MANAGED GREENSPACES

LOCAL HABITAT ACTION PLAN FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH
Reviewed: November 2008

1 CURRENT STATUS

1.1 Context and status

This action plan covers the group of habitats known as managed greenspaces[1] and includes:

- town parks
- pocket parks
- amenity grassland e.g. playing fields
- domestic gardens[2]
- planting associated with school grounds, colleges, hospitals and developments
- allotments[3]

Ownership of and access to these habitats is varied, resulting in a range of formal and informal spaces for people and wildlife. They are often highly designed and intensively managed either for recreation or amenity. As a consequence they may be of limited value for biodiversity and funds for managing these areas are often limited. Many managers are constrained in considering work specifically for wildlife benefit, but opportunities do exist for management to be altered to encourage biodiversity and depending on their structure, management and species composition a wide range of wildlife can be supported, especially in the suburbs. Importantly areas of managed greenspaces provide people with a point of contact with nature.

Parks of Victorian age or similar usually have a high proportion of non-native species, often in ornamental planting schemes and associated with hard landscaping such as tennis courts. Town parks may represent the only large area of accessible greenspace for many city and town residents. Those with lawns that are mown frequently have little value to biodiversity yet a change in the cutting regime or corners left uncut can enhance their biodiversity value. Parks often contain large numbers of trees (some veteran), both native and non-native depending on the land use history, that are important for invertebrates and bats, although associated deadwood is still being lost through management.

Amenity grassland is often drained, fertilised and frequently cut resulting in a species-poor sward dominated by ryegrass. Deliberately landscaped and planted managed areas can support diverse wildlife communities. This can be enhanced through the adoption of more sensitive and informal management. "Created" examples are often associated with new development representing an opportunity to deliver real gains for biodiversity.

Planted shrubberies will often have scattered trees, woodland or hedges associated with them and are found in a number of places such as in hospital, college and school grounds, in community areas and housing developments. Native trees and

[1] This definition is based upon that contained within the national BAP
[2] Domestic gardens are covered by their own BAP and are not covered in detail here.
[3] Allotments are covered by their own BAP and are not covered in detail here

shrubs can act as 'hedges' supporting a similar range of species to countryside hedgerows or woodlands. When combined with incidental pocket sized plots alongside waterways, transport and service corridors, they provide opportunities for many different species.

Local Authorities are required under PPG17 to assess the amount of open space, sport and recreation provision within their areas. This provides some indication of the amount of the habitats above. In addition, recent work carried out as part of the Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Cambridge Sub-Region and the Peterborough Green Grid Strategy has mapped green infrastructure down to 2ha.

Green Infrastructure, as defined in the above Strategies is the network of protected sites, nature reserves, greenspaces and greenway linkages. It is multi-functional i.e., wildlife, recreational and cultural uses, as well as delivering ecological services, such as flood protection and microclimate control.

The mosaic of habitats in urban areas provides for priority species such as song thrush, linnet, pipistrelle, barbastelle and button snout moth. They also provide nectar and pollen sources for insects, good hunting ground for birds and bats and support common species such as foxes, hedgehogs, frogs, newts and grass snakes.

2 CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE HABITATS

- Managing habitats for biodiversity, amenity/landscape and public access.
- Isolation from and fragmented links with other habitats.
- The many different organisations owning and managing these habitats make it difficult to agree overall policies for their management.
- The use of inappropriate, non-native or non-local species and the need to take into account climate change in planting schemes.
- Disturbance, trampling and heavy recreational use of some parks and greenspaces.
- An increasing awareness of the value of these habitats for people and wildlife and greater community involvement in local wildlife projects.

3 CURRENT ACTION

3.1 Legal status

Many of the larger examples of these habitats are afforded some protection directly or indirectly through appropriate policies contained within local development frameworks (for example, as part of green corridors or protected open spaces). Otherwise these habitats have little or no statutory protection, except that afforded secondarily to specific features (e.g. tree protection orders; Conservation Area legislation; known species of animals or plants protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, and biodiversity priorities under Section 74 of the CROW Act). Local Authorities also have a duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act to have regard to biodiversity in exercising its functions that includes the management of its landholdings.

3.2 Wider benefits of managed greenspaces and links to local strategies

The Cambridgeshire Green Vision is the result of the development of a green infrastructure strategy for the Cambridge Sub-region.

The strategy has been produced to ensure that enough green infrastructure is provided to support the significant growth in housing provision that is planned over the next 20 years. The aim is to improve the quality of life for residents of the county both now and in the future. This will be achieved by creating a network of green corridors and sites that enhance landscape character, connect and enhance biodiversity habitats and extend access and recreation opportunities for people. It is recognised that sites under 2ha, such as hedgerows, drainage channels/streams and private gardens make an important contribution to this network and play an important part in enhancing the environment for both people and wildlife.

In Peterborough the Green Grid Strategy has been produced to draw up a strategic framework and action plan for green space provision throughout the Greater Peterborough area and to ensure that Peterborough's growth goes hand in hand with the protection and provision of quality green infrastructure. The strategy seeks to provide a comprehensive vision to improve the quality, quantity and connectivity of the area's green spaces and to identify proposals for capital projects that will be realised in the short, medium and longer term. There are a number of guiding principles that have underpinned and informed the strategy including connectivity, multi-functionality, extended access, landscape character enhancement, biodiversity enhancement and landmark projects. The strategy will be used as a framework to inform bids for funding and setting up projects to deliver Green Infrastructure in and around the city.

4 OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

4.1 Objectives

- Assess and monitor existing urban habitats
- Maintain the extent of our urban habitat resource
- Create new urban habitats
- Manage and enhance our urban habitat resource
- Raise awareness and increase accessibility and involvement

4.2 Targets

1) Collate all available information to help identify any gaps in knowledge and key features for monitoring by 2009.

2) Designate sites that meet County Wildlife (CWS) and City Wildlife Site (CiWS) thresholds.

3) Create at least 50ha of new urban habitat by 2015.

4) Manage 20% of the total area of managed greenspace to benefit wildlife by 2012.

5) Increase the area of land managed for wildlife that is accessible to the public by 10% by 2012

6) Send out 1 press release each year promoting the value of managed greenspace for wildlife.

7) Increase the number of formally constituted groups with responsibility for managing an area for people and wildlife by 5%? by 2012.

8) Hold 5 public events each year in the parks in Cambridgeshire

5 ACTIONS

Objectives	Targets	Actions	Responsible	Timescale
Assess and monitor existing urban habitats	1) Collate all available information to help identify any gaps in knowledge and key features for monitoring by 2010.	1.1)Initiate surveys to gather data to address gaps, help assess and monitor the value of urban habitats for people and wildlife.	WT, CCC, PCC, named District Councils (BRC)	2010 and at regular intervals thereafter
		1.2)Ensure data collected is submitted to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre.	(BRC)	As required, but at end of projects or annually as appropriate.
Maintain the extent of our urban habitat resource	2) Designate sites that meet County Wildlife (CWS) and City Wildlife Site (CiWS) thresholds.	2.1)Ensure local development documents refer to the need to protect greenspace for people and wildlife.	WT, named District Councils, CCC	2009
		2.2) Review the CWS selection guidelines to include as appropriate thresholds for urban habitats.	WT, CCC, named District Councils, EA, NE, CWS partnership	2010
		2.3) Protect sites designated for their wildlife interest within urban areas.	WT, CCC, named District Councils, EA, NE	2012
Create new urban habitats	3) Create at least 50ha of new urban habitat by 2015.	3.1) Use the planning system to help secure the delivery of new areas of greenspace for people and wildlife.	Named District Councils, CCC, WT, NE, EA	2015

		3.2) Encourage the use of planting grants/incentive schemes to create new areas of greenspace for people and wildlife (including the linking and buffering of existing sites).	CCC, named District Councils, WT, NE	2010
Manage and enhance our urban habitat resource	4) Manage 20% of the total area of managed greenspace to benefit wildlife by 2012.	4.1) Provide advice, support and assistance to community groups and land managers on biodiversity and funding sources for habitat creation and management.	CCC, WT, SCDC, HDC	2012
		4.2) Provide advice to planners and developers on the design, linkage and management of greenspace for biodiversity.	CCC, WT, SCDC, HDC	2010
		4.3) Promote the production and implementation of management plans for town, district, city and parish council managed greenspaces that incorporate environmentally friendly practices.	CCC	2010
		4.4) Investigate the feasibility of developing a training programme for those managing greenspaces.	Urban BAP Group	2012
		4.5) Collate and disseminate information on where individuals and community groups can get information and advice on project planning, implementation and funding.	Urban BAP Group (Biodiversity Partnership)	2012

Raise awareness and increase accessibility and involvement	5) Increase the area of land managed for wildlife that is accessible to the public by 10% by 2012	5.1) Encourage access agreements to allow new areas of greenspace to be available for use by urban residents.	CCC, named District Councils, NE	2012
		5.2) Designate new Local Nature Reserves to achieve the Natural England target of 1 ha per 1000 head of population.	CCC, named District Councils, NE	2012
	6) Send out 1 press release each year promoting the value of managed greenspace for wildlife.	6.1) Promote the value of managed greenspace for wildlife by increasing publicity about existing sites.	Urban BAP Group	Annual
		6.2) Encourage schools and youth groups to carry out environmental studies fieldwork in local habitats, and adopt suitable areas as wildlife areas.	WT, HDC	2010
	7) Increase the number of formally constituted groups with responsibility for managing an area for people and wildlife by 5%? by 2012.	7.1) Encourage the membership of and community involvement in groups managing local sites for people and wildlife.	WT, CCC, HDC, PCC	2012
		7.2) Work with residents to improve areas of greenspace around their homes.	HDC, WT	2010
		7.3) Encourage networking through the Urban BAP group to share ideas and best practice.	Urban BAP Group (Biodiversity Partnership)	2010
	8) Hold 5 public events each year in the parks in Cambridgeshire	8.1) Encourage the public to come to and become involved in parks	HDC, WT	Annual

6 LINKS TO OTHER PLANS

The diverse nature of these habitats means that many other plans will be relevant. In particular this plan should be considered in conjunction with the habitat action plans for

- Arable land
- Gardens
- Churchyards and cemeteries
- Brownfield sites and the built environment
- Urban forest

Implementation of this plan will also benefit the following species (list not exhaustive):

house sparrow
kestrel
linnet
song thrush
starling
swift
bats – noctule, daubenton's, pipistrelle, barbastelle and brown long-eared bat
foxes
hedgehog
small mammals such as bank and field voles
frogs and toads
grass snake
great crested newt
button snout moth
comma butterfly
peacock butterfly
small tortoiseshell butterfly

7 REVIEW OF ACTION PLAN

This action plan will be reviewed by the Biodiversity Partnership on a regular basis and checked annually by the Urban BAP Group.

8 REFERENCES

Cambridgeshire County Council/Countryside Commission (1984) *A survey of landscape change within Cambridgeshire 1994*

Cambridgeshire County Council/Countryside Commission (1991) *Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines: a manual for management and change in the rural landscape* Cambridgeshire County Council/Granta Editions

London Wildlife Trust (1985) *Encouraging Wildlife in Urban Parks*

Cambridgeshire Horizons/The Landscape Partnership (2006) *Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Cambridge Sub-Region*

PECT/The Landscape Partnership (2007) *Peterborough Green Grid Strategy*

9 LIST OF INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

Anglia Ruskin University
Anglian Water
Bat Conservation Trust
BBC-Breathing Places
BTCV Parnwell Project
Buglife
Butterfly Conservation
Cambridge City Council
Cambridge Preservation Society
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre
Cambridgeshire County Council
Cambridgeshire Bats Group
Cambridgeshire Natural History Society
Chatteris Town in Bloom
Conservators of the River Cam
Countryside Properties
Diocese of Ely Environment Group
East Cambridgeshire District Council
Eco-arts Project Peterborough
Ely Society
Environment Agency
Fenland District Council
Friends of Sudbury Meadow
Friends of Parnwell
Froglife
Gallagher Estates
Greater Dogsthorpe Environmental Forum
Green Grid and Green Infrastructure Groups
Hanson/Philip Parker Associates
Huntingdonshire District Council
Natural England
Opportunity Peterborough
O&H Hampton
Peterborough City Council
Peterborough Environment City Trust
RSPB - East Anglia
Smeeden Foreman Partnership
Somersham Parish Council
South Cambridgeshire District Council
St Neots Town Centre Initiative
St Neots Town Council
The Wildlife Trust