

Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Action Plan

Foreword

In 2011, our Biodiversity Partnership welcomed the publication of the new Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for Lowland Derbyshire, to cover the period 2011-2020. The revised BAP introduced a new, logical and spatial approach to Biodiversity Action Planning within our area. Previously, BAPs across the country had focussed upon promoting the conservation, restoration and management of priority BAP habitats, and conservation action for priority BAP species, wherever possible. Whilst they had been very successful in identifying and promoting conservation priorities and coordinating action, it became apparent that the process should be reviewed and refined further, in order to maximise biodiversity benefits.

In the years leading up to the BAP review, there had been a growing awareness that the UK contained a diversity of landscapes that were distinctive from one another and unique in their own right – not only in their appearance, but also in their history and land use and in the environment and habitats they support. In a varied county like Derbyshire, there were clearly huge differences between the types of landscapes present across the county, and in the distribution of species and habitats. Within each landscape type there was a characteristic mix of habitats. Some are characteristically dominant in an area, some are rare or localised in their occurrence, and others absent entirely. It became apparent that it was important not to damage the distinctiveness of these landscapes by encouraging inappropriate habitats to be placed into them. Perhaps more importantly, it was evident that habitat creation and species conservation were more likely to be successful when undertaken within those landscape areas in which they would naturally be found. The prevailing conditions clearly suited certain habitats and species, and conservation action directed towards them would add to the existing resource in that area.

Thus, in 2011, a landscape-approach to Biodiversity Action Planning in Lowland Derbyshire was born. We divided the county into eight subdivisions, based on landscape character, and the distinctiveness of the species and habitats found in each one. For these eight areas we produced specific and detailed 'area action plans' and we set targets for appropriate habitat creation, restoration and management, as well as highlighting the important priority species found there too. The principle was clear: to ensure the right habitats and species were protected and enhanced in each area.

Across the country, many other local BAPs began to shift towards a similar landscape-scale format, helping everyone appreciate which habitats are most appropriate to each distinct part of any given region. This approach has worked well, although the government's replacement of the UKBAP with the *UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework* in 2012 removed the national requirement to capture and report back on detailed local (LBAP) achievements across the country. This meant that local BAP Partnerships were no longer required to report on biodiversity delivery in their area, and Natural England withdrew financial support to these partnerships, resulting in the loss of many LBAP coordinators. Although the UKBAP has been superseded, it is important to stress that the lists of Priority BAP Habitats and Priority BAP Species are still legally recognised within Section 40 and 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). They are now more correctly referred to as habitats and species of "Principal Importance" for biodiversity conservation.

Over the last few years, and in common with LBAP partnerships across the country, our partnership has seen its finances gradually dwindle, whilst our work priorities have also been changing. Since 2013, we have encouraged our part-time BAP Project Officer to spend a significant amount of their time supporting our Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP). It is pleasing that our LNP fully supports the principles of the LBAP, both here and in Nottinghamshire.

Inevitably, with this shift in work commitments, the resources available to capture and monitor detailed achievements towards local BAP targets have correspondingly diminished.

Partnership funding to support our LBAP Project Officer post eventually ran out in May 2017. However, it is important to recognise that this does not reduce the validity of the published Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Action Plan in any way whatsoever. Indeed, members of the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership firmly believe the principle of a landscape approach will remain valid for many years to come. Whilst the current LBAP established priorities and targets up to 2020, we hope that our partnership will then be able to find the resources to undertake a minor review and update of the LBAP to take it into the next period of 2020-2030. We are, however, confident that the principles embodied with the current LBAP (i.e. of a landscape approach to biodiversity action planning, of division of the county according to landscape type and environmental character, and of encouraging delivery of the right species and habitats in the right places) will still be relevant and valid as we move beyond 2020.

As a consequence, it is envisaged that any review of the Biodiversity Action Plan will leave these key principles unaltered and might instead focus on the removal of the very specific and detailed targets found in the 2011-2020 version of the BAP. This is simply because the monitoring of these detailed targets may no longer be practicable within the resources available. In addition, by 2020 and beyond, there will undoubtedly be new conservation projects in operation, whilst others will have finished. Nevertheless, members of the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership feel strongly that, whilst the specific opportunities for biodiversity action will undoubtedly be different, they should still all be guided by the principles laid out within this LBAP which will remain valid for many years to come.

So, whether or not we are in a position in 2020 to commission an update of this document, we urge all local planners and local authorities, ecological consultants and conservation organisations to continue to promote, recognise and endorse the broad principles and approach contained within the Lowland Derbyshire BAP, both up to 2020, and well beyond.

Steering Group
Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership
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