



**WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2012-2024**

**JUNE 2014**



## **Foreword**

Wokingham Borough Council is committed to ensuring we preserve and where possible enhance our natural environment whilst also accommodating the necessary housing developments to meet local housing needs. The borough enjoys a very varied and special natural environment which provides residents with valued opportunities for outdoor recreation, enjoyment of nature and to take an active role in supporting this natural environment.

This document updates the first Biodiversity Action Plan and will raise awareness of the issues which impact on local biodiversity, encourages and gives targets for action and ensures our policies are in place to protect, manage and where possible enhance local flora and fauna.

As a member of the council's executive, I am committed to ensuring we consider our environment with great care. I look forward to working with residents and groups to support this Plan.

Angus Ross  
Executive Member for Environment

# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

**2012-2024**

The Wokingham Biodiversity Action Plan is divided into the following three sections:

**PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

**PART 2: LEGISLATION AND PROTECTIVE POLICIES**

**PART 3: HABITAT ACTION PLANS (WITH LINKS TO ASSOCIATED SPECIES)**

## GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASNW	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BARS	Biodiversity Actions Reporting System
BBOWT	Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust
BLNP	Berkshire Local Nature Partnership
DEFRA	Department of Environment Farming and Rural Affairs
EA	Environment Agency
FC	Forestry Commission
HAP	Habitat Action Plan
LA	Local Authority
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
NE	Natural England
NT	National Trust
PAWS	Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites
PC	Parish council
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
TC	Town Council
TVERC	Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre
UA	Unitary Authority
WBC	Wokingham Borough Council

# **PART ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

## **1.1. Aims**

This new Wokingham Borough Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) covers the period 2012-2024 and aims to build on the achievements of the previous Biodiversity Action Plan for the Borough (2003-2012). It combines those BAP targets identified in the 2008 progress report as requiring continued work, with newly identified targets, in one structured delivery framework.

The overall aims of the Wokingham Borough BAP are to:

- Raise awareness of the issues impacting on local biodiversity
- Outline targets and actions which will enhance biodiversity in the Borough
- Encourage and support community engagement; enabling local action to deliver targets
- Encourage management practices sympathetic to wildlife; promoting “good practice” and providing guidance
- Ensure policies are in place for the protection, management and enhancement of the local wildlife resource

## **1.2. Biodiversity**

Biodiversity (biological diversity) is the term for every living thing on Earth, from the smallest microscopic organisms to the biggest blue whale, and the habitats on which they all depend. The rich variety of life is essential for sustaining the natural living systems, or ecosystems, that provide us with food, fuel, health, wealth, and other vital services.

Biodiversity includes every one of us, and although we currently pose its greatest threat we also offer the only hope for protecting and conserving the diversity of life for future generations. It is at the local level where we can all come together and make a real difference. The natural environment of Wokingham Borough has been heavily modified by human activity and many of the existing wildlife habitats face pressure from development threats or high recreational use. Despite this there is still a great variety of wildlife which can be found locally and by taking action together we can help ensure the future survival of our natural heritage.

### 1.3. Biodiversity Action Plans

International concern for biodiversity originated at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 where 150 countries, including the UK, signed the Convention on Biological Diversity. The aim was to conserve the diversity of flora and fauna at a global, national and local scale. To meet its obligations under the Treaty, the UK Government published “Biodiversity - The UK Action Plan” in 1994, followed by additional supporting documents.

The main objectives of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) were to:

- Conserve and enhance wildlife habitats; internationally important habitats and species; habitats and species characteristic of local areas; and natural and semi-natural areas which have declined in recent years
- Increase public awareness and involvement
- Contribute to the conservation of biodiversity on a European and global scale

The plan set out a programme for conserving the UK’s biodiversity. The UK Action Plan adopted a target based approach, and identified priority habitats and species at a national and regional level. This led to the production of 436 action plans between 1995 and 1999 to help many of the UK’s most threatened species and habitats to recover. A review of the UK BAP priority list in 2007 led to the identification of 1,150 species and 65 habitats that meet the BAP criteria at UK level.

However in recent years there has been a movement away from BAP target delivery towards landscape-scale conservation and an ecosystem approach. Following on from policies contained in the Natural Environment White Paper, published in June 2011, Defra launched a new England Biodiversity Strategy “*Biodiversity 2020: a strategy for England’s Wildlife and Ecosystem Services*”. The structure of the new strategy is framed by the strategic aims of the Nagoya Framework. *Biodiversity 2020* sets out how the quality of our environment on land and at sea will be improved over the next ten years. The mission for this strategy for the next decade is “*to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people*”.

## 1.4. The County Perspective

The Berkshire Local Nature Partnership (BLNP) seeks to both inspire those individuals, groups and bodies with the power and resources to make a difference to our biodiversity assets, and to provide guidance on where the best opportunities exist for action that will make a significant difference.

Through the Biodiversity Action Plan process county targets were set to maintain, restore and create BAP Priority habitats in Berkshire. The Wokingham BAP expands on this work and is therefore aligned with the actions happening at both county and national level.

The BLNP is working together to create a sustainable, healthy and vibrant Berkshire by promoting the conservation and enhancement of nature, and the services and benefits we receive from a healthy environment. The partnership will achieve this vision by:

- Taking a strategic view of the challenges and opportunities involved and identify ways to manage the natural environment as a system for the benefit of nature, people and the economy.
- Becoming local champions influencing decision-making relating to the natural environment and its value to social and economic outcomes, in particular, through working closely with local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Health and Well-being Boards.
- Contributing to the Government's national environmental objectives locally, by providing the advice and expertise required for the identification of local ecological networks, alongside addressing local priorities.
- Work with other organisations and Partnerships to improve awareness of the issues surrounding nature conservation and the value of the natural environment.

But over recent years there has been a changing approach at the county level. The challenge we face is to halt on-going losses and rebuild biodiversity, while taking account of climate change, and requires us to look beyond protecting sites and species and move towards an integrated landscape scale approach. As highlighted in the recent '*Making Space for Nature*' (2010) report we need more, bigger, better, and joined up wildlife sites.

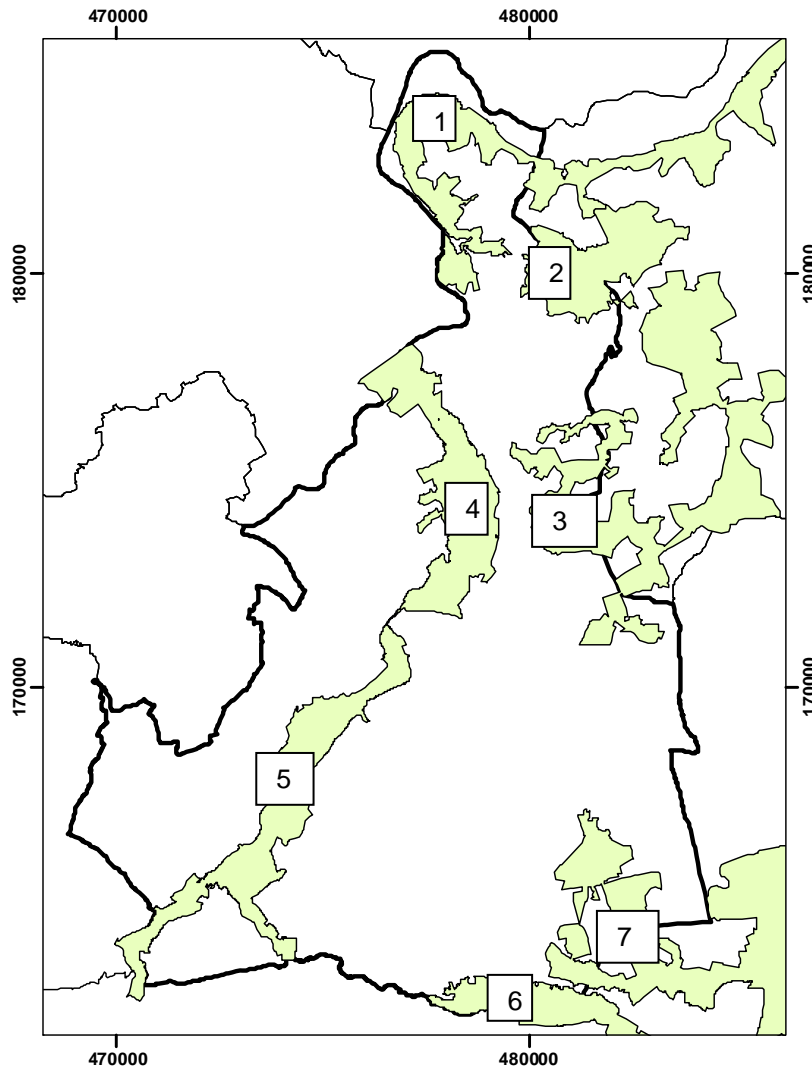
Following a detailed selection process 29 Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) were identified in Berkshire and these were formally agreed by BLNP in 2008. The BOAs include approximately 85% of Berkshire's BAP Priority Habitats and represent the areas in which habitat creation and restoration will have the most positive impact. To enable efficient targeting of limited resources efforts to deliver the Berkshire BAP targets are being focused within these BOAs, and so the county BAP targets have now been apportioned to each of these areas (for further details visit: <http://www.berkshirelnp.org>).



## 1.5. The Local Perspective

This new Wokingham Borough Biodiversity Action Plan aims to contribute to and build on biodiversity delivery at the county level. This includes progressing actions in the following Biodiversity Opportunity Areas: Blackwater Valley; Chilterns Escarpment; Thames Basin Heaths; Loddon Valley South; Loddon Valley Gravel Pits; Waltham Woodlands and Parkland; Ashley and Bowsey Hills. These are shown in Figure 1 and individual maps of each of these BOAs are included at the end of Part 1.

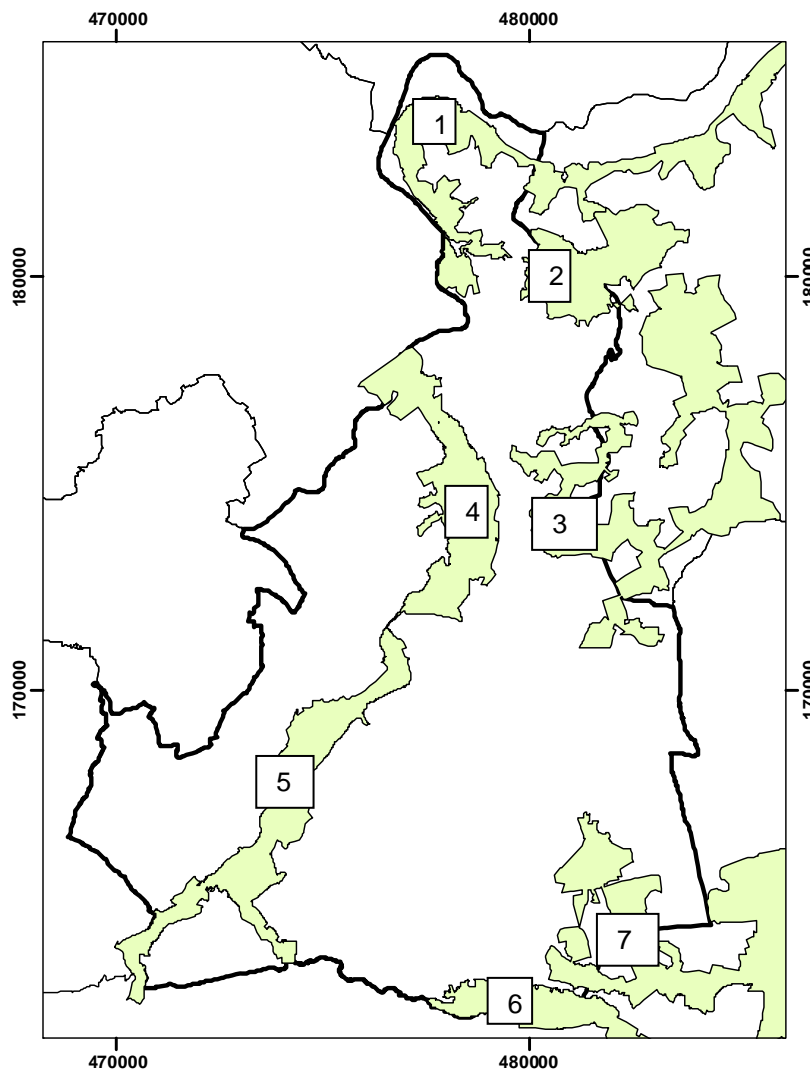
**Figure 1: Map of BOAs within Wokingham Borough**



## 1.5. The Local Perspective

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**Figure 1: Map of BOAs within Wokingham Borough**



**Key:**

**1 - Chilterns Escarpment; 2 - Ashley and Bowsey Hills; 3 - Waltham to Binfield Woods & Parklands; 4 - Loddon Valley Gravel Pits; 5 - Loddon Valley South; 6 - Blackwater Valley; 7 -Thames Basin Heaths**

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This Biodiversity Action Plan is a challenge for the community of Wokingham Borough to help achieve. Wokingham Borough Council acknowledges that the successful implementation of this BAP can only be achieved by working in partnership with businesses, developers, the voluntary sector and the local community. To this end the council will continue to support the Wokingham Biodiversity Forum which was established in March 2000. The Wokingham Biodiversity Forum will play a key role in ensuring the successful implementation and monitoring of the targets; this forum is an ongoing partnership between the council, the local community, statutory agencies (Natural England, Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency) and the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust.

## PART TWO: LEGISLATION AND PROTECTIVE POLICIES

### 2.1. Legislation

There are three pieces of government legislation which relate to Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs):

1. The Countryside and Rights Of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act)

- a. A conservation duty on public bodies and statutory undertakers to *“to take reasonable steps, consistent with the proper exercise of your functions to further the conservation and enhancement of Sites of Special Scientific Interests’ special interests.”*
- b. A duty on Government Ministers and Departments *“to have due regard to the purpose of the conservation of biological diversity in the exercise of their functions.”*

2. The Local Government Act 2000

The Section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000 contains a mandatory requirement that every local authority produces a strategy, known as a *“Community Strategy”*, for promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of their area and *“contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK”*.

3. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities act (NERC) 2006

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities act (NERC) 2006 states that *“Every public body must, in the exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”*

## 2.2. Protective Policy

Planning Policy Guidance 9: Nature Conservation (PPG 9) sets out the Government's policy for the treatment of nature conservation issues in development plans and the protection of designated sites. Wokingham Borough Council has liaised closely with Natural England to ensure that the Local Plan meets the requirements of PPG 9 and current wildlife legislation.

**a) The Wokingham Borough Core Strategy** (<http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/council/plans/key-strategies/new-ldf-core-strategy/>)

This document was adopted in January 2010. Sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted. The degree of protection given will be appropriate to the status of the site in terms of its international or national importance.

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas are referred to within the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy as priority areas for maintenance, restoration and creation of priority habitats.

**b) The Draft Managing Development Delivery Plan Document**

(<http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planningcontrol/planning/planningpolicies/ldf/managingdevelopmentdelivery/mddtimetable/?!locale=en>)

The final draft will be submitted to the Secretary of State in summer 2012 and will include policies covering biodiversity, country parks and green infrastructure.

## **PART THREE: HABITAT ACTION PLANS**

### **3.1. Habitats**

This new Wokingham Biodiversity Action Plan retains the structure of the former plan, featuring the five Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) covering the following broad habitat types:

- (1) Communities, Towns and Villages HAP
- (2) Woodland HAP
- (3) Grassland and Hedgerow HAP
- (4) Wetland HAP
- (5) Heathland HAP

However, following the UK BAP review additional Priority habitats were added to the UK BAP list in 2007. Subsequently the following have been incorporated into the most relevant of the above Habitat Action Plans:

- Hedgerows have been included in the Grassland HAP. They have been included in this action plan as they are a key habitat within open landscapes, forming a vital role in the ecology of many species (e.g. a bird may nest in the hedgerow, but feed within the nearby grassland).
- Traditional Orchards have been added to the Communities, Towns and Villages HAP as they are closely associated with people and offer a prime opportunity for community engagement.

### **3.2. Species**

Since 2003 it was decided to concentrate action of the Wokingham Borough BAP on Priority habitats, as most species are entirely reliant on their habitat. However, where there are specific additional actions which can benefit a Priority species then these have been included as targets in the associated Habitat Action Plan.

### **3.3. Monitoring**

It is essential that monitoring of progress of the delivery of the Action Plan is undertaken at regular intervals to ensure that targets are met; ascertain the gross changes to habitats; determine the

population of target species; assess the effectiveness of management plans. A Wokingham Borough BAP progress report will be produced in 2018 to evaluate progress on target delivery, and identify targets in need of further work.

# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

## **1. COMMUNITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES HABITAT ACTION PLAN**



## Table of Contents

### **Contents**

#### **1.1. Introduction**

#### **1.2. Links with other Habitat Action Plans and UK BAP Priority species**

#### **1.3. Current Status**

#### **1.4. Evaluation of Wokingham Borough's Towns and Villages**

#### **1.5. Threats to Wokingham Borough's Towns and Villages**

#### **1.6. Aspirations and Objectives**

#### **1.7. Implementation Plan**

# 1. COMMUNITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES HABITAT ACTION PLAN

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1. This Habitat Action Plan (HAP) covers all habitats occurring within the confines of a town or village. The value of these habitats is not confined to their ecological value, which can be significant, but also the ecological services they provide to local people (e.g. areas for recreation, clean water provision, health benefits).
- 1.1.2. Wokingham Borough contains numerous historical settlements, including Barkham, Arborfield, Finchampstead, Hurst, Twyford, Wargrave, Shinfield, Spencers Wood, Sonning, Ruscombe, Winnersh, Swallowfield, and Wokingham, together with more recent settlements, such as Lower Earley and Woodley. These settlements include extensive areas of greenspace, including private gardens, public parks, churchyards and cemeteries, allotments, and school grounds.
- 1.1.3. Although the substantial motorway and railway embankments/cuttings in the Borough can act as barriers which prevent natural dispersal of wildlife, they also have the opportunity to act as wildlife corridors enabling wildlife to move between sites.
- 1.1.4. There is intense development pressure on Wokingham Borough's natural environment, but many current residents have stated that they want the boroughs environment to be maintained and enhanced for future generations. Many people value the local countryside for quiet enjoyment, spiritual refreshment and general well being.
- 1.1.5. This HAP will act as the main vehicle to promote public understanding of biodiversity issues, and aims to increase the number of people participating in nature conservation activities. The plan includes measures that contribute to local awareness, public involvement and political commitment in the Biodiversity process.

## 1.2. LINKS WITH OTHER HABITAT ACTION PLANS AND UK BAP PRIORITY SPECIES

- 1.2.1. Towns and villages can contain other habitats covered elsewhere in the Wokingham Borough Biodiversity Action Plan. As the demand for housing continues, increasing amounts of the Boroughs wildlife habitats will fall within the boundaries of residential areas. It is increasingly important to make the links between biodiversity areas in villages and towns and the surrounding countryside.
- 1.2.2. Numerous UK BAP species occur in the towns and villages of Wokingham Borough, including: Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*),

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*), Bullfinch(*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibious*), Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*), Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*), Stag Beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), and Tower Mustard (*Arabis glabra*).

### 1.3. CURRENT STATUS

- 1.3.1. The demand for housing within the UK remains high, and so the extent of towns and villages in the Borough will undoubtedly continue to rise. The population of Wokingham Borough is currently 150,229, which is a 6% rise in the last ten years (2011 and 1991 census data). The population is expected to be 175,366 by 2029. This rising population will put increased pressure on sensitive wildlife habitats, but it also provides a great opportunity to engage people in biodiversity issues.
- 1.3.2. Accessible green space, particularly in urban areas, is now becoming recognised as providing some of the fundamental needs of society. Natural Greenspace provides a broad range of benefits to people and the quality of their lives. The Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) recommends that everyone, wherever they live, should have access to natural greenspace of:
  - At least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minute walk) from home
  - At least one 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home
  - One 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home
  - One 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home
  - A minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population
- 1.3.3. Natural England recommends that there should be at least one hectare of designated Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 people in the population. To put this into local context, with the current population across the Borough there should be provision of at least 150 hectares of provision, which leaves a shortfall of 58 hectares in the Borough. Given the predicted population growth for the Borough (175,366 by 2029) there will be a shortfall of over 83ha by 2029 unless additional sites are identified.
- 1.3.4. The Traditional Orchards inventory undertaken by People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) contains details of 35,351 individual traditional orchards in England covering 16,961 ha. The condition of each orchard was assessed revealing that 45% of England's traditional orchards are in poor condition, 46% are in good condition and only 9% are in excellent condition. The inventory lists 703 traditional orchards in Berkshire covering an area of 138.2 ha. Of these 36% individual orchards were verified by survey and 26 orchard owner questionnaires supplied additional information together revealing that 8% of traditional orchards in Berkshire are in excellent condition, 41 in good condition and 51% in poor condition.
- 1.3.5. Local Biodiversity Action Plans can undertake the following functions:

- Identify targets for species and habitats important to the local area and reflecting the values of local people, and direct effective action at the local level.
- Stimulate effective local partnerships to ensure for biodiversity conservation projects are developed and maintained in the long term.
- Raise awareness of the need for biodiversity conservation and enhancement in the local context.
- Ensure that opportunities for conservation and enhancement of biodiversity are promoted, understood and rooted in policies and decisions at local level.
- Provide a basis for monitoring and evaluating local action for biodiversity priorities, at both national and local levels.

These functions repeatedly emphasize the local context for Local Biodiversity Action Plans and the importance of engaging with the various sectors of the local community.

## **1.4. EVALUATION OF WOKINGHAM BOROUGH'S COMMUNITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES**

- 1.4.1. There are 3788ha of identified urban settlements in Wokingham Borough, nearly 22% of the total area. Village greens, road verges, village ponds, houses and street trees can all provide a habitat for wildlife.
- 1.4.2. Private gardens form the largest total area within the urban environment, and consequently can play an important role in conserving and enhancing the Boroughs biodiversity. In addition initiatives aimed at private householders can raise awareness of wider issues and encourage community involvement in other biodiversity projects.
- 1.4.3. Allotments tend to attract similar wildlife to private gardens, although the number of species found on them does depend on their management or if they are adjacent to other suitable habitats. There are a number of allotment sites within the Borough; in Woodley, Spencers Wood, Twyford and Hurst.
- 1.4.4. In 2007 traditional orchards were included in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. They can provide important refuges for wildlife with a mosaic of habitats and foraging opportunities on offer and often support a wide range of plants and animals. In addition to the ecological benefits, traditional orchards can significantly add to the local character of landscapes and provide local food as well as connecting communities with food production. There are currently four community orchards at Wargrave, Winnersh, Twyford and Riseley and a larger orchard at Dinton Pastures country Park.
- 1.4.5. There are 21 churches in the Borough, and many of these have extensive grounds. These churchyards and cemeteries are often made up of unimproved grassland and old trees and some have significant wildlife interest. The wildlife that any particular area holds will depend on the type of habitat or features present. A number of UK BAP Priority species do occur in our churchyards and cemeteries, in addition they

are often rich in lichens as the variety of materials used for headstones provides opportunities for specialist species to colonise areas that are usually unsuitable.

- 1.4.6. There are over 1273 hectares of Public Open Space on 466 sites in Wokingham Borough. These spaces can vary from formal sports pitches to country parks, but many contain small areas of semi-natural habitat such as woodlands, hedgerows, ponds, veteran trees and meadows. The wildlife that any particular park holds will depend what habitats are present, however a number of our priority species occur in our parks such as the Song Thrush, Bullfinch, bats, Stag Beetle and Great Crested Newt.
- 1.4.7. The Borough currently contains 10 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) covering an area of 92ha. Longmoor Bog LNR, Highwood LNR, Lavell's Lake LNR, Heathlake LNR, Pearman's Copse LNR, and Aldermoor LNR are owned and managed by Wokingham Borough Council. Maiden Erlegh LNR is owned and managed by Earley Town Council, Ali's Pond LNR by Sonning Parish Council, Holt Copse and Joel Park by Wokingham Town Council, and Swallowfield Meadow by Swallowfield Parish Council.
- 1.4.8. There are 120 Local Wildlife Sites in Wokingham Borough. Latest data suggests that only 40% of these sites are under positive management.
- 1.4.9. A key objective of the Wokingham Biodiversity Forum is to engage with and support the various sectors of the local community. Communication with the local community has been undertaken through a series of press releases and a Wokingham Biodiversity Newsletter. In addition the Forum has attempted to raise the local skills base by providing a series of biodiversity courses.
- 1.4.10. The Wokingham Biodiversity Forum was established in 2000 and currently has over 200 members. The Forum has been instrumental in the review of the previous Biodiversity Action Plan, and it is anticipated that the Forum will continue to be engaged in the delivery and monitoring of this new BAP.

## **1.5. THREATS TO WOKINGHAM BOROUGH'S TOWNS AND VILLAGES**

- Residential or commercial development; the built environment is likely to expand within the Wokingham Borough area for the foreseeable future due to the proposed increase in housing numbers.
- Conflict with recreational use particularly concerning Local Nature Reserves
- Lack of recognition and understanding of wildlife value.
- Unsympathetic management and intensive horticulture.
- Increasing dwelling density in new developments, bringing increased levels of disturbance.
- Invasive non-native species (e.g. Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), American Mink (*Mustela vison*)).
- Increased levels of pollution (e.g. air-pollution).

- Anti-social behaviour, including fly-tipping and vandalism.

## **1.6. ASPIRATIONS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1.6.1. Long term aspirations: What do we want by 2100?**

- An active and involved local community that supports and promotes the borough's biodiversity.
- Local Nature Reserves and Urban Natural Green Space at least matches the Natural England recommendation (based on the population estimate of 175, 366 by 2029).
- That the Borough contains a network of at least 50 Local Nature Reserves.
- That all our Public Open Spaces (over 2ha) are managed with biodiversity as one of the objectives.
- All churchyards, cemeteries, school grounds and allotments are managed with biodiversity as one of the aims.
- All new developments have biodiversity taken in to account at the design stage.
- Priority species associated with towns and villages are given the opportunity to thrive.



<b>Target :</b> <b>Produce a minimum of one issue of the Biodiversity Newsletter annually</b>															
Explore potential partnerships and sources of funding to produce the Biodiversity Newsletter	WBC	Biodiversity Forum	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Ensure that Biodiversity Newsletter is available on WBC website	WBC	Biodiversity Forum	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Increase, and then maintain, newsletter circulation to above 2000 by 2018 (including electronic circulation)	WBC	Biodiversity Forum	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Target :</b> <b>Ensure that all Wokingham Borough children have access to an appropriate biodiversity focused outdoor educational programme</b>															
Provide an appropriate outdoor educational programme annually	WBC	BBOWT/ PC/TC/	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Provide 3 biodiversity workshops for young people each year	WBC	BBOWT/PC /TC/	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Target:</b> <b>Audit the biodiversity work of the Parish and Town Councils every 5 years</b>															
Produce and distribute agreed biodiversity questionnaire every 5 years	Biodiversity Forum	WBC		*					*					*	
Produce report including commendations every 5 years	Biodiversity Forum	WBC			*					*					*
<b>Target:</b> <b>Promote wildlife friendly gardening in the Borough</b>															
Secure funds to support a Wildlife Gardening project	WBC	Partners including BBOWT							*						



Organise and run at least six workshops on wildlife gardening by 2024 (1 every two years)	WBC	Partners including BBOWT		*		*		*		*		*		*		*	
<b>Target:</b> <i>Create 2ha of Traditional Orchards within the towns and villages of Wokingham Borough by 2024</i>																	
Recruit and train new volunteers in planting and maintaining the orchards				*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Provide a training event on the value of orchards for wildlife and on appropriate management									*								*
Promote new traditional orchard sites in at least 5 parishes																	

<b>ASPIRATION :</b> <b>THE AMOUNT OF URBAN NATURAL GREEN SPACE AND LOCAL NATURE RESERVES AT LEAST MATCHES THE NATURAL ENGLAND RECOMMENDATIONS (175.4HA BY 2029)</b>	<b>POTENTIAL DELIVERERS</b>		<b>YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE</b>														
	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
			<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
			<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Target:</b> <i>Achieve the recommended area of Urban Natural Green Space in Wokingham Borough</i>																	
Identify and designate an additional 78ha of Urban Natural Green Space and LNRs in Wokingham Borough	WBC	Town & Parish Councils /NE															*
<b>Target :</b> <i>Designate 5-10 new nature reserves by 2024</i>																	

Work with partners to identify and designate suitable new Local Nature Reserves within the Borough	WBC	Town & Parish Councils /NE	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Target :</b> <b>Maintain the survey data of urban green spaces to assess current level of provision</b>															
Maintain GIS database of urban green space updated annually	WBC	TVERC	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Develop a rolling program of enhancements to address those areas of deprivation identified in the database	WBC	Various partners	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Target:</b> <b>Ensure that all surveyed urban green spaces which meet the relevant criteria are designated as Local Wildlife Sites</b>															
Maintain county wide Local Records Centre and County Recorder system	WBC / TVERC	All Berks UA's	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Target :</b> <b>Ensure that all relevant new major developments contribute to the provision of urban green space</b>															
Ensure that all major development application are assessed for their impact on urban green space availability	WBC		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Any development that adversely affects the integrity of a wildlife corridor / or a Biodiversity Opportunity Area can be objected to as part of the planning process	WBC		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

ASPIRATION : THAT ALL OUR URBAN GREEN SPACES/PUBLIC OPEN SPACES (OVER 2HA) ARE MANAGED WITH BIODIVERSITY AS ONE OF THE OBJECTIVES	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE												
	Lead	Partner	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
			2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	4



<b>ASPIRATION :</b> <b>ALL NEW DEVELOPMENTS HAVE BIODIVERSITY TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AT THE DESIGN STAGE</b>	<b>POTENTIAL DELIVERERS</b>		<b>YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE</b>												
	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
			<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

**Target :**  
**Maintain up to date guidance material and advice on biodiversity and development for local authority officers, parish councils and developers**

Update guidance leaflet on biodiversity and development by 2018	WBC								*						
Ensure that the Biodiversity Officer is consulted on all appropriate plans, policies and planning applications	WBC		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

**Target :**  
**Raise awareness of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and seek opportunities for biodiversity delivery**

Ensure Biodiversity Opportunity Areas are included in relevant planning policy documents	WBC		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Support biodiversity initiatives within Biodiversity Opportunity Areas within the Borough	BLNP	Various partners	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

<b>ASPIRATION : PRIORITY SPECIES ASSOCIATED WITH TOWNS AND VILLAGES ARE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO THRIVE</b>	<b>POTENTIAL DELIVERERS</b>		<b>YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE</b>												
	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
			<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>



# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

## **2. WOODLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN**

## Table of Contents

### **Contents**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

#### **2.2. Links with other Habitat Action Plans and BAP Priority species**

#### **2.3. Current Status**

#### **2.4. Evaluation of Wokingham Borough's Woodlands**

#### **2.5. Threats to Wokingham Borough's Woodlands**

#### **2.6. Aspirations and Objectives**

#### **2.7. Implementation Plan**

## **2. WOODLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

2.1.1. This Habitat Action Plan covers all types of woodland and parkland.

2.1.2. The underlying geology drives the woodland habitats which can be found in the Borough; from the calcareous Beech woodlands over the chalk in the north, to the acid Oak woodlands over acidic Bagshot and Reading beds in the south and west. Between these areas mixed broad-leaved woodlands can be found over the predominantly neutral London Clay.

2.1.3. Ancient Semi-Natural woodlands (ASNW) are sites that have been continuously wooded since 1600, and are composed of native tree species which have not obviously been planted. This continuity of woodland cover has provided a refuge for a great variety of plants and animals. ASNW, together with Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS), are considered the most important woodlands for wildlife.

2.1.4. The Wokingham Borough Woodland Habitat Action Plan includes the following UK BAP Priority habitats:

- Lowland Beech and Yew woodland
- Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
- Wet Woodland
- Lowland Wood Pasture and Parkland

### **2.2. LINKS WITH OTHER HABITAT ACTION PLANS AND BAP PRIORITY SPECIES**

2.2.1. Woodland does not occur in isolation and forms a diverse mosaic with other habitats



such as hedgerows, grassland, heathland, and wetlands.

- 2.2.2. Wet woodland (riverine) is associated with the floodplains of the major rivers and streams of Wokingham Borough, occurring along the floodplains of the River Loddon, Blackwater and Thames. Actions within the Woodland HAP will therefore contribute to the objectives of the Wetland HAP.
- 2.2.3. Some potential sites for woodland plantation will have alternative target habitats as their ideal restoration, for example the Heathland, Grassland and Wetland HAPs may have a negative effect on the area of woodland within the Borough.
- 2.2.4. Numerous UK BAP Priority species are associated with the Borough's woodland, including: Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*), Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*), Stag Beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) and numerous bat species.

## **2.3. CURRENT STATUS**

- 2.3.1. The total area of woodland of 0.1ha and over in England is 1,097,000ha which represents 8.4% of the land area (Forestry Commission, 2002). The total area of woodland of 0.1ha and over in Berkshire is 18308ha which represents 14.5% of the land area (Forestry Commission, 2002a).
- 2.3.2. The extent of ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) and lowland mixed deciduous woodland in Berkshire has more than doubled since the 1960s, from 4350ha in 1960 to 9607ha in 2009. In 2009 there were 7551ha of lowland mixed deciduous woodland. Improved mapping techniques are likely to be the key reason for this increase. This figure does not give any indication to the management status of these woodlands.
- 2.3.3. In the 1980's it was estimated that there were 50-70000ha of wet woodland within the UK, of which about 30-40000ha was ASNW (UK Biodiversity Group, 2000). TVERC data from 2009 identified 448ha of wet woodland in Berkshire.

- 2.3.4. It is estimated that there are 1780ha of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) in Berkshire (Cloughley,P and Wicks, D, 1998).
- 2.3.5. Habitat mapping undertaken by TVERC has identified 1127.6ha of wood pasture and parkland in Berkshire.
- 2.3.6. In 2009 the extent of lowland beech and yew woodland in Berkshire was 503.6ha.

## **2.4. EVALUATION OF WOKINGHAM BOROUGH'S WOODLANDS**

- 2.4.1. Wokingham Borough is relatively rich in woodland habitats, 14% of the Borough is covered by woodland, which amounts to 2550ha (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, unpub). Of this area, over 1000ha is lowland mixed deciduous woodland and around 190ha is wood pasture and parkland. Wokingham Borough is of county importance for its woodland resource.
- 2.4.2. Wokingham Borough's wet riverine woodlands are of national importance as they form part of the UK stronghold of the Loddon Lily (*Leucojum aestivum*).
- 2.4.3. Wokingham Borough is of county importance for its Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW).
- 2.4.4. Forestry plantations, most often of conifers planted on ex heathland sites, are among the poorest habitats for wildlife, often with virtually no ground flora. However with the removal of tree cover heathland vegetation can be successfully re-established.

## **2.5. THREATS TO WOKINGHAM BOROUGH'S WOODLANDS**

- Loss of woodland to residential and commercial development, and through conversion to horse paddocks and private gardens.

- A decline in traditional coppice management resulting in the loss of dependent species (e.g. Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*)).
- Increased browsing pressure from rising deer populations results in reduced woodland regeneration (particularly of coppice).
- Conflict with recreational use of woodlands (e.g. trampling of vegetation, compaction, and disturbance of wildlife).
- Damage to woodland through inappropriate management, caused by lack of understanding / education (e.g. fly-tipping leading to the introduction of non-native garden species).
- Invasive alien species, such as Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*).

## **2.6. ASPIRATIONS, OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFIC TARGETS**

### **2.6.1. Long term aspirations - What do we want by 2100?**

- There is no decline in area of ASNW and PAWS woodland within the Borough.
- The total area of woodland in the Borough is increased to 20%.
- Targeting of habitat restoration and creation is prioritised within the Boroughs Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) to create networks of resilient wildlife habitats.
- All LWS woodlands are under positive conservation management.
- All PAWS within the Borough are replanted with native broad-leaved woodland.
- Broad-leaved woodland increased from 62% to 76% of the total woodland area within Wokingham Borough.

## 2.7. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2012-2024

<b>ASPIRATION :</b> <b>THERE IS NO DECLINE IN AREA OF ASNW AND PAWS WITHIN THE BOROUGH</b>	<b>POTENTIAL DELIVERERS</b>		<b>YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE</b>												
	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Partner</b>	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
			2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Target :</b> <b>Ensure that all Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) sites within the Borough of over 1ha are designated as Local Wildlife Sites by 2018</b>															
Contact all landowners to inform them about LWS	WBC	TVERC / FC							*						
<b>Target:</b> <b>Ensure that all development adversely affecting ASNW or PAWS sites is objected to within the planning consultation process</b>															
The Biodiversity Officer is consulted during the planning consultation on all developments affecting ASNW or PAWs sites	WBC		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	

<b>ASPIRATION :</b> <b>THE TOTAL AREA OF WOODLAND IN THE BOROUGH IS INCREASED TO 20%</b>	<b>POTENTIAL DELIVERERS</b>		<b>YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE</b>												
	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Partner</b>	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
			2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Target :</b> <b>Plant 110ha of new native broad-leaved woodland within the Borough by 2024</b>															

Seek opportunities for woodland creation in the Borough, including through the planning system	WBC	FC / NE / Various partners															*
<b>Target:</b> <b>Create 15 ha of wood pasture and parkland in the Borough by 2024</b>																	
Seek opportunities for wood pasture and parkland creation in the Borough, including through the planning system	WBC	FC / NE / Various partners															*
<b>Target:</b> <b>Ensure that no development within the Borough results in a net loss of woodland area or increased fragmentation of woodlands</b>																	
The Biodiversity Officer is consulted during the planning consultation on all developments affecting ASNW or PAWs sites	WBC		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

<b>ASPIRATION :</b> <b>TARGETING OF HABITAT RESTORATION AND CREATION IS PRIORITISED WITHIN THE BOROUGH'S BIODIVERSITY OPPORTUNITY AREAS (BOAS) TO CREATE NETWORKS OF RESILIENT WILDLIFE HABITATS</b>	<b>POTENTIAL DELIVERERS</b>		<b>YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE</b>														
	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
			<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
			<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Target :</b> <b>BOAs are used to inform most appropriate areas for habitat creation and restoration</b>																	
Set up delivery groups in each of the BOAs within Wokingham Borough by 2015	BLNP	Various partners				*											
Ensure that BOAs are included in relevant plans and policies	WBC /BLNP	Various partners	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Hold a woodland management advisory event for woodland owners	BLNP	WBC							*								







# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

## **3. GRASSLAND AND HEDGEROW HABITAT ACTION PLAN**

## Table of Contents

### **Contents**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

#### **3.2. Links with other Habitat Action Plans and BAP Priority Species**

#### **3.3. Current Status of Grasslands**

#### **3.4. Current Status of Hedgerows**

#### **3.5. Evaluation of Wokingham Borough's Grasslands**

#### **3.6. Evaluation of Wokingham Borough's Hedgerows**

#### **3.7. Threats to Wokingham Borough's Grasslands**

#### **3.8. Threats to Wokingham Borough's Hedgerows**

#### **3.9. Aspirations and Objectives**

#### **3.10. Implementation Plan**

## **3. GRASSLAND AND HEDGEROW HABITAT ACTION PLAN**

### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

- 3.1.1. This Habitat Action Plan (HAP) covers all types of lowland grassland and hedgerows.
- 3.1.2. Within Wokingham Borough the agriculturally unimproved grasslands range from acid grasslands on the Reading Beds and Bagshot beds in the south and east of the borough, through neutral grasslands mainly on the London clay to calcareous (or chalk) grassland in the north. In addition, much of the improved grassland within the borough lies within the floodplains of the Rivers Thames, Loddon and Blackwater, and is subject to periodic inundation.
- 3.1.3. Native hedgerows can be found throughout the Borough, and are typically associated with the agricultural land.
- 3.1.4. The Wokingham Borough Grassland and Hedgerow Habitat Action Plan includes the following UK BAP Priority habitats:
- Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh
  - Lowland Meadows
  - Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
  - Lowland Calcareous Grassland
  - Hedgerows

### **3.2. LINKS WITH OTHER HABITAT ACTION PLANS AND BAP**

#### **PRIORITY SPECIES**

- 3.2.1. Grassland does not occur in isolation and forms a diverse mosaic with other habitats such as ponds and woodlands.

- 3.2.2. Hedgerows have been included in the Grassland HAP as they are a key habitat within open landscapes, forming a vital role in the ecology of many species (e.g. a bird may nest in the hedgerow, but feed within the nearby grassland).
- 3.2.3. Wet grassland is associated with the major rivers and streams of the Borough, or where drainage is impeded and will be addressed as part of the Wokingham Borough Wetland HAP as well as the Grassland HAP.
- 3.1.5. Most of the grassland and hedgerows within the Borough is found on farmland. Engagement with the farming community, in particular using agri-environment stewardship funding, will be a key mechanism for delivering restoration of Wokingham Borough's grassland and hedgerow habitats in the long-term.
- 3.2.4. Numerous UK BAP Priority species associated with semi-natural grassland habitats occur in the Borough, including: Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*), Slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), Grass Snake (*Natrix natrix*), Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), and Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*).
- 3.2.5. Numerous UK BAP Priority species are associated with Hedgerows. In England there are 130 BAP Priority species (following the 2007 revised list) known to be significantly associated with hedgerows, including their trees, banks, basal flora and immediate margins. While few of these species are dependent on hedgerows alone, the loss of hedgerows, or a decline in their quality, would be likely to have an adverse affect on their populations.

Hedgerows are of particular importance to the conservation of threatened lichens (10 species), invertebrates (72), reptiles and amphibians (5), birds (20) and mammals (11). The majority (69%) of associated species are widespread within the UK, including most of the birds and mammals. While still often common, these widespread species are recognised as priorities for conservation action because their populations have declined rapidly in recent decades.

It is recommended that the needs of the 90 widespread species are taken into account in the delivery of the hedgerow Habitat Action Plan, and that regional and local BAP partnerships should take a lead on those species for which their areas are of particular importance, including rarities that require site-specific action.

Hedgelink selected 12 flagship species against to which to measure the impact of its policies, action and advice. Collectively they represent the requirements of nearly all 130 species. They are: Purple Ramping Fumitory (*Fumaria purpurea*), Orange-fruited Elm-lichen (*Caloplaca luteoalba*), Large (Moss) Carder-bee (*Bombus muscorum*), Goat Moth (*Cossus cossus*), Brown Hairstreak (*Thecla betulae*), Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*), Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citronella*), Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), and Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*). Of these species Common Lizard, Bullfinch, Yellowhammer, Soprano Pipistrelle and Hedgehog occur within Wokingham Borough.

### **3.3. CURRENT STATUS OF GRASSLANDS**

- 3.3.1. Grazing marshes have undergone significant losses throughout the UK. Indeed between 1930 and the 1980's approximately 64% of grazing marsh was lost from the Greater Thames area, mostly through arable conversion or development (Cloughley, P and Wicks, D, 1998).
- 3.3.2. Between 1930 and 1984 lowland unimproved grassland has decreased by 97% nationally (UK Steering Group, 1995). Mapping data from Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre has identified 229.4ha of lowland meadow habitat in Berkshire. This is a 94% decline between 1960 and 2009.
- 3.3.3. Data from Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre has identified only 108.9ha of lowland dry acid grassland remaining in Berkshire.

- 3.3.4. Between 1940's and the present day it has been estimated that there has been an 80% decline in calcareous grasslands nationally (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 2001). Berkshire contains 209.6ha of lowland calcareous grassland, this is a 58% decline from 1960. A survey of 29 Berkshire lowland calcareous grassland sites in 1985 found that 79% of sites were less than 10ha in size and that no sites surveyed were over 40ha (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 2001).

### **3.4. CURRENT STATUS OF HEDGEROWS**

- 3.4.1. Hedgerow surveys, whether of individual hedges, parishes, boroughs or counties, are immensely valuable for the information they provide about the diversity and state of the UK's hedges and what needs to be done to restore or maintain them. There is currently insufficient data to undertake any quantitative analysis of the hedgerow resource in the county.
- 3.4.2. All major structural components of the hedge are important. Many species use more than one structural component. The high value of hedgerow trees is of particular note given that numbers of such trees are currently falling rapidly.

### **3.5. EVALUATION OF WOKINGHAM BOROUGH'S GRASSLANDS**

- 3.5.1. There is approximately 450ha of Floodplain Grazing Marsh in Wokingham Borough within the floodplains of the rivers Loddon, Blackwater and Thames. Although majority of this is considered to be in poor conservation status. Wokingham Borough is likely to be of county importance for its grazing marshes.
- 3.5.2. There is only around 10ha of unimproved neutral grassland within Wokingham Borough. It is an extremely scarce resource, and Wokingham Borough is of county importance for its unimproved neutral grasslands (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 1999).
- 3.5.3. Calcareous grassland is also a scarce resource in the Borough. There are two separate sites Chalk Grassland at Remenham (4.8ha) and Happy Valley and the Conways (10.17ha), both these sites are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. The Chalk grassland at

Remenham site is known to contain a nationally rare plant Hairy Mallow (*Althaea hirsuta*) with has its own national Species Action Plan lead by Plantlife.

3.5.4. Less than 1ha of Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture are present in Wokingham Borough. This is an extremely scarce habitat within Wokingham Borough and within the county of Berkshire.

3.5.5. Unimproved grasslands have already suffered a catastrophic decline and the maintenance of the few remaining sites within the Borough is the priority of this plan.

### **3.6. THREATS TO WOKINGHAM BOROUGH'S GRASSLANDS**

- Residential and commercial development.
- Agricultural improvement or conversion to arable use.
- Conversion to private gardens and horse paddocks.
- Inappropriate management or changes in type of grassland management (e.g. lack of active grassland management leading to scrub invasion, over-grazing).
- Inappropriate management of roadside verges.
- Fragmentation of existing sites.
- Changes to field drainage patterns.
- Air pollution, including nitrate deposition.
- Conflict with recreational use of grasslands (e.g. trampling of vegetation, disturbance of wildlife).
- Fly-tipping by householders, leading to the introduction of non-native garden species.

### **3.7. EVALUATION OF WOKINGHAM BOROUGH'S HEDGEROWS**

3.7.1. A hedgerow is defined as any boundary line of trees or shrubs over 20m long and less than 5m wide, and where any gaps between the trees or shrub species are less than 20m wide (Bickmore, 2002). Any bank, wall, ditch or tree within 2m of the centre of the hedgerow is considered to be part of the hedgerow habitat, as is the herbaceous

vegetation within 2m of the centre of the hedgerow. The definition is limited to boundary lines of trees or shrubs, and excludes banks or walls without woody shrubs on top of them.

3.7.2. The extent of hedgerow habitat within Wokingham Borough is currently unknown.

## **3.8. THREATS TO WOKINGHAM BOROUGH'S HEDGEROWS**

- Removal for agricultural and development purposes.
- Neglect (no cutting or laying) leading to hedgerows changing into lines of trees and the development of gaps.
- Too frequent and badly timed cutting leading to poor habitat conditions, the development of gaps and probable species changes.
- Loss of hedgerow trees through senescence and felling, without encouraging replacements.
- Use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers right up to the bases of hedgerows leading to nutrient enrichment and a decline in species diversity.
- Increased stocking rates, particularly of sheep, leading to hedgerow damage and the need to fence fields. The presence of fences reduces the agricultural necessity for hedge maintenance and so hastens their decline. The modern practice of "ranching" (placing netting around several fields to form a grazing block) also contributes to the deterioration of internal hedges).

## **3.9. ASPIRATIONS, OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFIC TARGETS**

3.9.1. **Long-term aspirations - What do we want by 2100?**



- There is no decline in area or wildlife value of unimproved grassland sites within the Borough.
- Total area of semi-improved grassland being managed with nature conservation as the priority is increased from 32.5ha to 300ha.
- Targeting of habitat restoration and creation is prioritised within the Boroughs Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) to create networks of resilient wildlife habitats.
- Achieve positive management status on all unimproved grassland Local Wildlife Sites.
- All agricultural grasslands and hedgerows are managed in a wildlife sensitive way (e.g. within the confines of an agri-environment scheme).
- There are sustainable populations of BAP species that currently occur within the Borough.
- Grasslands and hedgerows to be publicly valued and appreciated part of our natural heritage.







<b>Target:</b> <b>Create 5ha of dry acid grassland within the Borough by 2024</b>														
Undertake restoration through mechanisms such as the planning system and agri-environment schemes	WBC / NE													*
<b>Target:</b> <b>Create 10ha of floodplain meadow within the Borough by 2024</b>														
Undertake restoration through mechanisms such as the planning system and agri-environment schemes	WBC / NE													*

<b>ASPIRATION :</b> <b>ENSURE THE HEDGEROW RESOURCE IN THE BOROUGH IS MAINTAINED AND ENHANCED FOR WILDLIFE</b>	<b>POTENTIAL DELIVERERS</b>		<b>YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE</b>											
	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
			<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
			<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Target :</b> <b>The extent of the Boroughs hedgerow resource and condition is known by 2018</b>														
Co-ordinate volunteer surveys of hedgerows in the Borough	WBC / TVERC	BBOWT / NE /Various partners							*					
<b>Target:</b> <b>Ensure that 50% of the current hedgerow resource is in favourable condition by 2024</b>														
Use agri-environment schemes and other resources (e.g. volunteer groups) to ensure appropriate hedgerow management	WBC	NE / Various partners												*
<b>Target:</b> <b>Restore or create 5km of hedgerow in the Borough by 2024</b>														

Increase the hedgerow resource in the Borough through various mechanisms (including agri-environment schemes, the planning system, and awareness raising)	WBC	NE / Various partners																*
---	-----	-----------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	---

<b>ASPIRATION :</b> <b>ACHIEVE 60% ON SINGLE DATA LIST INDICATOR 160 (NUMBER OF LWS UNDER POSITIVE MANAGEMENT) BY 2024</b>	<b>POTENTIAL DELIVERERS</b>		<b>YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE</b>															
	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
			<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
			<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>			

**Target :**  
**Ensure that 100% of LA owned unimproved grassland LWS are under positive management by 2024**

Produce and implement management plans for all LA owned unimproved grassland LWS by 2024	WBC	BBOWT/NE /other partners																*
--	-----	--------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	---

**Target :**  
**Ensure that at least 60% of non-LA owned unimproved grassland LWS are under positive management by 2024**

Ensure that at least 60% of non-LA owned LWS have an appropriate management plan in place by 2014	WBC	TVERC / NE																*
---	-----	------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	---

<b>ASPIRATION :</b> <b>ALL AGRICULTURAL GRASSLANDS AND HEDGEROWS ARE MANAGED IN A WILDLIFE SENSITIVE WAY (E.G. WITHIN THE CONFINES OF AN AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SCHEME)</b>	<b>POTENTIAL DELIVERERS</b>		<b>YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE</b>															
	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
			<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
			<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>			

<b>Target :</b> <b>Ensure that at least 25% of agricultural grasslands and hedgerows are covered by an agri-environment scheme by 2018</b>														
Work with NE to ensure appropriate advice and funding available for farmers	WBC	NE / BBOWT							*					
Promote wildlife friendly farming through one article a year in a local newspaper	WBC	Forum members	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

<b>ASPIRATION :</b> <b>THAT GRASSLANDS AND HEDGEROWS ARE A PUBLICLY VALUED AND APPRECIATED PART OF OUR NATURAL HERITAGE</b>	<b>POTENTIAL DELIVERERS</b>		<b>YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE</b>											
	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Partner</b>	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
			2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3

<b>Target :</b> <b>Promote the use and appreciation of grasslands to the general public</b>														
Ensure that at least two educational walks/talks/events/articles on grasslands have been produced / held each year	WBC	PC/TC/BBO WT	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

<b>Target :</b> <b>Promote the use and appreciation of hedgerows to the general public</b>														
Ensure that at least two educational walks/talks/events/articles on hedgerows have been produced / held by each year	WBC	PC/TC/BBO WT	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

<b>ASPIRATION :</b> <b>PRIORITY SPECIES ASSOCIATED WITH GRASSLANDS ARE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO THRIVE</b>	<b>POTENTIAL DELIVERERS</b>		<b>YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE</b>											
	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Partner</b>	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
			2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3

**Target :**

***Promote species conservation projects linked to grasslands and hedgerows***

Increase availability of Barn Owl and Kestrel nest boxes in suitable areas / replace old boxes (a minimum of one per year)	Biodiversity Forum	WBC	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
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# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

## **4. WETLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN**

## Table of Contents

### **Contents**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

#### **4.2. Links with other Habitat Action Plans and BAP Priority species**

#### **4.3. Current Status**

#### **4.4. Evaluation of Wokingham Borough's Wetlands**

#### **4.5. Threats to Wokingham Borough's Wetlands**

#### **4.6. Aspirations and Objectives**

#### **4.7. Implementation Plan**

## **4. WETLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN**

### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

- 4.1.1. This Habitat Action Plan covers all types of wetland habitat, including rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, swamp, and reedbeds.
- 4.1.2. Wokingham Borough is crossed by the River Loddon and bordered by the River Thames in the north and the River Blackwater to the south. In addition there are a number of smaller streams that feed into the main rivers, including the Barkham Brook, Emmbrook, Twyford Brook, Hare Hatch stream and the Foudry Brook.
- 4.1.3. Wokingham Borough is reputed to contain over 600 ponds. Ponds are particularly common in the parishes of Hurst, Ruscombe, Winnersh, Sonning and Shinfield.
- 4.1.4. Gravel extraction has been extensive in the Blackwater and lower Loddon valley and there are numerous large lakes within these areas. In addition there are a group of much older relatively acidic lakes in the south of the Borough.
- 4.1.5. The Wokingham Borough Wetland Habitat Action Plan includes the following UK BAP Priority habitat types:
- Rivers
  - Reedbeds
  - Mesotrophic Lakes
  - Eutrophic Standing Water
  - Ponds
  - Fen
  - Marsh and Swamp
  - Bog

## 4.2. LINKS WITH OTHER HABITAT ACTION PLANS AND SPECIES ACTION PLANS

- 4.2.1. Wetlands do not occur in isolation and they form a diverse mosaic with other habitats such as wet grassland, wet woodland and lowland bogs. Floodplain habitats such as wet grassland and wet woodland are covered in the Grassland and Hedgerows HAP and the Woodland HAP respectively. The lowland valley mires are covered in the Heathland HAP.
- 4.2.2. Rivers, streams and canals form valuable ecological corridors between otherwise isolated sites. The **BAP priority species** following species are associated with the Borough's wetland habitats: Smew (*Mergus albellus*), Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibious*), Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*), Pea Mussel (*Psidium tenuilineatum*), Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*), White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*), Pillwort (*Pilularia globulifera*), and Greater Water Parsnip (*Sium latifolium*).

## 4.3. CURRENT STATUS

- 4.3.1. Reedbeds, swamps and fens have declined enormously in recent decades and those that remain are often small and isolated (Cloughley,P and Wicks,D, 1998). Of the 900 reedbed site nationally only 50 are greater than 20ha in size (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 2001c). There are more than 40ha of reedbeds in Berkshire.
- 4.3.2. It is estimated that there are 178500ha of eutrophic (nutrient rich) standing open water in the UK excluding small pools and field ponds (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 2001c). Mapping by TVERC identified UK BAP Habitat 1498.1ha of Eutrophic Standing Waters; The London basin Natural area, part of which lies in Berkshire, contains over 3000ha of gravel pits and reservoirs and is deemed an outstanding area for its standing open water habitat (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 2001c).

- 4.3.3. Around 97% of standing waters in Britain are under 2ha in size and there are an estimated 220,000 ponds less than 2ha in lowland Britain (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 2001c). It has been estimated that 75% of ponds have been lost since 1880's (Cloughley,P and Wicks,D, 1998). A number of SSSIs and around 100 Local Wildlife Sites in Berkshire contain ponds although there are many more unrecorded ponds in the county (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 2001c).
- 4.3.4. Habitat mapping data from TVERC identified 27ha of Mesotrophic Lakes in the county of Berkshire in 2009.
- 4.3.5. The three main rivers within the Wokingham Borough are: the River Thames, the River Loddon and the River Blackwater.

#### **4.4. EVALUATION OF WOKINGHAM BOROUGH'S WETLANDS**

- 4.4.1. Although many of the lakes and ponds in the Borough contain a diverse marginal vegetation, it is estimated that there are only 10ha of reedbeds in the Borough which amounts to less than 10% of the Berkshire resource within 14% of the county (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 2001c). The reedbeds of the Loddon valley are of county importance for their wintering Bittern.
- 4.4.2. There are a total of 19 flooded gravel pits within Wokingham Borough, the majority (17) of which are in the Loddon Valley between Winnersh and Twyford. This complex of lakes and wetlands supports regionally important populations of a variety of wildfowl including nationally important numbers of wintering Gadwall and Smew. There are a group of much older small acid lakes in the south of the Borough, but only one is still known to have a characteristic acid aquatic flora (Heathlake SSSI).

- 4.4.3. Heathlake SSSI was designated due to the site being of national importance for its populations of acid loving aquatic plants. However the aquatic flora is now very limited due to eutrophication caused by housing development.
- 4.4.4. It is estimated that there are around 600 small ponds within the Borough, although little information is known about their ecological value. Small ponds can be important for amphibians and invertebrates. A number of ponds in Wokingham Borough are of national importance for their populations of Great Crested Newts.
- 4.4.5. Wokingham Borough contains 75km of what the Environment Agency terms "main river" and river floodplain accounts for 20% of the Borough, a total of 3440ha. All the rivers within Wokingham Borough are classified as lowland rivers with shallow gradients and rich geology.

The three main rivers in the Borough are:

- River Loddon: A predominantly neutral river, of high ecological quality. It has suffered comparatively little "re-engineering" or dredging in the past and there is no right of navigation. The river has a diverse flora and fauna including such rarities as Loddon Lily (*Leucojum aestivum*), Loddon Pondweed (*Potamogeton nodosu*) and Club-tailed Dragonfly (*Gomphus vulgatissimus*) and signs of Otters (*Lutra lutra*).
- River Thames: This major river is extensively managed both for boat traffic and flood defense purposes. It retains significant ecological interest and the river has a diverse flora and fauna including such rarities as Loddon Lily (*Leucojum aestivum*), Loddon Pondweed (*Potamogeton nodosu*) and Club-tailed Dragonfly (*Gomphus vulgatissimus*).
- River Blackwater: The river flows through the predominantly urban areas of Aldershot, Ash, Frimley and Camberley and is therefore prone to significant pollution incidents. It retains significant ecological interest (especially within the predominantly rural catchment around Finchampstead), and has a diverse flora and fauna including such rarities as Loddon Pondweed (*Potamogeton nodosu*),

Club-tailed Dragonfly (*Gomphus vulgatissimus*) (According to the county database and NBN gateway this has not been recorded here since 1994 and Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*).

- 4.4.6. Most of the streams of Wokingham Borough are of reasonably high ecological quality. However the Emmbrook, which flows through the Molly Millars Lane area of Wokingham Borough, has been subject to a number of pollution incidents in the past. These streams often provide ideal conditions for a number of rare species, such as the White Clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*).
- 4.4.7. Part of the River Loddon has been designated a SSSI and is nationally important for its Loddon Lily (*Leucojum aestivum*) and Loddon Pondweed (*Potamogeton nodosu*) populations.

## 4.5. THREATS TO WOKINGHAM DISTRICT'S WETLANDS

- Drainage and agricultural infilling of ponds, resulting in habitat isolation.
- Residential and commercial development.
- Inappropriate river engineering.
- Landfill and fly-tipping.
- Pollution, eutrophication, and siltation.
- Scour effects due to re-routed storm water.
- Water abstraction.
- Conflict with recreational use of wetlands.
- Artificially high fish stocks.
- Colonisation by invasive non-native species (e.g. Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and American Mink (*Mustela vison*)).
- Lack of management of ponds and lakes.

## **4.6. ASPIRATIONS AND OBJECTIVES SPECIFIC TARGETS**

### **4.6.1. Aspirations - What do we want by 2100?**

- The river floodplains are maintained as fully functioning wetland corridors.
- There is no decline in area or wildlife value of wetlands within the Borough.
- All wetland LWS in positive conservation management.
- Targeting of habitat restoration and creation is prioritised within the Boroughs Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) to create networks of resilient wildlife habitats.
- All mineral extraction sites contribute a net benefit to wetland biodiversity.
- Increase the area of reedbed from 10ha to 100ha, including at least one of at least 20ha.
- Maintain a network of at least 100 ponds in favourable condition and integrated into the wider countryside.
- Wetlands are a valued and appreciated part of our natural heritage.





ASPIRATION : MAINTAIN A NETWORK OF AT LEAST 100 PONDS IN FAVOURABLE CONDITION AND INTEGRATED INTO THE WIDER COUNTRYSIDE	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE													
	Lead	Partner	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
			20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
			11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	22	22	22	22	22	
			23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	

**Target :**

**Maintain an inventory of the Boroughs pond resource by 2024**

Maintain GIS inventory of the Boroughs ponds	WBC	TVERC	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
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**Target :**

**Create at least 40 new ponds and restore at least 5 old ponds by 2024**

Identify opportunities for pond creation and restoration in the Borough, including through the planning system and the agri-environment schemes interim milestone needed or yearly ongoing action?	WBC / NE	Various partners													*
Create 4 new ponds per year			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Restore 1 old pond every other year				*		*		*		*		*		*	

ASPIRATION : TARGETING OF HABITAT RESTORATION AND CREATION IS PRIORITISED WITHIN THE BOROUGH'S BIODIVERSITY OPPORTUNITY AREAS (BOAS) TO CREATE NETWORKS OF RESILIENT WILDLIFE HABITATS	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE												
	Lead	Partner	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
			20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
			11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	22	22	22	22	22
			23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23

**Target :**

**Ensure that habitat creation and restoration is prioritised within the BOA**

Set up delivery groups in each of the BOAs within Wokingham Borough by 2014	BLNP	Various partners					*								
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# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

## **5. HEATHLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN**

## Table of Contents

### **Contents**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

#### **5.2. Links with other Habitat Action Plans and BAP Priority species**

#### **5.3. Current Status**

#### **5.4. Evaluation of Wokingham Borough's Heathlands**

#### **5.5. Threats to Wokingham Borough's Heathlands**

#### **5.6. Aspirations and Objectives**

#### **5.7. Implementation Plan**



## **5. HEATHLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN**

### **5.1. Introduction**

- 5.1.1. This Habitat Action Plan (HAP) covers all types of lowland heathland, lowland valley mires or bogs and acid grassland.
- 5.1.2. Lowland heathland is characterised by the presence of dwarf ericaceous species, such as Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), gorses (*Ulex spp.*) and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), and the typically undulating landscape forms associated with it.
- 5.1.3. The lowland heathland within Wokingham Borough occurs where the acidic Reading or Bagshot Beds are exposed. This is mainly towards the south of the Borough in the parishes of Finchampstead and Wokingham. In the valley bottoms or where drainage is impeded lowland valley mires occur.
- 5.1.4. The Wokingham Borough Heathland Habitat Action Plan includes the following UK BAP Priority habitats:
- Lowland heathland
  - Lowland raised bogs

### **5.2. LINKS WITH OTHER HABITAT ACTION PLANS**

- 5.2.1. Heathland does not occur in isolation, it forms a diverse mosaic with other habitats such as scrub, woodland and open water. The transition zones, between heathland and scrub or open water, are critically important for many of the UK BAP heathland species
- 5.2.2. The following UK BAP Priority species are all associated with heathland habitats within Wokingham Borough: Adder (*Vipera berus*), Nightjar (*Caprimulgus*)

*europaeus*), Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*), Silver-studded Blue (*Plebejus argus*) and Pillwort (*Pilularia globulifera*).

5.2.3. Coniferous plantations, secondary birch (*Betula* spp.) woodland and bog willow and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) carr are often associated with heathlands, but in this instance are addressed in the Woodland HAP.

5.2.4. Acid grassland is often associated with lowland heathland within the Borough, but for the purposes of this plan has been addressed as part of the Wokingham Borough Grassland HAP.

### **5.3. CURRENT STATUS**

5.3.1. In England only 17% of the heathland present in 1800 survives today (Berkshire Heathlands Project, 1998). There has been a 66% decline in Berkshire's lowland heathland between 1960 and 2009. The losses in this habitat have been attributed to agricultural intensification and abandonment of traditional management practices (especially the loss of grazing from many sites) and more recently forestry and urban development (Cloughley, P and Wicks, D, 1998).

5.3.2. The most recent mapping data available from Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre has identified 442.1ha of lowland heathland in Berkshire. All of Berkshire's heathland falls into the London Basin Natural Area. Only 10% of the Thames Basin Natural Area's 3200ha of heathland occurs within Berkshire. Whilst a small part of the total picture, Berkshire heathlands are a significant component of this Natural Area (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 1998).

### **5.4. EVALUATION OF WOKINGHAM BOROUGH'S HEATHLANDS AND BOGS**

5.4.1. There are approximately 20ha of Lowland Heath in Wokingham Borough occurring at six main sites: Simon's Wood, Longmoor Bog SSSI, Heathlake SSSI, Shepperlands Farm, Highwood LNR and Gorrick plantation. Only two sites, Longmoor Bog SSSI (6.3ha) and Simons Wood (6ha) are significantly greater than 1ha in extent.

5.4.2. Only 0.09% of the Borough land area is known to support Lowland Heathland. However, it is an extremely scarce resource in Berkshire, and so Wokingham Borough is of county importance for its heathland (Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum, 1999).

## **5.5. THREATS TO WOKINGHAM BOROUGH'S HEATHLANDS AND BOGS**

- Agricultural conversion
- Residential and commercial development
- Conflict with recreational use of heaths (i.e. disturbance of wildlife - in particular ground-nesting birds, trampling of vegetation)
- Fire (accidental or arson)
- Lack of active management (e.g. inappropriate grazing) leading to scrub encroachment
- Inappropriate tree planting
- Sustainability of heathland grazing schemes
- Water abstraction

## **5.6. ASPIRATIONS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **5.6.2 Aspirations - What do we want by 2100?**

- No net loss in either the total area or the wildlife value of current heathland sites in the Borough.
- Total area of heathland is increased to 200ha.

- Targeting of habitat restoration and creation is prioritised within the Boroughs Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) to create resilient networks of wildlife habitats.
- All heathland Local Wildlife Sites are in positive conservation management.
- All priority species associated with the borough's heathlands are able to thrive.
- Heathlands are a valued and appreciated part of our natural heritage.



ASPIRATION : TARGETING OF HABITAT RESTORATION AND CREATION IS PRIORITISED WITHIN THE BOROUGH'S BIODIVERSITY OPPORTUNITY AREAS (BOAS) TO CREATE NETWORKS OF RESILIENT WILDLIFE HABITATS	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE												
	Lead	Partner	2 0 1 2	2 0 1 3	2 0 1 4	2 0 1 5	2 0 1 6	2 0 1 7	2 0 1 8	2 0 1 9	2 0 2 0	2 0 2 1	2 0 2 2	2 0 2 3	2 0 2 4
<b>Target :</b> <i>Ensure that habitat creation and restoration is prioritised within the BOA</i>															
Set up delivery groups in each of the BOAs within Wokingham Borough by 2014	BLNP	Various partners			*										
Ensure that BOAs are included in relevant plans and policies	WBC	BLNP	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

ASPIRATION : 40HA OF HEATHLAND IS CREATED IN THE BOROUGH BY 2024	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR FOR ACTION TO BE COMPLETED OR IN PLACE												
	Lead	Partner	2 0 1 2	2 0 1 3	2 0 1 4	2 0 1 5	2 0 1 6	2 0 1 7	2 0 1 8	2 0 1 9	2 0 2 0	2 0 2 1	2 0 2 2	2 0 2 3	2 0 2 4
<b>Target :</b> <i>Identify priority areas for future heathland re-creation by 2012</i>															
Identify sites for restoration to heathland for plan period 2012-24 by 2014	WBC	PC / TC / Various partners			*										
<b>Target :</b> <i>Re-create 20ha of heathland within the Borough by 2024</i>															
Continue development of heathland restoration/re-creation project at Simons Wood	NT	WBC / NE							*						
Undertake restoration/re-creation of heathland at Heathlake LNR by 2018	WBC	NE							*						



