User guide

Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Action Plan

Guidance Notes for Planners

This User Guide gives a brief introduction to planners on the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Action Plan, and the reasons why they need to make use of it in their work. It is relevant both to Forward Planners and Development Control officers.

1. Why is biodiversity important to Planners?

Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth, and includes all species of plants and animals and the natural systems that support them. A healthy site, rich in wildlife is said to be '**biodiverse**'.

Conservation of biodiversity is vital in our response to climate change and in the delivery of key ecosystem services such as food, flood management, pollination and provision of clean air and water. Biodiversity is a core component of sustainable development, underpinning economic development and prosperity, and has an important role to play in developing locally distinctive and sustainable communities. Healthy environments and attractive landscapes provide pleasant places for people to live and work. They attract inward investment and they provide the green infrastructure necessary for economic development.

All local authorities in England and Wales now have a duty to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in exercising their functions.

2. What is a Biodiversity Action Plan?

A Biodiversity Action Plan (or BAP) is a document identifying the most important species and habitats in a given area. It highlights what does (or should) occur there naturally, and it describes the main actions and measurable targets needed to protect and enhance the key biodiversity of that area for the future. It covers a defined period of time, and a defined area. The Lowland Derbyshire BAP covers the area of the county outside the Peak Park. A separate BAP is available for the Peak Park.

3. Where do Biodiversity Actions Plans come from?

Biodiversity Action Plans are derived from the legally-binding **Convention on Biological Diversity** signed in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It obliged nations to create and enforce national strategies to conserve, protect and enhance biological diversity. Our government responded by publishing the United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan in 1994. It contained action plans and targets to protect 45 habitats and 391 species, all selected by government advisers for being either globally threatened, or known to be rapidly declining in the UK. The list was revised in 2007 and now includes 65 "**priority habitats**" and 1,149 "**priority species**". The **England Biodiversity Strategy** was published in 2002 to implement the aims of the UKBAP aims at the country level. It was revised in 2011.

Hedgehog. Credit: Nikki Charlton (via PTES)

Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) deliver international and national commitments at the local level. Two LBAPs cover Derbyshire – one for the **Peak Park** area, and one for the rest of **Lowland Derbyshire**. Only features meeting the national UK BAP definitions of 'priority habitats' or 'priority species' are included in the targets for the LBAP.

4. Why do Planners need to be aware of Local BAPs (LBAPs)?

NERC Act. 2006: Section 40 of this Act requires all local authorities to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. This is often referred to as the '**biodiversity duty**'.

Planning Policy Statement 9 sets out national planning policies on protection of biodiversity (and geological conservation) through the planning system. This includes the preparation of local development documents, and may be relevant to decisions on individual planning applications. The need for planning authorities and developers to consider biodiversity interest on previously developed land and in other developments are also covered by PPS9, which supersedes PPG9. .

Section 41 List. Policy makers and development control officers should be aware that paragraphs 11 and 16 of PPS9 point towards the list of all UK Priority BAP Species and Habitats (now the Section 41 list of the NERC Act). These need to be considered in any development proposal. The Lowland Derbyshire BAP provides both planners and developers with a list of the UK Priority Habitats and Priority Species found in our area.

5. What does the Lowland Derbyshire BAP aim to do?

The purpose of this Biodiversity Action Plan is to steer people and organisations towards doing the most important work to halt the continued losses of wildlife and their habitats in Lowland Derbyshire.

The Lowland Derbyshire area has been divided into eight Action Areas. Each one offers a description, a vision, and data tables showing exactly how much biodiversity resource still exists there today. It includes **Key Actions** and **Key Targets**. These are simple, measurable tasks with SMART targets to improve the amount and quality of habitats and species over the 10 year life of the BAP. Regular progress updates on achieving those targets over the life of the BAP will appear on the Derbyshire Biodiversity Website.

It suggests who might do each element of work – from councils, land-owners and by conservation groups, right through to schools, farmers and individuals. It can also be used to support applications for grant-funding, or to guide developers and their ecological consultants who need to demonstrate what the impacts of their proposals might be.

BAPs should be used to help local authorities develop policies for inclusion in the Local Development Framework (LDF), or to guide landscape restoration schemes so that they include habitat features most appropriate to the landscape they are in.

6. How does the Lowland Derbyshire BAP work?

The Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Action Plan covers a period from 2011 to 2020. Ninety partner organisations helped shape it, and all agreed on the detailed actions and measurable targets needed to try to halt the continued losses of wildlife and habitats in Lowland Derbyshire.

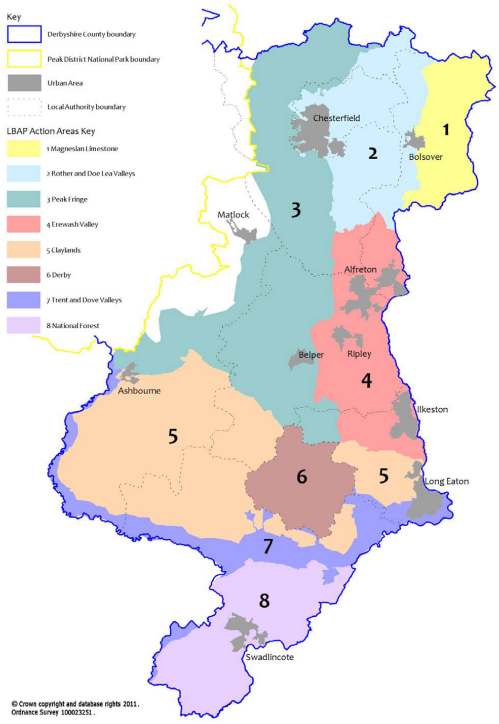
Its contents are split into the following sections:

1) **Quick Start Guide** single -page introduction.
2) **Introduction:** Maps and the background story to biodiversity action plans in Derbyshire.
3) **Generic Action Plan:** Sixteen simple actions that need doing, irrespective of area. .
4) **Action Areas:** Eight areas, based on Landscape Character, with 10-year actions and targets.
5) **Cumulative Target Table:** A summary of all the habitat targets across the entire BAP region.
6) **Habitat Background Information:** Maps, descriptions, species lists and background data.
7) **Species Action Plans:** Available online for key species from 2012.
8) **Detailed maps** – big maps to showing Priority Habitats within each Action Area.

Action Areas are distinct sub-divisions of Lowland Derbyshire, all with their own distinctive and special landscape character and biodiversity, plus their own set of SMART targets for each priority habitat.

There are eight Action Areas.

1) Magnesian Limestone
2) Rother and Doe Lea Valleys
3) Peak Fringe
4) Erewash Valley
5) Claylands
6) Derby area
7) Trent and Dove Valleys area
8) National Forest area



Based on sound evidence, the LBAP summarise the habitat features and species likely to occur within each Action Area. It not only gives an indication of their spatial presence, but also shows which features are most prominent and appropriate within that particular landscape, and which are of lesser significance. Schemes involving restoration or habitat creation should use the BAP to determine the most appropriate features to develop within that local landscape.

Features to Protect: Data tables are presented which clearly show the current quantity of each habitat type alongside targets for management, restoration or creation de novo. We would expect no net loss of these amounts by the end of the BAP period. We would also expect planners and developers to identify opportunities for restoring or creating new habitats, and these need to be appropriate to the area under consideration. The BAP helps by assigning three levels of significance to the habitats found within each Action Area. Primary feature; Secondary feature; Localised feature. You should advise an applicant that you would expect to see most habitat protection or restoration to be focussed mostly towards Primary Features so as to ensure continuity of appearance of the landscape.

Multi-functionality in Landscape Scheme: Be aware that many landscaping schemes can have huge biodiversity benefits, as well as solving other problems such as flooding risk. SUDS schemes using ponds and reedbeds have the benefit of creating two Priority Habitat types. The planting of mixed hawthorn/blackthorn hedges gives added security within developments. Goof hedges and fields margins reduce surface runoff and phosphate pollution in rivers and streams. Flood storage lagoons do not have to be deep-sided, dangerous features – they can be gently shelving ponds, good for wildlife and great in times of heavy rain. Good landscaping and habitat creation schemes in school grounds can become nature reserves and a learning resource in their own right. Even housing developments can incorporate nest boxes for swifts, bats, or house martins, and are far cheaper and more effective to do at the time of construction, whilst Green Roofs in urban areas hold back water and provide invaluable bird-feeding areas and nectar sources for insects.

7. Robustness of the data

The LBAP is a partnership product. Over 90 organisations were consulted with a draft update in December 2010. (They are all listed in the BAP, and include major conservation organisations, local authorities, government bodies, voluntary groups and many key naturalists.) Consultation lasted three months, and approximately 500 feedback comments were received and considered. All habitat statistics are based on data held on GIS, often compiled in cooperation with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. Local naturalist groups supplied tens of thousands of records on which species data was based.

SMART Targets were set, based upon knowledge of existing proposals, restoration schemes and other opportunities likely to come on stream. An ambitious, yet realistic, 20% increase was then added to those figures in many instances. The habitat targets are therefore grounded in reality, yet have an appropriate level of ambition. Specific targets were set for only those species where we felt there is sufficient knowledge.

8. Monitoring and Feedback

The BAP process will not work without information on the UK Priority Habitats that are being lost and that are likely to be established or restored. We need planning officers to ensure losses and gains through development are adequately reported. Applicants should be asked to clearly report against the BAP and to show:

- what Priority Habitats and Species occur within a development area
- what the likely losses and gains would be.
- what proportion that represents of the of the total habitat resource within each Action Area.

The BAP gives figures for the quantity of habitat currently present within each Action Area – it is important that applicants are asked to supply information how much of that resource will be destroyed, restored, created or mitigated for in any proposal

Download the LBAP and maps from www.derbyshirebiodiversity.org.uk

9. How else can the Lowland Derbyshire BAP be used?

BAPs should be used to help local authorities develop policies for inclusion in the Local Development Framework (LDF), or to assist in development control work. They can guide landscape restoration schemes so that they include habitat features most appropriate to the landscape they are in.

As well as informing the work of local authorities, the LBAP document can also assist businesses, landowners and countryside managers, government bodies, ecological consultants, conservation organisations, wildlife groups, schools and homeowners. The Biodiversity Partnership relies on all these groups working to the common goals of the Action Plans if we are to halt the continuing losses of biodiversity, and to embed biodiversity into all our lives.

10. Resources

Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Action Plan available from www.derbyshirebiodiversity.org.uk
Peak Park LBAP available from www.peakdistrict.gov.uk
Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (has SLAs with most local authorities for supplying ecological advice)
PPS9 Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation , HMSO 2005
NERC Duty Guidance for Local Authorities on Implementing the Biodiversity Duty, DEFRA, 2007

11. Contact Us:

Debbie Alston & Nick Moyes Biodiversity Project Officer (job share)
Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership
c/o Environmental Services
Derbyshire County Council
Shand House
Darley Road South
Matlock DE4 3RY
Telephone: 01629 539771
debbie.alston@derbyshire.gov.uk or nick.moyes@derbyshire.gov.uk.
Debbie works Monday - Wednesday morning, Nick works Wednesday - Friday


Fungal foray display. Credit: Debbie Alston


Bird watching in Derby. Credit: Nick Moyes


Cinnabar Moth caterpillar. Credit: anemoneprojectors

Conserving biodiversity includes restoring and enhancing species populations and habitats, as well as protecting them. Conservation of biodiversity is vital in our response to climate change, but also provides substantial economic, local and environmental benefits to communities, as well as vital life support services.