

National Forest Area Action Plan



View towards Robin Wood. Credit: Derbyshire County Council

Prepared by the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership



This document is part of the Lowland Biodiversity Action Plan 2011-2020

National Forest Area

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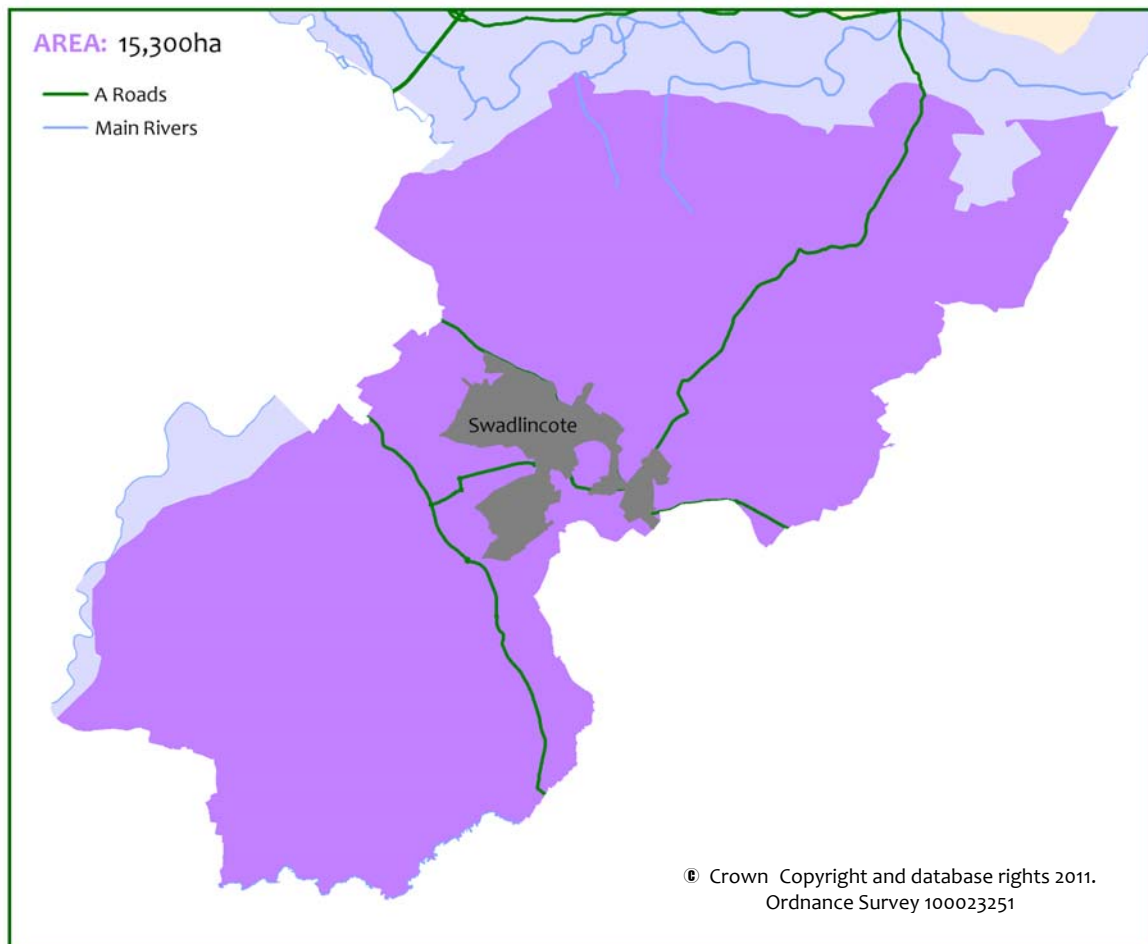
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8. National Forest Area - ACTION PLAN -



Map of National Forest Action Area

For further detail see Maps section

8.1 Area Description:

This is a complex area comprising three sub-areas. The Melbourne Parklands in the north is an undulating mixed farming landscape with country houses, landscaped parks and estate plantations to the north of Charnwood Forest. Large areas are intensively farmed for arable crops with low, fragmented hedgerows and few hedgerow trees. The Swadlincote area comprises fragmented woodlands, occasional mixed species hedgerows and more recent post-industrial habitats. The Claylands in the south is a gently rolling mixed farming landscape with regular shaped fields enclosed by hawthorn hedgerows, remnant unimproved grassland and occasional estate plantations. Minor stream corridors provide opportunities for wetland habitats. Historic parkland such as Calke Abbey has substantial woodland with veteran trees. Much of the area lies within the National Forest providing opportunities for environmental enhancement.

The area includes three Sites of Special Scientific Interest and part of the River Mease Special Area of Conservation (SAC), one Local Nature Reserve, 4 RIGS, 79 Local Wildlife Sites and a number of potential Local Wildlife Sites.

The National Forest area comprises six Derbyshire Landscape Character Types:

- Wooded Estatelands
- Village Estate Farmlands
- Riverside Meadows
- Coalfield Village Farmlands
- Sandstone Slopes & Heaths
- Estate Farmlands

Use the Derbyshire County Council online mapping system to view Landscape Character Types within this Lowland Derbyshire LBAP area. www.derbyshire.gov.uk/maps

This Action Area includes the settlements of Repton, Ticknall, Swadlincote, Overseal, Walton on Trent, Lullington.

8.2 Vision

A managed working landscape, where existing habitats are buffered and linked with new habitats to create strong habitat corridors. Hedgerows especially are strengthened where they form vital corridors.

8.3 The Challenges and Opportunities

The mineral extraction industry and subsequent development has resulted in a fragmented landscape in and around the Swadlincote part of this area. There has been considerable regeneration in the former coalfield part of the area, with much of this land having been planted with woodland supported by grants from the National Forest Company. Other habitats around this area are now very fragmented. Semi-natural grassland in particular is rare in this area.

The National Forest area covers a very large proportion of this area and has its own biodiversity action plan which guides habitat creation. Between 1992 and 2010 more than 1,000 ha of woodland was planted, funded by the National Forest Company. Work is now taking place to look strategically at this work and target areas which will links these sites through appropriate habitats corridors. There remains significant opportunity for habitat creation and targeted restoration and management work under agri-environmental schemes in the National Forest.

The area includes 79 Local Wildlife Sites, only 34 of which (43%) are in 'favourable' or 'recovering' condition. The main reasons for 'unfavourable'

condition assessments are associated with non-native species present in woodlands, and the lack of management on grasslands and wetlands. See section 8.3.3 for a list of key sites in this National Forest Action Area.

8.3.1 Existing initiatives and projects

The **National Forest** covers almost 90% of this area and parts of Leicestershire and Staffordshire amounting to 200 square miles. The concept of the National Forest was to transform an area of lowland England with a low coverage of woodland to one which had a much higher coverage of woodland and other connected habitats. In 1991 the National Forest area as a whole had 6% woodland coverage, by 2010 this had risen to 18% with more than 700 ha of woodland planted in this area of lowland Derbyshire. The National Forest Company, which operates in the National Forest area, runs a number of grant schemes encouraging landowners to create habitats, especially where these form wildlife corridor links to mature habitats.

The area to the north of Hartshorne falls within the Trent Higher Level Stewardship targeting area. One of the primary aims of this targeting area is to provide an expansion to the parkland habitat at Calke Abbey so that species found within the veteran trees might in time be able to colonise other nearby parklands such as Donnington Park which is just over the county border in Leicestershire.

8.3.2 Main landowning bodies

A number of relatively large estates make up the majority of the landholding in this area. These include Melbourne, Bretby, Church Commissioners Estates, National Trust and Severn Trent Water.

8.3.3 Key Sites

The key sites in National Forest Action Area are:

- **National Nature Reserve:** Calke Abbey
- **SSSIs:** River Mease Special Area for Conservation (SAC), Calke Abbey SSSI, Carvers Rocks SSSI, Ticknall Limeyards SSSI.
- **LNRs:** Coton Park LNR
- **Others:** Foremark Reservoir, Grange Wood , Repton Shrubs, Robin Wood, Staunton Harold Reservoir and South Wood .

8.4 KEY ACTIONS for the National Forest area.

1. The **primary habitat objective** within the National Forest area is the maintenance, restoration and expansion of priority habitats, especially woodlands and grasslands to achieve targets in Table 8.1 below
2. The **secondary objective** is to increase connectivity of semi-natural habitats to create larger habitat complexes using priority habitats wherever possible. New habitats such as plantation woodland and hedgerows will be key to achieving this objective.
3. Target renewing Entry Level Stewardship agreement holders to include appropriate actions for farmland birds and field margins.
4. Strengthen hedgerow corridors, especially where they link with woodlands.
5. Re-introduce dormice to the area, via a recognised re-introduction programme and monitor the population.

Full targets for all Priority Habitats and Species are listed in Tables 8.1 and 8.2
All actions listed in the separate **Generic Action Plan** also apply to this area.

8.5 KEY TARGETS for the National Forest area.

8.5.1 Targets for UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

Table 8.1 below lists the specific habitat targets for the National Forest area. The requirements of UK BAP reporting mean that our own LBAP targets need to be presented as cumulative figures. The meaning of each column is explained below the table. See Maps section for the distribution of primary habitat features in this Action Area.

UK BAP Priority Habitat	(1) Current Extent at 2011 (i.e. Maintenance* Target to 2020)	Targets for 2011-2020		
		(2) Manage*	(3) Restore*	(4) Expand*
Primary feature:				
Lowland meadow	12 ha	12 ha	150 ha	20 ha
Hedgerows	unknown	additional 10 km	n/a	7 ha
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	2,194 ha	2,000 ha	n/a	150 ha
Wet woodland	23 ha	15 ha	n/a	8 ha
Wood-pasture and parkland	4 sites	4 sites	n/a	1 site
Lakes and canals	3 lakes	3 lakes	n/a	n/a
Ponds	> 200 ponds	100 ponds	20 ponds	25 ponds
Secondary feature:				
Field margins	unknown	100 ha [#]		
Lowland dry acid grassland	8 ha	8 ha	40 ha	5 ha
Floodplain grazing marsh	unknown	10 ha	n/a	10 ha

Localised feature:				
Heathland	n/a	n/a	0.2 ha	0.5 ha
Traditional orchard	61 sites	20 sites	n/a	10 sites
Open mosaic habitats	Unknown [∞]			
Lowland calcareous grassland	8 ha	8 ha	n/a	n/a

Table 8.1 Targets for National Forest Action Area 2011-2020.

*Table explanation:

Terminology and measurements are the same as those used in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). These are:

- (1) **'Maintenance'**—this is the current 2011 resource of each Priority Habitat, irrespective of condition and management that we must, *at the very least*, keep and carry forward into the next plan period after 2020. (i.e. no net loss.)
- (2) **'Manage'** – The amount of Priority Habitat in (1) that we want to be under appropriate management to maintain in 'favourable' condition. This is a cumulative target, continuing on from the previous plan period.
- (3) **'Restore'** – Habitat which is not in a 'favourable' condition, but which is under restorative management to bring it up to that condition. This is a cumulative target, continuing on from the previous plan period.
- (4) **'Expand'** – New habitat created from scratch. This could be on a new site or an extension to an existing one. The target is for this Plan Period, though some habitats, - such as woodland - take far longer to fully develop.

Notes to accompany Table 8.1

Calke Abbey forms the core of the parkland habitat within the area, two current Higher Level Stewardship schemes have made provision to expand the parkland habitat, by planting suitable specimen trees within a grassland habitat. Efforts should be made to continue this expansion, where possible, by linking parkland at Calke with other smaller parkland in the area and over the county border.

Grassland, woodland and hedgerow creation should also be targeted where the underlying ground conditions are suitable and it links existing habitats.

Pond creation is suitable anywhere in the area, but is especially important where new ponds will add to existing pond networks, and can support great crested newt populations. Restoration should be targeted on sub-priority habitat, especially where it links to priority habitats.

For **field margins** it is not possible to set separate targets for management, restoration or expansion. A single overall target for simply increasing this resource is provided. Figures can only be based on Entry Level Stewardship

monitoring. Further habitat may also be provided through Living Bird Table initiatives.

∞ **Open mosaic habitats** the distribution of this habitat is not well understood at the start of this Plan Period (see Generic Action Plan). Its presence is, however, important in this area. It should be maintained in situ wherever possible, especially where it contributes to a wider network linking key habitats.



Calke ponds and weirs project.
Credit: Debbie Alston

8.5.2 Targets for UK BAP PRIORITY SPECIES

There are 93 UK BAP Priority Species recorded within the National Forest area since 2000. The distribution and status of many of these species is not currently well known, and consequently it is not possible to set meaningful targets for them. However, there are other species about which we do know enough to be able to set targets, monitor and assess their success. These are shown below in Table 8.2

The full list of BAP Species for the National Forest area is given in Table 8.3 (see Section 8.6.2)

UK BAP Priority Species	Range targets to 2020 (1km ²)	Range expansion targets 2011-2020 (1km ²)	Method of expansion
Dingy skipper	9	5	Appropriate Habitat enhancement
Dormouse	nil	2	Natural England approved re-introduction programme
Great-crested newt	8	2	Targeted pond creation
Grizzled Skipper	1	1	Appropriate Habitat enhancement
Oak Polypore	2	Maintain current extent	Appropriate habitat enhancement
Otter	3	2	Appropriate habitat enhancement
Water vole	2	2	Mink control and appropriate habitat enhancement
White clawed crayfish	4	1	Ark development and appropriate habitat enhancement

Table 8.2 Targets for UK BAP Species within the National Forest Action Area.

Efforts should be targeted in this area to maintaining the existing populations of water voles, white-clawed crayfish and skipper butterflies. Targeted pond creation can aid with great crested newt range expansion. Otters have only been recorded at one location along the River Mease, however, with increased monitoring efforts their presence will hopefully be revealed in more kilometre grid squares.

Dingy skippers are less well recorded in this area, than those in the north of the LBAP area. They have been recorded in nine grid squares (9 x 1 km²) since 2000, one of these is at Carvers Rocks, others are on sites in Swadlincote where glades exist in recently planted woodlands. **Target:** Increase range by five 1 km² by 2020

Dormice have not been recorded in south Derbyshire since the start of the 1900's, where they are recorded in the Victorian County History as scarce in southern

Derbyshire. National 'nut hunts' have failed to find them. A suitable site in the Action Area has been highlighted as a potential for a licensed re-introduction scheme.

Target: Increase range to two 1 km² by 2020

Great-crested newts have been recorded in eight grid squares (8 x 1 km²) since 1990, many of these records are very old and could relate to populations that no longer exist or that are under development pressure. **Target:** Increase range by two 1 km² by 2020

Grizzled skippers have been recorded in only one grid square (1 x 1 km²) since 2000. The species has not been recorded at the site in Swadlincote in recent years and it is believed that it may be extinct in the area. **Target:** Increase range by one 1 km² by 2020

Oak Polypore has been recorded a few times since 2000 associated with the veteran trees at Calke Abbey, it has been recorded in two grid squares (2 x 1 km²). One specimen was removed and preserved at Kew. **Target:** Maintain 2011 range by 2020

Otters have been recorded in three grid squares (3 x 1 km²) since 1990. The River Mease Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is designated for the presence of a number of key species, including otters, although they have only recently been recorded in 1m grid square along the river in the LBAP area. Old records of otters exist from Foremark and Staunton Harold Reservoir. **Target:** Increase range by two 1 km² by 2020

Water Voles have suffered a large decline in the area over the last 15 years or so. They have only been recorded in two grid squares (2 x 1 km²) since 2000 and are in isolated areas that are very vulnerable to the future of the population. **Target:** Increase range by two 1 km² by 2020

White-clawed crayfish are rare within the area, only being recorded in four grid squares (4 x 1 km²) since 2000. The core of this population is associated with Calke Abbey, where work has been done recently to enhance appropriate habitats on one of the main lakes. Two ark sites have been set up nearby on National Trust owned land. **Target:** Increase range by one 1 km² by 2020



Dormouse.
Credit: Debbie Alston

8.6 Current Biodiversity Resources

This list of resources within the National Forest area has been divided into three parts:

- 8.6.1. UK BAP Priority Habitat Resources
- 8.6.2 UK BAP Priority Species Resources
- 8.6.3 Organisational and Manpower Resources

8.6.1 UK BAP Priority Habitat and other Resources

The figures below show the total amount of each Priority Habitat known to exist in the National Forest area at the start of this Plan Period in 2011. Figures for sub-priority and newly created habitats are given if known.

Brief notes on their distribution within the area then follow.



Total area of the National Forest region = **15,283 ha**
 Total area of Priority biodiversity resource at start of Plan Period = **2,788 ha**
 Percentage of National Forest containing this biodiversity resource = **18.2%**

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland:

Ancient Semi-natural woodland =	166 ha
Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites =	268 ha
Secondary =	357 ha
Plantation =	1,403 ha

Wet Woodland:

23 ha

Wood pasture and parkland: (4 sites)

336 ha

Traditional orchard: (61 sites)

19 ha

Lowland meadow:

12 ha

(Plus 647 ha of sub-priority and 57 ha of newly created)

Lowland Calcareous:

8 ha

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland:

8 ha

(Plus 45 ha sub-priority and 2ha of newly created)

Rush-pasture: (7 ha of sub-priority, 4 ha newly created)

Wetland:

Ponds: >200 ponds

Lakes (3 lakes)

181 ha

Reedbed

0.5 ha

Swamp

6 ha

Location of Priority Habitats in the Landscape:

Primary features:

Lowland deciduous woodland: Few ancient woodlands, but now the landscape is relatively wooded with recent plantations forming large blocks of woodland.

Wood-pasture and parkland: Concentrated within the Melbourne parkland area, the largest of which is Calke Abbey.

Veteran trees: Widespread throughout the area, especially within the Melbourne parkland area.

Wet woodland: Associated with the upper reaches of streams and brook that feed into River Trent and along the River Mease corridor.

Lowland meadow: Mostly in the eastern part of the area and relatively rare.

Hedgerows: Widespread, but in many places fragmented and under managed

Lakes: Two large reservoirs, Staunton Harold and Foremark, built for water storage.

Ponds: Widespread, including many new ponds associated with agri-environmental schemes.

Secondary features:

Lowland dry acid grassland: Associated with the sandstone soils south of Ticknall.

Field margins: Widespread throughout the area.

Localised features:

Heathland: Only present in very small patches at Carvers Rocks SSSI.

Lowland calcareous grassland: Only present at Ticknall and Bretby areas associated with limestone outcrops.

Traditional orchards: Widespread but very small in size.

Floodplain grazing marsh: Associated with the River Mease.

Open mosaic habitats: Occurs in areas of brownfield land, especially on former industrial and coal extraction sites.

Note: The terms Primary, Secondary or Localised feature used above are synonymous with 'Primary Habitat' etc. used in the Landscape Character of Derbyshire (2003) see www.derbyshire.gov.uk/landscape. These describe how noticeable and distinctive each habitat is within the landscape itself. Only Primary Features are shown in the detailed map of each Action Area in the Maps section.

8.6.2 UK BAP Priority Species Resources

Group	English Name	Group	English Name
Fungus	Oak polypore	Butterfly	White admiral
Plant	See footnote	Butterfly	White letter hairstreak
Amphibian	Great crested newt	Crustacean	White-clawed crayfish
Amphibian	Common toad	Moth	Argent and sable
Reptile	Adder	Moth	Autumnal rustic
Reptile	Common lizard	Moth	Beaded chestnut
Reptile	Grass snake	Moth	Blood-vein
Reptile	Slow worm	Moth	Brindled beauty
Bird	Bullfinch	Moth	Broom moth
Bird	Corn bunting	Moth	Brown-spot pinion
Bird	Cuckoo	Moth	Buff ermine
Bird	Curlew	Moth	Centre-barred sallow
Bird	Dunnock	Moth	Deep-brown dart
Bird	Grasshopper warbler	Moth	Dot moth
Bird	Grey partridge	Moth	Double dart
Bird	Hawfinch	Moth	Dusky brocade
Bird	Herring Gull	Moth	Dusky thorn
Bird	House sparrow	Moth	Dusky-lemon sallow
Bird	Lapwing	Moth	Flounced chestnut
Bird	Lesser Redpoll	Moth	Garden dart
Bird	Lesser spotted woodpecker	Moth	Garden tiger
Bird	Linnet	Moth	Ghost moth
Bird	Marsh tit	Moth	Green-brindled crescent
Bird	Reed bunting	Moth	Grey dagger
Bird	Skylark	Moth	Knot grass
Bird	Song thrush	Moth	Latticed heath
Bird	Spotted flycatcher	Moth	Mottled rustic
Bird	Starling	Moth	Mouse moth
Bird	Tree pipit	Moth	Oak hook-tip
Bird	Tree sparrow	Moth	Pale eggar
Bird	Turtle dove	Moth	Powdered quaker
Bird	Willow tit	Moth	Pretty chalk carpet
Bird	Wood warbler	Moth	Rosy minor
Bird	Yellowhammer	Moth	Rosy rustic
Bird	Yellow wagtail	Moth	Shaded broad-bar
Mammal	Brown hare	Moth	Shoulder-striped wainscot
Mammal	Brown long-eared bat	Moth	Small emerald
Mammal	Harvest mouse	Moth	Small phoenix
Mammal	Hedgehog	Moth	Small square-spot
Mammal	Noctule	Moth	The cinnabar
Mammal	Otter	Moth	The crescent
Mammal	Polecat	Moth	The rustic
Mammal	Soprano pipistrelle	Moth	The sallow
Mammal	Water vole	Moth	The spinach
Butterfly	Dingy skipper	Moth	White ermine
Butterfly	Grizzled skipper	Moth	White-spotted pinion
Butterfly	Small heath		
Butterfly	Wall		

Table 8.3 UK BAP Priority Species present within the National Forest Area since 2000 (93 species)

Note: Shepherd's-needle was recorded within this Action Area near Linton in 1996.

8.6.3 Organisational and Manpower Resources

Below is a list of organisations that are key to delivering the actions and targets in the National Forest area. Reference should also be made to the table in the Generic Action Plan.

Statutory Agencies	
Environment Agency *	Drakelow Parish Council
Forestry Commission *	Foremark Parish Council
Natural England *	Hartshorne Parish Council
	Ingleby Parish Council
	Linton Parish Council
	Lullington Parish Council
	Melbourne Parish Council
	Netherseal Parish Council
	Newton Solney Parish Council
	Overseal Parish Council
	Repton Parish Council
	Rosliston Parish Council
	Smisby Parish Council
	Stanton by Bridge Parish Council
	Ticknall Parish Council
	Walton upon Trent Parish Council
	Woodville Parish Council*
Voluntary organisations	
BTCV *	
Derbyshire Wildlife Trust *	
FWAG *	
Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire *	
RSPB *	
Other Organisations	
Environmental Education Project *	
National Forest Company *	
Local Authorities (including Town and Parish Councils)	
Derbyshire County Council *	
South Derbyshire District Council *	
	Other Landowning bodies
Bretby Parish Council	Church Commissioners
Calke Parish Council	Homeowners (for UK BAP species in gardens)
Castle Gresley Parish Council	National Trust
Cauldwell Parish Council	Private landowners and farmers
Coton in the Elms Parish Council	Severn Trent Water
	Woodland Trust

* indicates Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership member.
If your group or organisation would like to join the Partnership, go to
www.derbyshirebiodiversity.org.uk

8.7 Achievements to Date in National Forest area

Figures are based on Nov 2011 data and rounded to nearest hectare

Woodland



1,517 ha (76 % of the target) of lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland was considered to be under management (in an agri-environmental scheme or assessed as favourable or recovering condition)

Wet Woodland



10 ha (66 % of the target) of lowland Wet Woodland (including newly planted woodland) was considered to be under management (in an agri-environmental scheme or assessed as favourable or recovering condition)

Lowland Meadow



11 ha (92 % of the target) of priority Lowland Meadow was considered to be under management (in an agri-environmental scheme or assessed as favourable or recovering condition)



87 ha (58 % of the target) of sub-priority Lowland Meadow was considered to be under restoration (in an agri-environmental scheme or assessed as 'favourable' or 'recovering' condition), looking to bring the habitat condition up to priority status.

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland



7 ha (88 % of the target) of priority Lowland Dry Acid Grassland was considered to be under management (in an agri-environmental scheme or assessed as favourable or recovering condition)



36 ha (90 % of the target) of sub-priority Lowland Dry Acid Grassland was considered to be under restoration (in an agri-environmental scheme or assessed as 'favourable' or 'recovering' condition), looking to bring the habitat condition up to priority status.

Wetland



30 ponds under management (30%)



2 lakes (66% of the target) are under management

Current Agri-environment Schemes:

- 1 Higher Level Stewardship Scheme
- 3 Countryside Stewardship Schemes

National Forest Action Area - Priority Habitats Map

- Wood-Pasture and Parkland
- Woodland
- Wet Woodland
- Lakes and Ponds
- Lowland meadow

Only those Priority Habitats which are seen as primary landscape features are shown here. See Area Action Plan for details.

