

Brownfields and Built Environment – hidden gems for wildlife!

Brownfield sites describe areas with permanent structures such as unused buildings and infrastructure, and usually some bare ground and a range of habitats, such as shrub areas and temporary water pools. These sites are also known as previously developed land, and they are largely confined to urban areas such as Cambridge and Peterborough. Impoverished thin soils encourage a huge variety of flowering plants that become nectar sources for bugs and invertebrates - many of them can be rare and under threat. Areas of open bare ground that warm up quickly are welcoming for lizards and invertebrates. Species such as Great Crested Newts make use of temporary and permanent pools of water.

The **built environment** includes both old buildings, which may provide roosts for bats, and the opportunities that new development may present, such as living roofs and green walls. The built environment can provide habitat for lichens, plants and nest sites for birds such as swift, house martin or kestrel and homes for bats.

A local **Biodiversity Action Plan for Brownfield Sites and Built Environment**, launched in 2000, recognized their importance for wildlife. This plan has been reviewed in 2007/08. Below is an overview of the main objectives and some example actions. It would be great if you can get inspired to contribute towards them!

The objectives of the Brownfield and Built Environment Action Plan are to **assess and monitor our existing habitat, keep the extent of biodiverse Brownfield Sites and protect them from development**. We want to **create new biodiversity features in new industrial and residential developments**. Another objective is to **manage and enhance the existing area of brownfield sites and built environment**. A very important objective is to **raise awareness and increase access and involvement with** brownfield sites and the built environment.

Example of Brownfield and Built Environment actions:

- Organise training days in brownfield monitoring for volunteers
- Produce information on management of brownfield habitats for landowners
- Encourage local community involvement on brownfield sites where appropriate
- Produce information on making your home 'wildlife friendly' for householders
- Bats in Buildings showcase at Ecocentre Peterborough
- Promotion of "Best Practice" and brown roofs advocacy-partnership
- Work with landowners and local authorities to secure access to brownfield sites
- Organise 'brownfield awareness' ('urban wildlife') events for the public



Inner city Brownfield Site- Photo Buglife

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough local authorities, statutory agencies, conservation charities and the local Records Centre work together in partnership towards achieving actions outlined in the local Biodiversity Action Plans. To learn more about the Biodiversity Action Plans or to share how you are contributing towards these actions, please visit:

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/biodiversitypartnership or contact the coordinator Fabiola Blum on 01223 715697.