

Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull Local Biodiversity Action Plan

FINAL Progress Report for 2011-2015: 1st Tranche of 8 Plans

Our 52 **Local Biodiversity Action Plans** provide a local response to the UK Government's National Action Plans for threatened habitats and species. A county-wide network of over 80 partners, all active in nature conservation, is consulted on these plans and their measurable targets. The partnership works to fulfil the agreed priorities. Most of the plans were written between 2002 -5, with progress first reported on in 2007-8. They were fully revised between 2011 -15 and a second reporting programme of tranches of plans is underway, to be completed by 2020.



OUR SUCCESSES

- ❖ **Engagement of new partners:** the **Churchyards & Cemeteries** Action Plan was revised with help from the Coventry Diocesan Environmental Group (CDEG), aiming to encourage the enhancement of churchyards and cemeteries for wildlife in 2016 via the new Eco-church programme. A Biodiversity Statement to Parochial Church Councils is on the agenda for a CDEG conference to introduce 'A Rocha', an inter-denominational Christian organisation promoting community-based conservation projects. 
- ❖ **Targets achieved:** for the **Dingy Skipper** Action Plan, the target of reaching 70 sites (up from 31 in 1999) has been exceeded by Butterfly Conservation, Warwickshire (BCW). An increase in the known range has been achieved by surveying former locations. Breeding conditions have been created at 2 sites; at one, scrub has been cleared and bare ground seeded with bird's foot trefoil, the food plant of the dingy skipper caterpillar; at the other site a butterfly bank has been created.  *Bird's foot trefoil ©Steve Batt (BCW)*
- ❖ **Targets overtaken:** to support the **School Grounds** Action Plan, Warwickshire County Council (WCC) has increased the number of actively managed school grounds. This has been achieved by encouraging the inclusion of a biodiversity statement in 'School Development Plans'/'Eco Action Plans', developing and circulating a biodiversity survey form, delivering training days on developing biodiversity value and promoting an awareness of the need and importance of nature conservation. With an average achievement of 240% over 5 targets, we will modify targets to reflect these successes.


CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY VOLUNTEERS AND LOCAL GROUPS

Barn Owls: South Warwickshire Barn Owl Survey, in partnership with Stour Valley Wildlife Action Group (SVWAG), has been working since 2011 to increase the barn owl population in the south of the county. Most new sites result from requests for advice, to provide and erect nest boxes and to monitor boxes. 115 landowners are now involved in the project; locations and names are confidential. With 59 breeding pairs in the south of the county in 2014, a substantial contribution has been made to our target of increasing the breeding population to 100 pairs. 10 nest boxes installed by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) in the Tame Valley will be monitored by West Midland Bird Club ringers. 3 boxes have been installed at Nelson's Wharf, Stockton, by the owner and BCW.

Roadside Verges: in collaboration with the County Highways, BCW and the Probation Service, SVWAG is implementing the management plans for 2 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), written by the Warwickshire Biological Record Centre, and is monitoring the condition of 4 more local verges. Extensive scrub clearance at 5 of the sites has been carried out and the protection of meadow clary and other rare or notable plants achieved by liaising over cutting times.



Common lizards at Ettington Cutting Verge ©Phill Clayton (SVWAG)

Bats: hedgerow restoration and creation in the Princethorpe Woodlands by WWT, and for the barbastelle bat project in S. Warwickshire by the Warwickshire Bat Group (WBG), has contributed to the restoration and creation of feeding habitats / associated flight lines. 1 hibernation site has been created.  *Future hibernation sites in old brick kilns at Nelson's Wharf ©Tony Penycate(BCW)*

Acid Grassland: the condition of 7.8ha of acid grassland has been achieved through the efforts of 3 partners:

- ❖ at Kenilworth Common, WWT has controlled scrub and coppiced glades, improving the connectivity with grassland on the railway cutting, and has spread native acid seed mix and green hay to increase species diversity.
- ❖ at Coombe Abbey, Wrautum's Field has been restored by Coventry City Council by controlling ragwort and thistles, by scrub removal and introducing sheep grazing on a seasonal rotation.
- ❖ at Abbey Fields, Kenilworth, the acid grassland reseeded in 2011 by Warwick District Council is establishing well.

Heathland: the condition of 2.5ha of heathland has been achieved through the efforts of 4 partners:

- ❖ Restoration at Coughton Court by BCW, resulting in regrowth of heather and colonisation by the common heath moth.
- ❖ The Grendon Common Heathland Restoration Project (BCW, Warwickshire Amphibian & Reptile Team (WART) and Friends of Baddesley Common) has cleared birch scrub, creating areas that will support lizards and snakes.
- ❖ At Hay Wood, in collaboration with the Forestry Commission, BCW and WART have cleared birch and pine saplings and widened the rides, making it the second largest concentration of heathland in the sub-region after Grendon Common.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AND PRIORITIES FOR ACTION 2016-2020

As reported, there is excellent progress with many actions, thanks to the dedication and efforts of our partners, but there are key areas of concern and need for further action.

- ❖ **Heathland** and **Acid Grassland** require more work to maintain and achieve condition as only 40% of their targets has been achieved. There has been no known expansion of acid grassland.
- ❖ **Roadside Verges** requires the creation of policy statements and management guidelines.
- ❖ **Bats** requires a considerable increase in the uptake of bat box options through agri-environment schemes.



Heather at Grendon Common ©Steven Cheshire (WWT)

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Progress 2011-2015

Key to status: ↑ Good progress ↑ Some progress ↔ No change ↓ Decline

ACTION PLAN	STATUS 2008-2010	KEY ACTIONS IN THE PLANS SELECTED FOR REPORTING IN 2015	STATUS 2011-2015	
			ACTION	PLAN
ACID GRASSLAND	↑ denoted any progress	Continue to select all qualifying lowland acid grassland sites as LWSs . 5 achieved	↑	↑
		Ensure that new minor or major developments result in net biodiversity gain through adherence to the mitigation hierarchy. Ongoing	↑	
		Maintain favourable ecological condition of all 72.75ha (HBA, 2012) of existing acid grassland . 15.78ha achieved	↑	
		Continue to achieve favourable condition of 6ha of existing acid grassland by 2015 . 0.25ha achieved	↑	
		Continue restoration of degraded acid grassland at SSSIs and other sites. 7.55ha achieved	↑	
		Expand the area of acid grassland by 3ha by 2015 , including one site of at least 3ha . No known progress	↔	
		Work at a landscape scale, focusing effort on identified important clusters of acid grassland to maximise benefit. Target area is the Hartshill Ridge . In progress	↑	
		Identify plant indicator species for assessing the quality of acid grassland. Achieved	↑	
HEATHLAND	↔	Continue to select all qualifying heathland sites as LWSs . 6 achieved, 1 potential	↑	↑
		Ensure that new minor or major developments result in net biodiversity gain through adherence to the mitigation hierarchy. Ongoing	↑	
		Maintain favourable ecological condition of all 7.76ha (HBA, 2012) of existing heathland . 1.70ha achieved	↑	
		Manage or create areas of scrub , to a maximum 0.5% of each site. 1 site achieved	↑	
		Continue to achieve favourable condition of 6ha of existing heathland by 2015 . 0.5ha achieved	↑	
		Continue restoration of degraded heathland at the SSSIs and other sites. 2.04ha achieved	↑	
		Continue to expand the area of heathland by 2ha by 2015 , including one site of at least 2ha . 2ha min. achieved	↑	
		Identify plant indicator species for assessing the quality of heathland habitat. Achieved	↑	
ROADSIDE VERGES	↔	Continue to identify and select all qualifying verges as LWSs . 9 achieved	↑	↑
		Encourage the incorporation of habitat creation into new road building / widening schemes wherever feasible to increase the extent of the resource. Ongoing	↑	
		Include reference to enhancing the biodiversity value of roadside verges and hedgerows within Local Authority biodiversity policies . Achieved	↑	
		Include an environmental statement within Neighbourhood Plans for the conservation of biodiversity on parish roadside verges. 6 achieved, 6 in progress	↑	
		Produce management plans for all currently designated LWSs. 2 achieved, 1 in progress	↑	
		Produce management guidelines to maximise the wildlife value of verges. In progress	↑	
		Implement management plans for LWSs and manage other sites. 2 plans/6 sites achieved	↑	
		Survey suitable verges for LWS status or as interim sites of importance. 1 achieved	↑	
		Explore opportunities for projects relating to verge restoration . 1 in progress	↑	
		Establish a monitoring group involving local communities. S. Warwickshire achieved	↑	
		Investigate the possibility of a ' Best Management for Wildlife ' competition. In progress	↑	
SCHOOL GROUNDS	↔	Survey, designate and record qualifying educational establishments as LWSs . 0 achieved, 1 potential	↔	↑
		Talk to 30 schools regarding the inclusion of a biodiversity statement in their 'School Development Plans' and /or 'Eco Action Plans'. 91 achieved	↑	
		Identify 10 schools that are managing their grounds for wildlife, to act as 'Best Practice' Case Studies. 35 achieved	↑	
		Identify 10 schools using their school grounds as a learning resource 38 achieved	↑	
		Develop an easy to use biodiversity survey form and circulate to all schools. Achieved	↑	
		Develop a database / collate evidence of school grounds undertaking positive habitat management and including any wildlife records. Achieved by WCC, SMBC	↑	
		Monitor and record biodiversity in 30 schools and send to the Warwickshire Biological Record Centre. In progress	↑	
		Promote awareness of the importance of nature conservation in 30 schools . 105 achieved	↑	

FULL PROGRESS REPORTS AND A LIST OF OUR PARTNERS ARE AVAILABLE ON THE WARWICKSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST WEBSITE

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CHURCH-YARDS & CEMETERIES	↔	Continue to select all qualifying churchyards as LWSs. 5 achieved, c.10 potential	↑	↑
		Birmingham and Coventry dioceses to draw up a Biodiversity Statement recommending the management of churchyards. Coventry achieved, Birmingham in progress	↑	
		Birmingham and Coventry dioceses to circulate this Statement to their parishes, in a phased approach of 10 per year from 2016 . Coventry in progress	↑	
		Maintain existing quality habitats within churchyards and cemeteries , e.g. grassland, walls, and specific roosts, e.g. bats, through liaison with PCCs. 4 sites achieved	↑	
		Carry out a detailed survey of the flora (including lichens) on 5 churchyards annually , as identified by HBA, to inform habitat enhancement plans. 13 achieved	↑	
		Repeat the 1984 botanical survey of churchyards by the Women's Institutes to determine the extent of losses/gains in wildlife value. No known progress	↔	
		Trial the use of local seed /green hay at 5 sites which are species poor . 5 achieved	↑	
		Establish an annual ' Wildlife in Churchyards Day ' with events. 1 achieved	↑	
		Involve volunteers in management by turning the final grassland cut into a community event. 2 sites achieved	↑	
BATS	↔	Protect the 3 known populations of lesser horseshoe and barbastelle bats. 3 achieved	↑	↑
		Respond to threats to roosts and important foraging habitat by survey. Ongoing	↑	
		Increase the number of agri-environment schemes which include bat box options by 15 agreements . 2 achieved	↑	
		Maintain, enhance and restore landscape elements e.g. hedgerows, trees, to provide flight lines where barbastelle and lesser horseshoe bat roosts occur. 10.5km achieved	↑	
		Protect potential underground hibernation sites if feasible. 1 achieved, 1 potential	↑	
		Continue the monitoring of local bat populations for 5 targeted species . 5 achieved	↑	
		Identify potential roosts for targeted species. 2 achieved	↑	
		Continue to monitor boxes at key sites across Warks., Coventry & Solihull. 3 achieved	↑	
		Support training schemes for volunteer bat workers. Achieved	↑	
BARN OWL	↑ denoted any progress	Raise awareness of the HSE statutory rules and guidelines on the use of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides . S. Warwickshire achieved	↑	↑
		Install at least 10 nest-boxes per year where the habitat is suitable. Minimum 86 achieved	↑	
		Protect and re-establish rough grassland to increase the 2011 figure of 2966.87ha to 4000ha. By 2020 . 3014ha achieved	↑	
		Establish effective monitoring of range and population , including results from nest box schemes, and training of bird ringers. Achieved	↑	
		Monitor and record the breeding success rate , keeping a database of landowners. S. Warwickshire achieved	↑	
		Promote good land management practice at one demonstration site . 1 achieved	↑	
DINGY SKIPPER	↑ denoted any progress	Ensure the protection of all known colonies by designation as LWSs; secure 4 sites within each meta-population area . 28 LWS; meta-population target achieved	↑	↑
		Increase the number of viable colonies by 9 to a total of 70 . 71 achieved	↑	
		Remove scrub from grasslands on former sites to create suitable habitat for dingy skipper and, where appropriate, seed with bird's foot trefoil. 1 site achieved	↑	
		Include habitat requirements of the dingy skipper in the management of public open space in areas where the butterfly occurs by establishing bird's foot trefoil. 1 site achieved	↑	
		Using recent research, create breeding conditions on a minimum of 10 sites . 5 potential	↑	
		Continue monitoring all large colony sites and at least one site in each dingy skipper meta-population. Monitor annually at least 20% of sites . 20% achieved	↑	
		Visit a minimum of 90% of all current and potential sites biannually and collate presence/absence results to establish population status/distribution. 109% achieved	↑	
		Continue to survey former locations for the species. 13 achieved	↑	
Revise all meta-population maps . Prioritise areas for potential new colonies. In progress	↑			

IN 2016 WE WILL BE REPORTING ON 11 ACTION PLANS ASSOCIATED WITH FARMLAND

**Rivers & Streams • Neutral Grassland • Arable Field Margins • Hedgerows • Ponds
Lapwing • Farmland Birds • Great Crested Newt • Rare Bumblebees • Scarce Arable Plants • White-clawed Crayfish**

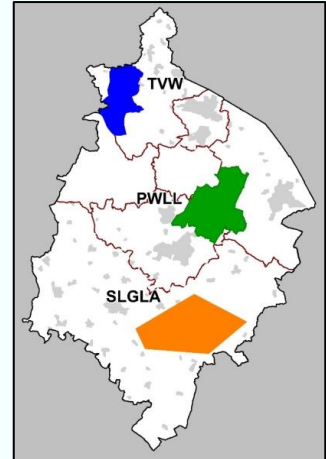
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LANDSCAPE SCALE SCHEMES

These are active on the ground, delivering the first phases of a 50 year vision, and comprise:

- ❖ **Tame Valley Wetlands (TVW):** a £2.5m landscape partnership scheme in delivery 2014-2018, led by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and a wide partnership of charities, local groups, councils and statutory bodies. In this regionally important area for wildfowl and wetland species, the vision is to create a wetland landscape, rich in wildlife and accessible to all. The scheme includes wetland creation and river restoration, focussed on a number of LBAP priority habitats and species including barn owl, snipe, water vole, otter, black poplar and bats.
- ❖ **Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscape (PWLL):** a wide partnership focussed on managing and restoring ancient and semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows. Started in 2004, it has delivered 6.2km of hedgerow restoration and 13.4 ha of woodland management since 2012. Led by WWT, the partnership is developing a major funding bid to HLF for a 4 year delivery project.
- ❖ **Southam Lias Grassland Landscape Area (SLGLA):** Butterfly Conservation Warwickshire, supported by VEOLIA & CEMEX, is undertaking a species recovery programme for the small blue butterfly in the Southam area. The aim of the project is to save the remaining 3 colonies and restore 50 sites in the area to establish 30 colonies by 2020. The project will also help other rare butterflies such as grizzled and dingy skipper, and the chalk carpet moth.



The Habitat Biodiversity Audit (HBA) Partnership

- ❖ Was established in 1996 by WWT, working with the 7 Local Authorities across Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull, Natural England and the Environment Agency. It is managed by WWT and based at Warwickshire County Council's Ecology Unit in Warwick.
- ❖ To provide up-to-date biodiversity data by surveying all habitats to Phase 1 methodology and to map digitally, with 20% of the area re-surveyed every year.
- ❖ To identify sites of biodiversity potential for the restoration and expansion of habitats. Indicator species criteria are used for monitoring their condition and expansion every 5 years.



The Wildlife Sites Project (LWSP)

- ❖ Began in 1999 to develop and maintain a formalised Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) system for Warwickshire, made up of Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites as part of a wider initiative involving the LWS system operated in Coventry and Solihull; it is now part of the HBA Partnership.
- ❖ To designate sites following detailed site survey (Phase 2 habitat survey) and consultation with a panel of experts. To date there are a total of 518 LWSs, covering 5942ha across the sub-region, ranging from woodlands, grasslands, post-industrial sites, hedgerows, rivers and canals. 22% of these are suitably managed and 21% are not; the status of 56% is unknown.
- ❖ To ensure that all LWSs receive management guidance and have a full management plan, to monitor the success of the management plans on a biennial basis and to assess their current condition on a 5 year rolling programme.

LWS: Ettington island with common spotted orchids, Pillerton verge with meadow clary, Tredington island. ©Phill Clayton (SVWAG)

The Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull Local Nature Partnership (LNP) was established and recognised by Government in 2013

Its overall purposes are to:

- ❖ Drive positive change in the local natural environment, taking a strategic view of the challenges and opportunities.
- ❖ Contribute to achieving the Government's national environmental objectives locally, including identification of local ecological networks.
- ❖ Become local champions influencing decision-making relating to the natural environment and its value to social and economic outcomes.

The LNP works strategically and has Board Members from many sectors: Local Authorities, statutory agencies, Public Health, environment, NGOs and business.

Strategic Aim Themes: improving the quality of life, maximising benefits for society, restoring biodiversity and water quality improvements.

The LNP Board has endorsed a programme of landscape scale habitat restoration projects developed by the LNP Implementation Group.

