetings to ensure that biodiversity is linked with the climate change indicator.

8.2 Planning documents and other consultations

During the period the Project Officer attended a meeting to discuss the Green Infrastructure Study for the 6C's area and also responded to the formal consultation. Comments were also made on North East Derbyshire's Climate Change SPD, the Derbyshire Community Strategy consultation and Erewash Borough Council's Issues and Options paper for the Local Development Framework.

8.3 Training for LBAP Partners

There were no training opportunities in this period.

9. Raise Funding for LBAP initiatives

9.1 Information

Information has continued to be circulated to LBAP partners on new funding schemes with the appropriate deadlines and criteria.

9.2 Support of Funding bids

The Project Officer has continued to work with various LBAP partners and local groups on funding bids for specific biodiversity projects. Support letters have been written and sent to accompany a number of LBAP grant applications.

9.3 Funding for co-ordination

Contributions towards the co-ordinator's post for 2009/10 were received from all local authorities in the LBAP area and the Forestry Commission.

10. NERC Biodiversity Duty

As part of the ongoing NERC Duty work with LBAP partners the Project Officer met with the Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service, surveyed the Headquarters site in Littleover and provided advice on minor adjustments which could be made to maintenance/management. A visit was made with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to Sudbury Prison to offer advice on a pond restoration and other land management issues relating to biodiversity.

Following distribution of information on the NERC Duty to all parish and Town Councils, the Project Officer was approached by four parish councils Barrow-on-Trent, Newton Solney, Barlborough and Old Bolsover Town Council to provide management advice on sites they manage. A talk on biodiversity and the NERC Duty was given to Little Eaton Parish Council.