HAMBLETON BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

April 2002

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

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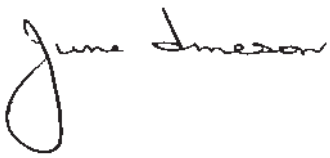
The Biodiversity Action Plan is an initiative to maintain and enhance the whole variety of life on Earth. Whilst many people perceive it to be a 'good thing' there has been a great deal of uncertainty as to what needs to be done and how they can contribute. The Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan will help clarify that situation.

The production of a Biodiversity Action Plan was an important target in the Local Agenda 21 Strategy for Hambleton District. By identifying areas of our natural environment where action is required, the Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan represents an important step in the creation of a sustainable future.

The Challenge of the Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan is in making it not simply one to which conservationists, farmers and planners feel they must respond, but one in which all sections of the community actually want to become involved.

We all want a healthy, attractive and sustainable natural environment and the actions and objectives in the Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan are about achieving those real physical changes that will conserve our natural environment, halt the decline of key habitats and species, and make good past losses. No single organisation or body can achieve all the changes and improvements that are required and it is only by working together, forging new partnerships and involving the whole community that we can hope to establish and maintain a healthy environment in which all life can thrive and survive.



Published by:

Hambleton District Council, Civic Centre, Stone Cross, Northallerton DL6 2UU

Telephone: 01609 779977, Fax: 01609 767228 E-mail: info@hambleton.gov.uk Website: www.hambleton.gov.uk

CONTENTS

HAMBLETON BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

Contents

INTRODUCTION

ONE

Background

Biodiversity encompasses the whole variety of life on earth. It includes not only all species of plants and animals, but also their genetic variation, and the complex ecosystems of which they are all part. It is not restricted to rare or threatened species but includes the whole of the natural world from the commonplace to the critically endangered. Biodiversity is also about the wide range of habitats that these animals and plants live in and depend upon.

The intricate network of ecosystems, habitats and species that comprises Biodiversity provides the support systems that sustain human existence. It provides many of the essentials of life – our oxygen, water, food, clothing, health and relaxation. The value of Biodiversity extends from the spiritual benefits gained from contact with nature, to the economic potential of wild species for new sources of food or medicines.

In a local context, Biodiversity has particular importance in giving a distinctive character to an area, whether it be chalk downland, estuary, woodland or mountain. Even in towns and cities, oases of wildlife habitat make an important contribution to the quality of life.

The world, however, is losing Biodiversity at an increasing rate mainly as a result of human activity. It is reported that the UK has lost over 100 species this century, with many more species and habitats in danger of disappearing, especially at a local level. On a world scale, the rate of loss is now recognised to be a cause for serious concern, requiring international action to prevent continued loss of Biodiversity.

The target audience for the Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is landowners and land managers, policy makers and policy implementers, the wider community and businesses, their employees and customers.

Planning Policy Context

Framework

Planning Policy Guidance Note 9 advises how the Government's policies for the conservation of our natural heritage are to be reflected in land use planning. It embodies the Government's commitment to sustainable development and to conserving the diversity of our wildlife.

Regional Planning Guidance for Yorkshire and the Humber to 2016 (RPG12, published October 2001) now requires local planning authorities to identify and develop policies for areas important to the conservation of biodiversity. This is to be done by drawing on Local Biodiversity Action Plans and by reference to the Regional Biodiversity Audit and the National Species Action Plans (Policy N1).

The North Yorkshire County Structure Plan (Alteration Number 3, October 1995) contains policies stating that development will normally be permitted only where it would not harm the character and appearance, general amenity value or nature conservation interests of the surrounding area.

The Hambleton District Wide Local Plan (January 1999) contains policies with clear objectives to:

- protect sites and habitats of nature conservation interest from inappropriate development,
- protect the nature conservation heritage of the District wherever it is found, and
- improve the number and diversity of sites and habitats of nature conservation value in the District.

The preparation and use of the Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan is an important part of the planning process because, in addition to providing valuable information and supplementary planning guidance, it also identifies specific and positive actions that can be undertaken to preserve and enhance biodiversity in Hambleton District.

Links to LA21

The Council's Local Agenda 21 Strategy states that the Council will, in partnership with North Yorkshire County Council, 'Develop a Biodiversity Action Plan for the District' by July 2001. This document, therefore, satisfies one of the targets in the Council's first Local Agenda 21 Strategy (December 2000). It is also one of the Council's targets to develop a Council 'Education for Sustainable Development Strategy', which links throughout the various sections of this plan.

Why a Biodiversity Action Plan?

Why conserve biodiversity?

Biodiversity is an integral part of our surroundings and quality of life, providing a resource for recreation and education, improving our well-being and maintaining a whole range of environmental protection functions such as flood control and climate regulation.

Biodiversity – a quality of life issue

Quality of life is important to us all, and is dependent on a number of factors. Amongst others, these include access to a decent home, work, education, health. It also depends on a healthy environment – clean air and water, and a rich and diverse natural world.

In the UK the destruction of the countryside and the loss of wildlife has been such that a rich and healthy natural environment is no longer guaranteed. For example, 98% of wildflower meadows, 448,000 kilometres of hedgerows, over two million skylarks and 95% of high brown fritillary butterflies have been lost in less than a lifetime. We need to halt decline and put back, where we can, what has been lost not just in protected areas or nature reserves, but in the wider countryside too. Neither the scale of the task nor the need for urgent action should be underestimated.

Biodiversity is important to us all:

- We must hand over to the next generation a world no less rich than the one we inherited;
- The culture of a nation - music, literature and visual art - is inspired by its landscape and wildlife;
- Respect for the environment encourages respect for ourselves;
- Power over other organisms confers responsibility;
- Life takes time to evolve but can be lost quickly and is impossible to replace;
- Our environment's health determines our own;
- Some organisms are useful to us but we should not limit our efforts to these - we must conserve all those about which we still know little.

Biodiversity is not only significant for those who have a direct interest in nature conservation. It has much wider impact on our daily lives and sustainable development in general:

- Our rich wildlife heritage encourages people to get out and take exercise, helping to improve the health of society and reduce the impacts on the health service;
- It is important to people's mental and physical health and well-being;
- Wildlife-rich landscapes have economic benefits. For example, environment-related economic activity contributes jobs and income to the economy.

The conservation of our natural resources, including wildlife, is a key test of sustainable development, and is of relevance to us all. The threats to biodiversity cannot be dealt with by targeted species or habitat recovery work alone. Many of the threats and constraints to protecting biodiversity arise from broader issues relating, for example, to the unsustainable use of land, air and water. An integrated approach is needed if positive impacts are to be made, for example through:

- Support for environmentally friendly agricultural methods, and the protection of the rural economy;
- Planning – needs to have a clear approach to avoiding or mitigation of adverse impacts on habitats as a result of development;
- Controls on water management and pollution;
- Protection of areas of high biodiversity interest (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest);
- Action on climate change, through wiser energy and transport use.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan

The Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is the UK's initiative to maintain and enhance biodiversity. Through this plan, the Government committed itself to a process designed to conserve and enhance:

- The range and numbers of wildlife species and the quality and extent of wildlife habitats;
- Species and habitats that are internationally important or characteristic of local areas;
- Species and habitats that have declined significantly over recent decades.

English Nature and other organisations from across all sectors are committed to achieving the Plan's conservation

goals over the next 20 years and beyond. Local Biodiversity Action Plans form part of this structure.

Regional Biodiversity

Local Biodiversity Action Plans are being prepared across the Yorkshire and Humber region, based on administrative boundaries and are at various levels of completion. They are complimentary to one another in terms of their priority habitats and species. This is important for species such as the otter, which is best looked at on a river catchment scale, which covers more than one Local Authority area.

There is a particularly close relationship between the Hambleton and Harrogate BAPs where they meet in the historic washlands area of the rivers Swale and Ure, a situation that could also apply to Richmondshire. The Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is represented in both the Hambleton and Ryedale BAPs and there are close affinities between the Countryside Agency Landscape Character areas of the northern portion of Hambleton and parts of the Tees Lowlands Area, which is covered by the Tees Valley BAP. At the eastern edge of the Vale of Mowbray, the Hambleton BAP is replaced by the North York Moors BAP, which covers many of the upland habitats of the National Park.

The North Yorkshire Biodiversity Action Group is co-ordinating the preparation of Local BAPs in the county of North Yorkshire, following agreement to produce District BAPs with a county overview.

A number of regional initiatives, such as the preparation of Regional Biodiversity Indicators, is being undertaken. The Yorkshire and Humber Biodiversity Forum has produced a biodiversity audit covering all of the UK priority habitats and species. This work is to be followed by an audit of regionally important species.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans

One of the important facets of the UK approach to Biodiversity has been the encouragement of Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs). These plans are being developed to help foster action for UK priority species and habitats at a local level, but also to determine and take action for wildlife of local importance. LBAPs have been produced at a number of administrative levels including parish, district, county and region.

The LBAP can help integrate biodiversity action into the decision making of statutory and non-statutory bodies at a local level. For example, planners can use LBAPs as Supplementary Planning Guidance, to influence planning decisions, both to avoid harming wildlife and to encourage the restoration of habitats through after-use conditions. Business and industry can use LBAPs to highlight the biodiversity priorities which should be taken into account in their environmental management systems.

A Local Biodiversity Action Plan is both a product and a process and it should include the following:

- Establish a plan partnership
- Review wildlife resource
- Identify priorities within the national and local context
- Prepare action plans which set specific targets, identify partners and list actions
- Publish the BAP

- Identify and co-ordinate delivery mechanisms, funding and advice
- Implement action
- Establish long term monitoring programme
- Feed information back to national lead agencies

The Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan seeks to achieve the following:

- Ensure national targets for species and habitats (in the UK action plan) are translated into effective action at the local level
- Identify targets for species and habitats of local value
- Develop effective, long term local partnerships
- Raise awareness of the need for biodiversity conservation
- Consider opportunities for conservation of the whole biodiversity resource
- Set up a monitoring programme for both local and national levels

The Hambleton District Approach

A BAP steering group has been established. Membership is given in Annex D.

The overall vision of the Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan is 'Working in Partnership for Wildlife in Hambleton'.

The Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan intends to:

- Establish a local process for the delivery of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan
- Deliver action on agreed targets within a stated time scale
- Monitor progress towards targets
- Generate awareness, understanding and involvement in wildlife conservation

The Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan will tackle wildlife conservation issues. Habitat classification work has shown that the habitats that are of highest value for wildlife are scarce in the District. Referred to as semi-natural habitats, these cover just 2.4% of the District (excluding the National Park). The Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan aims to safeguard and enhance these rare habitats and their wildlife. Many are being lost through neglect and the Plan will encourage their management in order to keep them in prime condition for wildlife. It may also be possible to restore habitats lost to recent changes in land use, or to create new habitats, but these measures are much inferior to adequate safeguarding of our existing resources. A rich and varied countryside benefits wildlife by sustaining the habitats they need and also by providing corridors between these key sites.

Large parts of the District are intensively managed for food production and there is huge potential to involve farmers in also managing for wildlife on their farms. This will help to address significant losses of wildlife that have occurred in the countryside over the last few decades.

The Hambleton BAP will also raise the quality of life of residents, by seeking their involvement in managing gardens and community space for wildlife.

Wildlife Audit

The first task for the Hambleton BAP Steering Group has been the preparation of a wildlife audit. This

considered all the habitats and species known in the District and prioritised them for conservation action. The following criteria were used:

Criteria for selecting habitats

- Any habitat for which a UK BAP has been prepared that occurs in the Hambleton District.
- Any semi-natural habitat that occurs in the Hambleton District.
- Any habitat that is characteristic of the Hambleton District.
- Any habitat that is locally distinctive within the Hambleton District.
- Any habitat that supports a priority species and occurs in the Hambleton District.

Some habitats are grouped into broad habitat types, such as 'farmland'.

Criteria for selecting species

- Any species (not including vagrants) that has recently occurred in Hambleton, and for which a UK BAP has been prepared.
- Any species that has been issued with a status showing that it is of conservation concern (such as Red Data Book listing, Nationally Scarce or red/amber listed birds) and has recently occurred in Hambleton.
- Any species that has statutory protection under European Directives or the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and has recently occurred in Hambleton.
- Any species occurring in the District that is considered by experts to be regionally rare.
- Any species that is considered to be locally distinctive.
- Any species that is considered to be locally valued.
- Any species that is considered likely to make a good flagship species for promoting action plans.

The selected priority habitats and species were evaluated and given a score.

Action Plans

Action plans have been written for the top-scoring habitats and species and these form the bulk of this document.

The BAP has identified a general lack of baseline data for some of the priority habitats and many of the priority species. There is therefore a need to establish the current status of many of the priorities before meaningful targets can be set.

Hambleton District Council will seek to develop a computer based mapping system (Geographical Information System) to record data on BAP habitats and species populations, as it becomes available. This information will inform the Hambleton District - Wide Local Plan.

Progress towards targets will be assessed annually and the Hambleton BAP will be fully reviewed after five years. The BAP is a flexible process, which is able to incorporate changes and additions as they occur.

An explanation of abbreviations is given at Annex F.

Hambleton District

The Hambleton BAP covers the Hambleton District-Wide Plan area, thus excluding those parts of the North York Moors National Park that lie within the official boundary of Hambleton.

A large proportion of the District lies within the Vale of York and the Vale of Mowbray. This is essentially low lying, fertile, arable land, dissected by the River Swale and bordered by the River Ure and the River Ouse. In the north the River Leven and Cod Beck are important river systems. The River Swale has been classed as a 'near natural' river. The flat, undulating topography rarely exceeds 100m above sea level and is based on glacial deposits that obscure the underlying geology. Both the Magnesian Limestone, which outcrops in the west, and the Howardian Hills to the east add variety.

Five market towns of Easingwold, Thirsk, Stokesley, Northallerton and Bedale form the main settlements, with numerous small villages, hamlets and out-lying farms scattered across the district.

Most of the area is intensively farmed with fertile, pastoral and arable land surrounded by fragments of woodland cover. There are very few semi-natural grassland or other habitats remaining.

Important habitats and species

Farmland is a major broad habitat in the District and consequently supports populations of farmland birds, a group that is nationally declining. All the speciality arable flowers, however, became extinct in the twentieth century. There have been many effective conservation projects on farmland in the last twenty years and there is high potential for further initiatives.

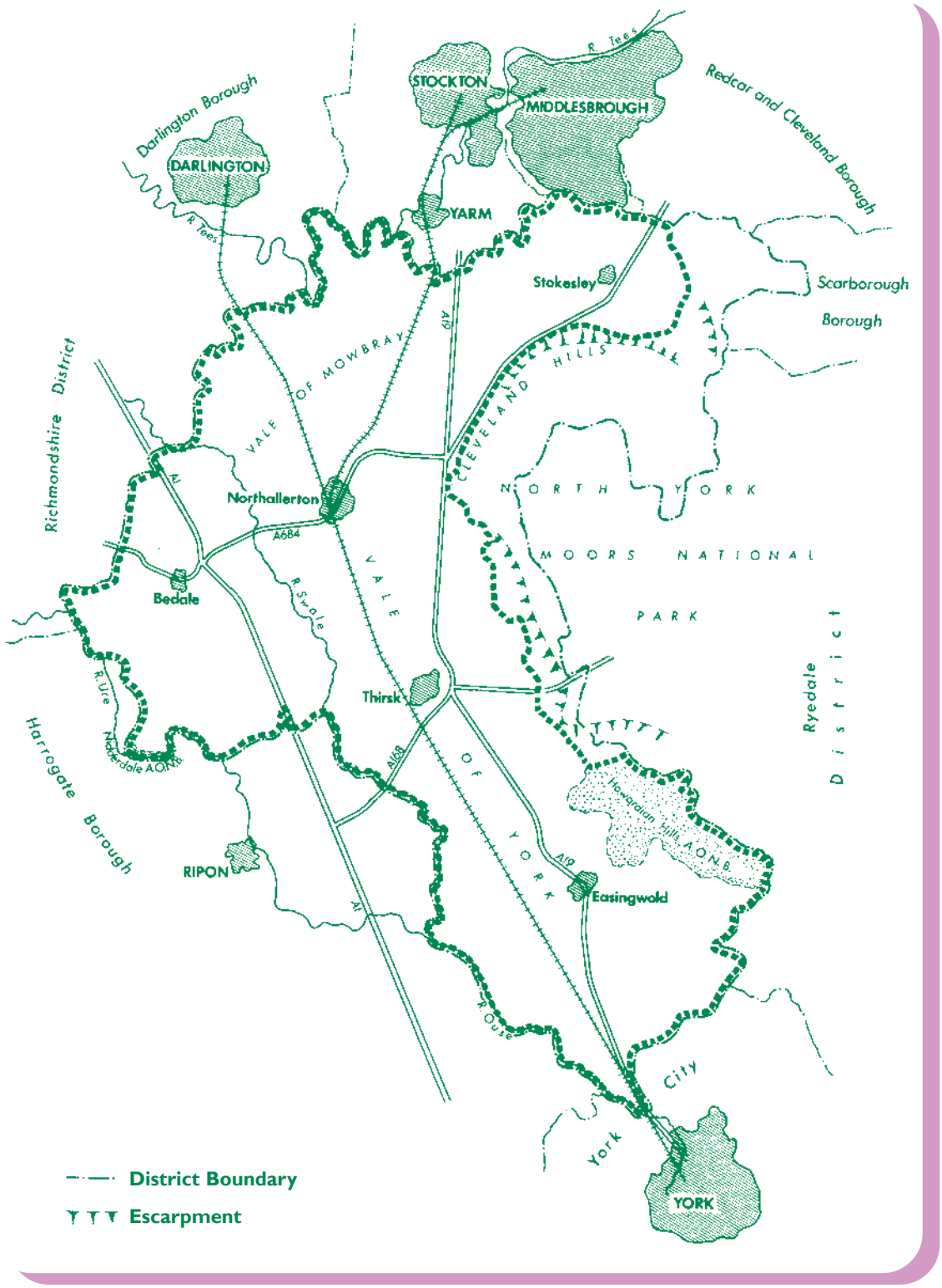
The largely urban habitats around towns and villages are significant in terms of both wildlife and the involvement of local communities.

Of the semi-natural habitats, only fragments remain:

Semi-natural Habitat Type	% land area in Hambleton
Woodland	1.0
Scrub	0.08
Neutral grassland	0.6
Calcareous grassland	0.003
Acidic grassland	0.004
Marsh	0.01
Heathland	0.04
Standing water	0.1
Flowing water	0.3
Total	**2.4**

The European otter has re-colonised some river systems in Hambleton, and nationally declining species such as brown hare and water vole occur. Rare species such as great crested newt and white-clawed crayfish have recently been recorded, and no less than ten UK BAP priority species of bird breed.

CONTENTS NEXT SECTION



CONTENTS SECTION 2

TOWNS, VILLAGES AND OPEN SPACES HABITAT ACTION PLAN

TWO

Introduction

Community gardening: BTCV

Residential gardens cover a large area of land, with more in other urban greenspace, such as school grounds, allotments, parks, cemeteries, golf courses, hospital grounds and play areas.

This is a significant habitat resource that provides a range of benefits for wildlife in both towns and villages, giving the opportunity to manage with biodiversity in mind.

'Gardens' range from those that closely resemble long established semi-natural habitats to more recent, artificial ones. They include elements of grassland, woodland and wetland. Gardens can benefit wildlife whether they are maintained or neglected.

Perhaps most importantly gardens and greenspace provide a network of corridors through urban areas, which link together fragments of habitat.

For many people parks are the only readily accessible areas of greenspace where they can be in contact with wildlife. Most parks have a largely recreational remit.

Man-made structures such as bridges are important for some species such as bats.

Developed sites are good temporary wildlife sites.

Hambleton Priority Species

- Song thrush (UK BAP)
- Bullfinch (UK BAP)

Other Species

- Elm
- Bats
- Spotted flycatcher (UK BAP)
- Skylark (UK BAP)
- Linnet (UK BAP)
- Amphibians
- Bumblebees
- Butterflies
- Reptiles

Status of Priority Species

Song thrush: Photographer unknown

The song thrush is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority due to rapid declines in the UK, especially on farmland, possibly caused by a loss of invertebrate prey. It has seen a moderate decline in woodland, possibly caused by drainage and reduction in shrub layers. The species has declined by 57% since the 1970's. The survival rate of juveniles has fallen.

The bullfinch is a UK BAP species that has declined rapidly on farmland and moderately in woodland since 1970, averaging a 56% decline. The decline is possibly due to loss of scrub and hedges and over cutting of hedgerows.

Both of these species will benefit from actions taken towards the targets. The song thrush will benefit from targets 3, 4, and 7-9. The bullfinch will benefit from targets 4 and 7-9.

Requirements

- Maintaining a variety of habitats and micro-habitats, including ponds, old trees, flower rich lawns, decaying timber, scrub, bare ground, damp hollows, etc.
- Sustainable gardening, including composting and using rain water.
- Links to surrounding habitat.
- Minimal disturbance - especially needed by breeding birds.
- Wildlife gardening, including erecting nest boxes, winter bird feeding, encouraging flowering plants and growing fruit and vegetables.
- Organic gardening.
- Flowers and nesting pots for bumblebees.
- Bat surveys prior to bridge and building work, including wood treatment.
- Regular ground disturbance benefits some invertebrates that require bare patches. Bare areas are valuable.
- Trees, shrubs and wildflowers, planted in schemes, should be of local native provenance.
- Development of habitats in school grounds.
- 'Living churchyard' projects.

Male Bullfinch: Whitfield Benson

- Appropriate management of hedges, verges, parks and waterways.
- Retention of gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) for breeding linnets.
- Planting wych (*Ulmus glabra*) and English (*Ulmus procera*) elms in tree planting projects.

Current Action

- The following Hambleton District-Wide Local Plan policies are relevant:
  - **i** NC1: General nature conservation considerations,
  - **ii** NC5: Species protected by law,
  - **iii** NC6: Semi-natural habitat protection,
  - **iv** NC7: Wildlife corridors and
  - **v** BD5: Spaces of 'Townscape' Importance.
- Hambleton District Council can put Tree Preservation Orders on trees of local value.
- Hambleton District Council countryside management and tree planting schemes.
- Hambleton District Council implements the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations.
- North Yorkshire County Council checks bridges for bat roosts prior to engineering work.

Threats

Large white butterfly larvae: Graham Megson

- Loss of well established gardens to new housing.
- Loss of urban greenspace to development.
- Damage and disturbance caused by recreational use.
- Inappropriate management or timing of operations.
- Destruction of garden ponds.
- Pollution, from domestic sources.
- Use of pesticides, e.g. slug pellets that poison snails and then song thrushes.
- Competition from introduced species of plant and animal, including Canadian pondweed (*Elodea canadensis*), Australian swamp stonecrop (*Crassula helmsii*), water fern (*Azolla filiculoides*) and other exotic pond plants.
- Imported varieties of fodder species, e.g. red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) and bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), which are of no benefit to bumblebees.
- Disturbance or destruction of bat roosts, either intentionally or accidentally.
- Inappropriate land restoration schemes that damage wildlife interest.

Threats to Associated Habitats

- Destruction of peat bogs in an un-sustainable manner for the compost trade.
- Illegal destruction of limestone pavement for rockery stone, often sold under the name 'water worn' or 'Cumbrian limestone'.

Other Possible Partners

- Churches
- Town and Parish Councils
- Gardening Clubs
- Golf Clubs
- Schools
- The public
- Tree Council
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Objective

To establish greater biodiversity within and around towns and villages, while creating opportunities for communities to learn about and be involved with local wildlife.

Targets

1. Local Authorities to sign a charter boycotting the use of peat based compost in Council initiatives.
2. Local Authorities to sign a charter boycotting the use of limestone rocks in Council landscaping schemes.
3. Local Authorities to sign a charter boycotting the use of slug pellets on Council owned land.
4. Ten wildlife areas to be developed and managed in urban or suburban locations.
5. Ten businesses or associations to have wildlife policies in place.
6. Raise awareness of the need to manage land for wildlife through 20 articles.
7. Ten ponds to be created.
8. Ten areas of scrub to be created or brought into favourable management for birds.
9. Five km of 'urban' hedgerow to be brought in to favourable management for birds.

Actions

Action	Partners	Target No.
Policy and Legislation		
HDC and NYCC to sign up to a peat charter, boycotting the use of peat	HDC NYCC	1
HDC and NYCC to support the boycotting of limestone in landscaping schemes.	HDC NYCC	2
HDC to sign up to a charter boycotting the use of slug pellets on Council owned land.	HDC	3
Encourage local businesses to introduce wildlife policies.		5
Habitat and Species Protection and Management		
Work with schools to initiate wildlife schemes in school grounds	BTCV, NYCC	4,7
Encourage gardeners, schools, Parish Councils or Community groups to create new ponds, through publicity.	LTL	7
Encourage churchyard wildlife projects.		4
Work with community groups to develop wildlife projects.	BTCV	4,6-9
Research and Monitoring		
No action.		
Advisory		
No action.		
Communications and Publicity		
Prepare guidance on hedge management for bullfinches		6,9
Publicise the environmental damage caused by peat extraction and quarrying of limestone pavement		1,2,6
Prepare guidance note on managing ponds for amphibians.		6
Prepare guidance note on gardening for song thrushes.		6
Publish information/article about the detrimental effects of slug pellets on wildlife.		3,6
Prepare guidance on using plants of local native provenance in landscaping schemes.		6
Organise the selection of a flagship species to promote the gardens and urban greenspace BAP.		6
Involve the public in the reporting of the flagship species.	BTCV NEYEDC	6

The LUCT and SUWP have both indicated that they are willing partners for this Action Plan as a whole

FARMLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN

Introduction

Autumn ploughing: Graham Megson

Farmland is the main land use in the district of Hambleton in terms of both land coverage and economics. It is the most crucial habitat in the Biodiversity Action Plan. The Farmland Action Plan covers the following key habitats and species:

- Cereal field margins
- Boundary and linear features
- Arable weeds
- Farmland birds
- Bumblebees

Farmland includes a mosaic of habitats including arable fields, improved grassland, copses, ponds, hedgerows and land under set-a-side or conservation management.

Many farms include areas of good wildlife habitat, the best of which are notified as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).

Production-orientated agricultural policies and technological advances led to profound changes in agriculture in the years after 1945, with a decline in biological value.

Since the 1980's major habitat and species benefits have accrued through farming. Chemical use on farmland is falling and the net loss of hedgerows has been reversed.

'Cereal field margins' and 'Boundary and linear features ' are UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats.

Status

National

Farmland is a major land use in Great Britain, producing cereals, root crops and livestock.

Regional

The regional audit gives figures on lengths of arable field margins in the Countryside Stewardship (CS) scheme in 1998, for North Yorkshire (excluding the National Parks). This gives 72.7km of 'uncropped arable margins' and 207km of '2m grass margins and beetle banks'. This gives a total of 279.7km of the UK BAP priority habitat cereal field margins.

Local

Hambleton is the most arable of the seven North Yorkshire districts. Phase 1 Habitat Survey results give a total for arable of 69,192 hectares or 63% of the total land area. Farming is a major industry in the District due to high

fertility in the Vale of Mowbray and Vale of York.

Baseline figures for the amount of Cereal field margin and Boundary and linear features are not available. Breeding bird data is available for a few sites, including Nosterfield Local Nature Reserve, where many of the target species breed.

Hambleton Priority Species

- Farmland birds
- Arable weeds
- Bumblebees

Other Species

- Brown hare (UK BAP)
- Harvest mouse
- Bats
- Redshank
- Snipe
- Barn owl
- Kestrel
- Cuckoo
- Quail
- Golden Plover

Status of Priority Species

Farmland Birds - a wide range of farmland birds, have seen a severe decline in the UK over the last 50 years. These changes have led to conservation agencies agreeing two bird priority lists, referred to as red and amber. The British Trust for Ornithology researches changes in the population of wild birds through national recording schemes and has published the following national declines for the period 1973 - 1998:

Tree sparrow: Dr Peter Evans

Species	National % decline
Tree sparrow	94%
Corn bunting	86%
Grey partridge	83%
Yellow wagtail	81%
Turtle dove	69%
Starling	61%
Reed bunting	61%
Yellowhammer	56%
Bullfinch	56%
Linnet	55%
Skylark	54%
House sparrow	51%
Lapwing	40%

Baseline figures for the status of farmland birds in Hambleton and regional changes in wild bird populations are not known.

The following species are UK BAP priorities: grey partridge, turtle dove, bullfinch, skylark, linnet, tree sparrow, reed bunting and corn bunting. The

turtle dove is particularly associated with the band of Magnesian Limestone.

Hambleton is also important for large numbers of wintering golden plover and lapwing (see targets 1-3, 7-14, 17 & 18).

Arable 'weeds' – these are species of wild flower that thrive in regularly disturbed soil in an arable environment. Many have suffered a sharp decline.

Lapwing: Dr Peter Evans

Some have medicinal or other beneficial properties and all perform an ecological role at the base of the food chain. Weed seeds are an important food source for birds in winter.

Hambleton District has lost many vascular plants in the past 120 years, including eight UK BAP priority species.

Losses from arable habitats (especially light sandy or calcareous soils) are most striking and the BAP aims to re-introduce some or all of the following:

- Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*) (UK BAP)
- Spreading hedge-parsley (*Torilis arvensis*) (UK BAP)
- Small-flowered catchfly (*Silene gallica*) (UK BAP)
- Shepherd's-needle (*Scandix pecten-veneris*) (UK BAP)
- Loose silky-bent (*Apera spica-venti*)
- Broad-fruited cornsalad (*Valerianella dentata*)
- Night-flowering catchfly (*Silene noctiflora*)
- Corn buttercup (*Ranunculus arvensis*)
- Small-flowered buttercup (*Ranunculus parviflorus*)
- Broad-leaved spurge (*Euphorbia platyphyllos*)
- Yellow vetchling (*Lathyrus aphaca*)
- Rough poppy (*Papaver hybridum*)
- Prickly poppy (*Papaver agremone*)

Arable weeds will benefit from targets 1,3 & 4. Monitoring will be based on a presence or absence basis.

Bumblebees - both abundance and variety of these economically important pollinators of crops and garden flowers, has declined, with extinction of some species, including brown-banded carder bee and shrill carder bee. Bumblebees will not be monitored at the local BAP level (see targets 1 & 3).

Requirements

- Agri-environment schemes. CS is one of the best mechanisms for delivering targets for farmland.
- Options for arable farmers are available through CS.
- National monitoring of CS to assess the conservation benefits of options and to improve upon the prescriptions that would benefit wildlife.
- Care and maintenance visits undertaken by Rural Development Service staff to farms with CS agreements.

- Although conservation advice is available to farmers, it is often based upon national prescriptions and national specifications, e.g. for grass seed mix. Opportunities for schemes of local value should be encouraged.
- Appropriate conservation management is required for every site.
- Use of targeted pesticides.
- Planted trees should be of guaranteed local provenance.
- Revision of the criteria by which hedges are eligible for protection under the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations.
- Hedge management, including laying if there is a history of this.
- Development plan policies that promote the management of wildlife corridors and 'stepping stones' of semi-natural habitat.
- Making training available to farmers.
- Making training available to agronomists.
- Demonstration farms.

Arable flowers: Cliff Megson

- Differential management of arable margins to include some tussocks and some tall herbage.
- Turtle doves favour hedges ten years after they have been laid.
- Turtle doves favour areas of scrub (especially hawthorn (*Cretaegus monogyna*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), dog rose (*Rosa canina*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*)).
- Retention of gorse (*Ulix europaeus*) benefits breeding linnets.
- A diversity of habitats and sub-habitats with a range of management for each, e.g. different hedge heights.

Current Action

- Local training organised by Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.
- Oneholmes, Linking Environment and Farming, demonstration farm.
- Manor Farm, Linking Environment and Farming, demonstration farm.
- Options are available in various agri-environmental schemes.
- The CS Targeting Statement highlights the creation of arable field margins and hedgerows in Hambleton.
- CS options include field margins, beetle banks, winter stubble, wildlife mixtures and buffer strips along watercourses.
- A number of farmers are farming organically.
- Wildlife benefits from work undertaken by many farmers not in agri-environmental schemes.
- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has piloted a Farmer Volunteer Alliance, to survey breeding birds on farmland.
- Advice on the management of farmland can be sought from Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and Rural Development Service.
- Research is undertaken by agencies such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, British Association for Shooting and Conservation, the Game Conservancy Trust and others.
- Hambleton District Council implement the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations.

Threats

Arable Management

Field management is greatly influenced by European Agricultural policy through the Common Agriculture Policy. Farmers are therefore advised on how they can crop their land.

The proportion of farms that are mixed, having both livestock and arable land, has declined due to economic pressures to specialise. This has reduced habitat diversity on much farmland.

A change in arable cropping patterns has led to a switch from spring sown to autumn sown crops. This produces a higher yield crop that is ready for harvesting earlier in the summer. A shift to winter cropping has resulted in the loss of winter stubble with weeds – a major source of food for wintering finches.

Bare ground is available for less time, as autumn sown crops germinate during the winter. By springtime when some birds are looking to nest on sparsely vegetated fields, the autumn sown crops have developed thick ground cover. This also prevents arable weeds from germinating.

Loss of Hedgerows

The loss of hedgerows through grubbing out, neglect or over-tidying has reduced this resource. Felling of old hedgerow trees removes holes, song perches and specific ecological niches for wildlife.

Grassland Management

By improving grassland with applications of fertilizer, the frequency of cutting in intensive silage production is increased, often to below the ten week threshold required by ground nesting birds such as skylark to successfully rear a brood.

Chemical use

Pesticides (including herbicides, fungicides and insecticides) and inorganic fertilizers impact upon farmland wildlife. Nationally rare plants have become extinct and the abundance of weed seeds and invertebrates available to wildlife has decreased. Spray drift during pesticide application adversely affects features such as ponds and hedges. Veterinary medicines for livestock can be both toxic and persistent (e.g. worming drugs).

Drainage

Drainage occurs on different scales, from individual fields to whole wetlands. This results in the loss of semi-natural habitat and its associated wildlife.

Isolation

When populations becomes physically isolated from one another they also become genetically isolated and the overall species gene pool is reduced.

Dangers faced by migratory birds

Migratory birds face an assortment of natural and human dangers on their long journeys to and from Africa. Spring hunting in southern Europe kills thousands of birds destined for the British countryside, including BAP priority species such as turtle dove and quail.

Farmland birds

Threatened by:

- Autumn sowing of cereals, leading to less winter stubble, less bare ground and less choice of vegetation height for nesting in.
- Winter stubble retained but without associated arable 'weeds'.
- Conversion of grassland and other habitats to arable, leading to loss of nesting areas and lower frequency of insect food.
- Increased production of silage.
- Use of pesticides, especially broad-spectrum varieties, leading to loss of weed seeds and insect food.
- Loss of copses, old trees, hedgerows and derelict barns, leading to a loss of nest sites.
- Loss of mixed farming systems, which reduces structural diversity in the countryside, leading to the loss of specialist birds.
- Grey partridge is a game bird. The Game Conservancy Trust advise against shooting, unless steps are also being taken to conserve them.

Buff-tailed bumblebee: Graham Megson

Arable weeds

Threatened by herbicides, especially broad-spectrum varieties. Autumn sowing prevents annuals from growing in cereal stubble.

Other Possible Partners

- British Trust for Ornithology
- Farmers
- Game Conservancy Trust
- Linking Environment and Farming
- National Farmers' Union
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Ryedale Museum
- Seed Merchants
- Yorkshire Agricultural Society

Objective

Increase biodiversity within agricultural holdings.

Targets

1. Promote CS agreements, including the establishment of 50 pollen and nectar field options and 50 cereal field margins, to help conserve birds and bumblebees.
2. Increase species-rich hedgerow resource by 50km, using plants of local native provenance.
3. Increase the number of beetle banks by 15km.
4. Re-introduce arable weeds into the district at two sites.
5. Involve ten local community groups in farm projects.
6. Raise public awareness of the natural heritage of farmland.
7. Set up five winter finch feeding projects.
8. Increase the population of all 13 Farmland bird priority species by 5%, based on six targeted farms.
9. Investigate the setting up of a scheme for monitoring breeding farmland birds.
10. One Farmland Habitat Action Plan target to be incorporated as a performance indicator in a Local Authority strategy, such as Local Agenda 21, Community Strategy or Best Value.
11. 80% of SINCs to be under favourable management.
12. Create areas of native scrub on five farms.

Actions

FARMLAND

	Partners	Target No.
Policy and Legislation		
Input into CS scheme County Targeting Statement (produced by DEFRA)	DEFRA NYCC	2,3,8
Promote the inclusion of HBAP targets in LA21, and/or Community Strategies.	HDC	10
Site Safeguard and Management		
Promote the Countryside Stewardship scheme and in particular the cereal field margins, hedgerow and the arable options available from 2002, to farmers	FWAG DEFRA	1,4,8,12
Target grant scheme(s) for HBAP projects.	HDC	2-9,11,12
Investigate, with partners, options for 'Special Project' CS scheme agreements based on HBAP targets	DEFRA	7-9,11,12
Work with landowners to bring SINCs into favourable management.	BTCV HH-AONB, NYCC	11
Research and Monitoring		
Instigate a rolling program for re-surveying SINCs.	NEYEDC, NYCC	11
Investigate options for monitoring breeding birds.	NYCC	9
Advisory		
Arrange, with partners, 2 training days on arable field margins, for farmers or agronomists.	FWAG DEFRA	1,3,4,6,8
Advise landowners on grants, schemes and current research, regarding farmland.	FWAG DEFRA	7-9,11,12
Communications and Publicity		
Contribute to existing publications to raise public and landowner awareness of farmland and its heritage.	HDC	6
Contact SINC owners and supply them with up to date site information.	NYCC	6,11
Establish links between farms and schools.	LTL	5,6
Work with local communities such as schools e.g. to secure the planting of fruit and other trees.	BTCV LTL, HDC	5,6

ARABLE 'WEEDS'

Policy and Legislation

No action.

Site Safeguard and Management

Encourage farmers to take up arable field margin options within CS scheme agreements.	FWAG, HH-AONB, DEFRA	1,3,4,8
Work with local communities such as schools, to set up 'arable weed' projects.	BTCV, LTL, HDC	4-6

Research and Monitoring

No action.

Advisory & Communications and Publicity

Arrange, with partners, a training event for farmers on creating arable margins.	FWAG DEFRA	1,3,4,6,8

FARMLAND BIRDS (incorporating Cereal field margins and Boundary and linear features)

Policy and Legislation

No action.

Site Safeguard and Management

Promote the retention and management of areas of scrubland on farms.	DEFRA SUWP	11,12
Establish five winter feeding projects for finches, on local farms.		7
Encourage arable farmers to enter CS using arable and other options that will favour birds and bumblebees.	FWAG DEFRA	1-4,8, 11,12
Set up community schemes to produce nest boxes to be used for tree sparrows.	BTCV	5,6,8
Undertake the erection of nest boxes on local farms populated by tree sparrows (where few suitable trees are available).	FWAG BTCV SUWP	5,6,8
Promote the beetle bank option under CS to farmers (to benefit invertebrates, grey partridge and quail).	FWAG DEFRA	1,3,8
Promote the planting of new hedgerows, including schemes through CS and grant assistance.	BTCV, FWAG HH-AONB DEFRA, SUWP	2,8
Promote the restoration of hedgerows (including re-instating traditional management), and retention of old hedgerow trees where appropriate, through CS and other incentives.	BTCV FWAG DEFRA	2,8

Research and Monitoring

Use results of "Swale & Ure Washland Project" turtle dove project to identify future targets.	SUWP LUCT	8,11,12
Investigate options for setting up a farmland birds monitoring project.	FWAG BTCV	9
Monitor success of nest box schemes.		9
Work with interested farmers, to undertake breeding bird surveys as part of the RSPB Farmer Volunteer Alliance.	FWAG	9

Advisory

Contact owners of large, open grassy spaces (airfields, golf courses) to advise on skylark conservation.		8
Offer advice on importance of scrub in addition to trees, for species such as bullfinch, roosting corn bunting and turtle dove.	SUWP	8,12
Prepare advice note on planting new, and conserving existing ash trees for tree sparrow nesting.		8

Communications and Publicity

Prepare articles on ecology and conservation of farmland birds.		1-9,11,12

CONTENTS SECTION 4

NATIVE BROAD-LEAVED WOODLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN

FOUR

Introduction

Twisted tree: English Nature

There is no virgin forest (the original 'wild wood') remaining in Britain. Existing woodland is categorised as semi-natural woodland (predominantly native trees that have grown naturally), or artificial woodland (woods that have been planted with either native trees or non-native species).

Either of these can be ancient woodland, which is defined as occupying a site that has been continuously wooded since 1600 (when the first maps were made). Ancient woodland is richer in wildlife and is of greater conservation importance, indeed it has the richest invertebrate fauna of any habitat in Britain.

Recent woodland is that which has developed naturally or has been artificially planted, since 1600. This may be native woodland or non-native (which includes conifers and species such as sycamore Acer pseudoplatinus). Newly planted woods can never replace the value of ancient woods.

Status

National

Great Britain has a woodland cover of just 1.5%, compared to an average of 6% in other European countries.

Regional

Upland oakwood is a characteristic habitat of the North York Moors and Hills and Yorkshire Dales Natural Areas. Lowland oak and mixed deciduous woodland are characteristic habitats of the Southern Magnesian Limestone, Coal Measures and North Lincolnshire Coversands and Clay Vales Natural Areas.

Local

The English Nature Ancient Woodland Inventory gives a figure of 755 hectares of semi-natural ancient woodland and 188 hectares of ancient but re-planted woodland, giving a total resource of 943 ha (1% of the BAP area). This is composed of different woodland types including 'Upland oakwood' a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitat, of which 100 hectares occurs in Hambleton. Much of this woodland is designated within Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).

There is no figure available for the amount of recent native woodland.

Hambleton Priority Species

- Spotted flycatcher

Other Species

- Beech fern (*Thelpteris phegopteris*)
- Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*)
- Bats
- Redstart
- Pied flycatcher
- Wood warbler
- Purple hairstreak butterfly

Bluebell (Hyacinthoides non-scripta): Graham Megson

Status of Priority Species

Spotted flycatcher: Dr Peter Evans

The spotted flycatcher has declined by 77% in the UK between 1973 and 1998. It is a UK BAP priority species. The decline is due to a worsening first-year survival rate, possibly caused by deteriorating habitat, migration hazards or problems on the wintering grounds in Africa. This species is also covered by the Habitat Action Plan for lowland wood pasture and parkland.

Targets 1 - 4 will benefit the spotted flycatcher, although its fortunes will not be monitored at local BAP level.

Requirements

- Maintain existing resource.
- Expand the resource using open ground.
- Restore woodland that has been degraded.
- Conservation-minded management of woodlands, including leaving some trees to mature.
- Appropriate conservation management even if timber production is not an objective.
- Fencing and/or culling of deer, to control overgrazing and browsing by sheep and deer.
- Monitoring to see whether woodland is regenerating without the need for intervention.

- Planting of trees should only be undertaken if regeneration is demonstrably not occurring. Trees of guaranteed local provenance should be used.
- Assessment of the age structure of the wood. If it is even-aged, some trees should be ring-barked or felled to encourage the growth of saplings. This also creates standing or fallen dead timber.
- Standing dead timber, and fallen wood of all sizes from twigs to main boughs and trunks to be left in situ, to encourage invertebrates, fungi, lichens and mosses. Invertebrates associated with the decay of timber are very diverse.
- Rides for overhead services to be kept clear of maturing trees. These add to the structure and diversity of the wood.
- Areas of open ground are valuable for conservation in woodlands. Woodlands often contain clearings and glades vegetated with bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) or herb-rich grassland.
- Invasive exotic species to be controlled or removed, including unplanted beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and occasionally conifers. Plants such as rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*), cherry laurel (*Laurelia serrata*) and Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cusipidatum*) can inhibit regeneration and shade out ground flora plants. These should be eradicated.
- Associated woodland elements should be managed as appropriate, e.g. hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice.

Current Action

- Forestry Commission felling licences are normally required if more than five cubic metres of timber is to be felled in a quarter of a year.
- Guidance and grants available from Forestry Commission including Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) and Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG).
- The Howardian Hills Area of Oustanding Natural Beauty Management Plan endorses the management and protection of woodland.
- Many woods are registered as SINC's in the Hambleton District-Wide Local Plan under Policy NC4.
- English Nature maintains an ancient woodland inventory for woods greater than two hectares in size that meet the ancient woodland criteria.
- There is a CS option to plant up to 0.25 hectares with broad-leaved tree species as part of a whole farm scheme. Under the Less Favoured Area (LFA) category, larger woods can be stock-proofed.
- The Forestry Commission encourage planning officers to consult on planning applications that affect ancient woodland.

Threats

- Clearance for other land use.
- Invasion by non-native species, especially sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*).
- Overgrazing by sheep and deer which kills saplings (and is indicated by the absence of a shrub layer). Roe deer and muntjac are increasing.
- The neglect of boundary features, which then fail to exclude grazing animals.
- Isolation caused by the simplification of the landscape, through the removal of connective elements in the countryside.
- Nutrient enrichment and chemical input from agricultural run off or spray drift changing soil conditions and ground flora.
- Neglect of traditional management such as coppicing altering the structure of the woodland and thus reducing diversity.
- Loss of tree seed to birds and mammals is natural but is increased in woods stocked with pheasants.

Other Possible Partners

- Country Land and Business Association
- English Nature
- Forestry Commission
- Indigenous Woodlands Woodland Consultancy
- Landowners
- National Farmers' Union
- Small Woodlands Association
- Woodland Trust
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
- Yorwoods

Objective

To maintain and enhance the Upland oak wood resource and to increase the amount of native broad-leaved woodland in Hambleton.

Targets

1. No reduction in area of established upland oak woodland or any other ancient woodland.
2. Secure management plans for 20% of woodland SINC's.
3. Restore 25 hectares of coniferous plantation to native broad-leaved woodland by 2020.
4. Increase the area of 'new' native woodland by 25 hectares.
5. Establish the condition of all SINC woodlands.
6. Raise awareness of conservation amongst all woodland owners.
7. All known native woods to be surveyed and ratified as SINC's if criteria met.

Actions

	Partners	Target No.
Policy and Legislation		
Ratify sites as SINCs if criteria met.	NEYEDC, NYCC	7
Write to English Nature to lobby for the inclusion in the Ancient Woodland Inventory of woodland under 2ha.	NYCC	6
Site Safeguard and Management		
Encourage woodland owners to implement appropriate long term management plans.	FWAG DEFRA, FC	1 2,6
Encourage woodland owners to provide secure boundaries to control unwanted grazing.	FC	1
Encourage farmers to enter WGS agreements and to utilise the woodland creation options in the CS scheme.	FC DEFRA	4
Encourage woodland owners to remove where appropriate 50% non-native tree species from woods	FC	2
Encourage owners of conifer plantations that were previously ancient or semi-natural woodland, to restore this habitat.	FC	3
Research and Monitoring		
Set up a woodland inventory including statements on invasive species, boundary condition and hazel coppice.	NEYEDC	5-7
Advisory		
Advise owners of known Native broad-leaved woodland, about grants and research.	FC	1-3 4,6
Communications and Publicity		
Identify owners of woods and make them aware of the HBAP and who they can contact for information and advice.	HDC	1,6

CONTENTS SECTION 5

WET WOODLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN

Introduction

'Wet woodland' is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat.

Alder woodland: Ian Dormor

Such woodland is found on poorly drained and/or seasonally wet soils, with alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), willow species and hairy birch (*Betula pubecens*) dominating the woodland canopy and understorey.

Wet woodland has a rich diversity. Wet conditions encourage ferns and mosses, while decaying wood is good for fungi and invertebrates.

Status

National

The national resource includes 25,000 to 30,000 hectares of established semi-natural wet woodland and 25,000 to 40,000 hectares of recently developed wet woodland, giving 50,000 to 70,000 hectares in total.

Regional

The regional resource is thought to be a minimum of 343 hectares, some 0.5% of the upper value of the UK resource. This is probably a great underestimation.

This is a characteristic habitat of the North York Moors and Hills and Southern Magnesian Limestone Natural Areas.

Local

The exact amount of Wet woodland in Hambleton is not known. For the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty portion of Hambleton, some 15 hectares occur and there is an estimated 15 hectares elsewhere (only 0.03% of the Biodiversity Action Plan area). Examples can be found at Dalby Bush Fen Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Pilmoor SSSI.

Hambleton Priority Species

None

Other species

- Otter (UK BAP)
- Marsh tit
- Willow tit
- Lesser spotted woodpecker

Requirements

- Minimum habitat loss.
- Retention of ancient and dying trees, which provide the best habitat for dead wood invertebrates.
- Low intervention management. Timber production is rarely a high priority for wet sites.
- Wet woodland or carr, can be a threat to other habitats, such as open wetland. Long established carr should be retained. If younger carr is controlled, some should be retained.
- Wet woodlands benefit from the following:
  - **a** Retention of old trees and dead timber, standing and fallen. Wet woods are commonly neglected and have a high proportion of these resources, which are valuable for invertebrates, fungi, lichens and mosses.
  - **b** Absence of underplanting - unlikely to be necessary or profitable.
  - **c** Monitoring over time to see whether the wood is regenerating without the need for intervention.
  - **d** Appropriate conservation management is important in all sites irrespective of whether timber production is carried out.
  - **e** Light grazing by sheep, deer, hares or rabbits. Light grazing is natural and ensures that the ground is disturbed enough to allow alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) seed to germinate. Fences may need to be erected and maintained to prevent overgrazing.
  - **f** Control of invasive alien ground flora such as giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and Japanese knotweed (*Polyganum cuspidatum*) to whose infestation wet woodland is vulnerable. These inhibit regeneration and shade out ground flora plants.
  - **g** Control by periodic thinning of alien tree species such as sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and poplars.

Marsh tit: Dr Peter Evans

Threats

- Hostility of surrounding land use may isolate Wet woodland.
- Lowering of water tables through drainage or water abstraction producing a drier woodland type.
- Changes in management can lead to adverse affects. This includes inappropriate grazing levels that change the woodland structure and cause poaching of soil. These factors lead to an impoverished ground flora and reduced regeneration.
- Fragmentation.
- Invasion by non-native species, especially Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), reducing the conservation value of ground flora.
- Wet woodlands are often associated with dynamic watercourses which can be lost through river control and flood prevention measures.
- Decline in water quality diminishing ground flora and invertebrate communities. This could be caused by nutrient enrichment and chemical input from agricultural run off or spray drift, or from effluent or fly tipping.
- Air pollution threatening bryophyte and lichen communities.
- Climate change,radically altering wet woodland ecosystems.
- Death of alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) trees, being killed by the spread of *Phytophthora* root disease, a fungus that causes die back and death. This is a serious and increasing disease.
- If existing woods are coppiced, any decline in that form of traditional management can diminish diversity by altering the structure of the woodland.
- Conservation conflict between Wet woodland and another valued habitat, leading to the destruction of the wood in favour of the other habitat.
- Removal of dead and decaying wood including fallen and standing timber.

Current Action

- Felling licences are required if more than five cubic metres of timber is to be felled in a quarter.
- The Forestry Commission has produced Forest Practice Guide No 8, 'The management of semi-natural woodlands: Wet woodlands'.
- Forestry Commission grants such as WGS are available. Advice can be sought from the Forestry Commission, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and English Nature.
- There is a Countryside Stewardship (CS) option to plant up to 0.25 hectare with appropriate broad-leaved tree species. Under the LFA larger woods can be stock-proofed.
- The Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan endorses the

protection and management of Wet woodland.

- The 31 woods are registered as Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC) in the Hambleton District-Wide Local Plan under Policy NC4. Policy NC6 is concerned with semi-natural habitat protection, for sites not on nature reserves.
- Information on Wet woodland is recorded in the Forest Authority's National Inventory of Woodland and Trees started in 1995. It is also collected as part of Woodland Grant Scheme documentation.
- Other agencies including the Environment Agency, may have information from riparian surveys.

Other Possible Partners

- Landowners
- Lower Ure Conservation Trust

Objective

To conserve, maintain, restore and enhance Wet woodland in Hambleton.

Targets

1. Maintain current amount of Wet woodland.
2. Create 15 hectares of Wet woodland.
3. Restore one degraded Wet woodland.
4. Implement management agreements on five Wet woodland SINC's.
5. Establish an inventory of sites.
6. Raise awareness of the scarcity and conservation value of Wet woodland.
7. Assess all sites against SINC criteria and ratify if met.

Actions

	Partners	Target No.
Policy and Legislation		
Evaluate existing survey details against SINC criteria to ratify or delete sites.	NEYEDC NYCC	7
Site Safeguard and Management		
Promote WGS and other agreements in order to create wet woodland in appropriate locations.	FWAG, DEFRA FC, SUWP	2
Advise landowner(s) of degraded sites and of restoration measures.		3
Work with landowners to assess sites and write management prescriptions.		1,4
Ensure SSSIs are under favourable management.	EN	1
Research and Monitoring		
Develop a Hambleton wet woodland inventory, researching SINC data held in Biodat, aerial photographs and phase 1 survey target notes (especially along water courses).	NEYEDC	1,5
Advisory		
Advise landowners of grants and current research.	SUWP, FC	1-4,6
Communications and Publicity		
Publish articles on the conservation value of wet woodland.		6

LOWLAND WOOD PASTURE AND PARKLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN

Introduction

Wood pasture: Ian Dormor

'Lowland wood pasture and parkland' is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat. This is a vegetation structure, rather than a particular plant community, where there has been a long history of management. Its identification may need research into the following: field archaeology, ground flora, aerial photographs, Ordnance Survey first edition 6" maps and historical records. First edition maps sometimes depict this habitat as 'wooded commons'. The plan also covers isolated mature trees in fields and field boundaries.

Nationally, this habitat is known to support many UK priority species, especially invertebrates. Many of these have specialised requirements for rotting timber, sap runs and other niches. Many hole nesting birds breed, and the mix of mature trees, parkland structure and grazing provide ideal conditions for bats.

Status

National

The national resource covers some 10,000 to 20,000 hectares of working lowland wood pasture and parkland.

Regional

The regional resource has not been estimated.

This is a local but notable habitat of the North York Moors and Hills Natural Area.

Local

Only a small proportion occurs in Hambleton, chiefly in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Sites include Gilling Castle (on the district boundary with Ryedale), Newburgh Priory and Beningbrough Hall. The amount of this habitat in the District is not known.

Hambleton Priority Species

- Spotted flycatcher

Other Species

- Fungi
- Bats
- Starling
- Nuthatch
- Green woodpecker
- Invertebrates

Status of Priority Species

The spotted flycatcher has declined by 77% in the UK between 1973 and 1998. It is a UK BAP priority species. The decline is due to a worsening first year survival rate, possibly caused by deteriorating habitat, migration hazards or problems on the wintering grounds in Africa. This species will benefit from target 2. (This species is also covered by the Habitat Action Plan for Native broad-leaved woodlands.)

Requirements

- The English Nature Veteran Trees Initiative, promotes conservation objectives.
- Reinstating of pollarding where this traditional management has ceased.
- Correct grazing regimes for open ground elements of parkland (grassland or heath).
- Site protection and appropriate management plans.
- Research and advice on management and on invertebrate requirements.
- Management as parkland and not as plantation.
- Retention of veteran trees, including dead and dying specimens.
- Retention of historic avenues.
- Conservation of isolated veteran trees.

Chicken of the woods fungus: Graham Megson

Current Action

- Forestry Commission licences are normally required if more than five cubic metres of timber is to be felled in one quarter of the year.
- English Heritage has sought to conserve ancient parkland for its historic value. Some parks are graded in terms of their importance, and are recorded on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. English Heritage favours formal parks over hunting parks. Parks not on the register are also important.
- Research is being undertaken by agencies such as English Nature.
- The following Hambleton District-Wide Local Plan policies are relevant:
  - i NC1: General nature conservation considerations,
  - ii NC2: Statutory Sites of Nature Conservation Interest,
  - iii NC4: Non-statutory sites of nature conservation interest,
  - iv NC5: Species protected by law,
  - v NC6: Semi-natural habitat protection and
  - vi NC7: Wildlife corridors.

Threats

- Open ground may be lost to the withdrawal of grazing, with consequent declines to wildlife dependent on such habitat.
- Loss of trees, especially veterans, through natural death or felling (the timber is often desirable).
- Suspension of pollarding, a traditional practice which has helped to prolong the the life of veteran trees.
- The generation gap between veteran trees and young trees, which leads to a break in the continuity of old trees that provide specialised niches for invertebrates and other species.
- Improved recreational access, which has often led to old trees being felled for safety reasons, and increased erosion or compaction around trees.

Other Possible Partners

- Arboricultural Association
- English Heritage
- Indigenous Woodlands Woodland Consultancy
- National Trust
- Rural Development Service
- Swale and Ure Washlands Project

Objective

Conserve, maintain, restore and enhance Lowland wood pasture and parkland, ensuring that management takes account of wildlife.

Targets

1. Prepare an inventory of the District's resource and its condition.
2. Agree one management plan for a Lowland wood pasture and parkland site.
3. Assess existing sites against SINC criteria and designate if appropriate.
4. Raise awareness of the benefits provided by isolated field and boundary trees.

Actions

	Partners	Target No.
Policy and Legislation		
Assess sites against SINC criteria and ratify or delete	NEYEDC	3
Habitat Creation and Management		
Monitor and assist where possible, in the continuous updating of the management plan for Beningbrough Hall.	NT	2
Monitor and comment on appropriateness of stocking levels at Beningbrough.	NT	2
Research and Monitoring		
Prepare an inventory of sites	HH-AONB, NEYEDC	1
Prepare an inventory of isolated, mature field trees	HH-AONB	1
Advisory		
Prepare and make available guidance on isolated old and veteran tree management.	EN HH-AONB	4
Communications and Publicity		
Share information with Yorkshire veteran trees initiative		4

CONTENTS SECTION 7

NEUTRAL GRASSLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN

Introduction

This action plan covers grasslands that are unimproved or semi-improved. This includes the two UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats 'Lowland meadows' and 'Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh'.

Floodplain grazing marsh: English Nature

Lowland meadow is defined as 'most forms of unimproved neutral grassland across the enclosed lowland landscapes of the UK' It includes grasslands cut for hay and those where livestock grazing is the main land use.

Floodplain grazing marsh is defined as: 'periodically inundated pasture or meadow with ditches that maintain water levels. The ditches are rich in plants and invertebrates. Most areas are grazed or cut for hay or silage'.

These habitats support declining wetland birds. The key to their conservation is appropriate management.

Historically, this was a characteristic habitat of the washlands of the rivers Ure and Swale.

Status

National

The exact extent of high species diversity Neutral grassland in the UK is not known but was estimated in 1994 to be about 25,000 hectares. There has been the loss of 97% of semi-natural grassland in southern England since the 1930's.

Regional

In the Yorkshire and Humber region, the majority of this habitat survives in the Derwent Valley, on the Humberhead Levels and along the River Hull. The total figure is not known.

Neutral grassland is a characteristic habitat of the Vale of York and Mowbray Natural Area.

Local

This habitat occurs on ten Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC).

The English Nature Grazing Marsh Survey gives the total amount for Hambleton as 358ha, which is 0.3% of the district. This is fragmented along the river valleys of the Swale, Cod Beck and becks in the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and is

spread across nine sites in five distinct areas. Not all of these sites are designated as SINC's.

- River Swale - west of Thrintoft
- River Swale - around Maunby.
- Cod Beck - north of Thornton-le-Street
- Holbeck - south of Ampleforth (shared with Ryedale)
- Dalby Bush Beck – south of Terrington (shared with Ryedale)

The exact amount of lowland meadow habitat and the number of sites in the District are not known.

All three priority species breed at Nosterfield Local Nature Reserve. Most sites are known for their ornithological interest, but a few for their botanical interest.

Hambleton Priority Species

- Lapwing
- Redshank
- Yellow wagtail

Other Species

- Water vole (UK BAP)
- Curlew
- Snipe
- Barn owl
- Reed bunting (UK BAP)

Status of Priority Species

The lapwing breeds in the uplands and also on poorly drained land in the lowlands. It has declined moderately in England and in the lowlands since 1987. Important numbers winter in the region.

The redshank has contracted its range and declined moderately in the UK since 1987, possibly due to land drainage. It is a rare breeding bird in the district.

The yellow wagtail has declined rapidly along waterways since the 1980's and has contracted its range towards central England. The optimum habitat is tussocky pasture grazed by cattle. It is now a scarce breeding bird in the District. All three species will benefit from targets 1 and 2.

Yellow wagtail: Dr Peter Evans

Requirements

- No habitat loss.
- Habitat re-creation.
- Appropriate management.
- Flood defence works undertaken in an ecologically sensitive manner.
- Water level management plans designed for the conservation of this habitat.
- No grass re-seeding following ground disturbance.
- Minimal disturbance from humans and dogs, especially through the breeding season.
- Scrapes and seasonally flooded wetlands.

Current Action

- This is a key Countryside Stewardship (CS) target community. Options are available to raise water levels and re-create this habitat on ex-arable land. Scrapes can also be created.
- The Environment Agency, Water Companies, Internal Drainage Boards and Local Authorities have a statutory duty to further conservation, where this is consistent with their functions as set out in the Water Resources Act 1991 and the Land Drainage Act 1991.
- The Environment Agency must consider conserving and enhancing features of special interest.
- One site containing this habitat (Dalby Bush Fen) is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Guidance on managing drainage channels for nature conservation was issued in 1989 by the Nature Conservancy Council. A guide to water level management was issued in 1992 by Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and there is guidance on environmental procedures for inland flood defence decision making (1992).

Threats

- Flood defence works, which construct embankments to prevent river flooding.
- Agricultural intensification, including ditch clearance, increased input of artificial fertilizers and pesticides, changes to stocking densities and loss of grassland to cereal production.
- Decline in traditional management.
- Housing and industrial development.
- Mineral extraction.
- Groundwater abstraction.
- Pollution of groundwater or surface water.
- Disturbance to breeding birds by humans and dogs.

Other Possible Partners

- Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Country Land and Business Association
- English Nature
- Farmers
- Land Registry
- Lower Ure Conservation Trust
- National Farmers' Union
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Objective

Safeguard the remaining remnants of neutral grassland through appropriate land management and sensitive river management.

Targets

1. 75% of this habitat to be under favourable management and maximum protection.
2. Ten hectares of Lowland meadow or Floodplain grazing marsh to be recreated from arable land.
3. Survey to locate additional habitat and ratify new sites if SINC criteria are met.
4. Survey known sites to obtain baseline data for breeding birds.

Actions

	Partners	Target No.
Policy and Legislation		
Test SINCs against criteria and ratify if met.	NEYEDC	1
Site Safeguard and Management		
Encourage farmers to choose CS options for managing known sites of Neutral grassland.	FWAG DEFRA	1
Encourage farmers and other landowners to use CS or other options to re-create Neutral grassland habitat.	FWAG DEFRA SUWP	2
Research and Monitoring		
Undertake habitat audit to identify sites that are not yet classified.	NEYEDC	3
Investigate links between breeding bird populations & Neutral grassland and survey known sites to obtain baseline data.		4
Advisory		
No action.		

Communications and Publicity

Identify landowners and ensure that they are aware of the relevant sections of the HBAP and who to contact for information and advice. I

ROAD VERGES HABITAT ACTION PLAN

Introduction

Flower-rich road verge: Stuart West

There are few semi-natural grasslands in the district of Hambleton, and in this intensively agricultural landscape road verges assume particular significance as representatives of semi-natural grassland and as wildlife corridors.

There are UK Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP's) for 'Lowland calcareous grassland' and 'Lowland dry acid grassland'. Other minor habitats associated with road verges include hedges, ditches and scrub.

Status

National

Grass verges are recognised as contributing to the grassland resource.

Regional

Neutral, calcareous and acidic grassland occurs in the region but has a scattered distribution and is never extensive. Road verges, therefore, make an important contribution to the regional distribution of these grassland habitats.

Lowland calcareous grassland and Lowland dry acid grassland are characteristic habitats of the Vales of York and Mowbray Natural Area.

Local

The Hambleton audit gives the following totals for unimproved or semi-improved grassland:

- neutral - 709 hectares
- marshy – 16 hectares
- acidic – 4 hectares
- calcareous – 3 hectares

It is estimated that there are approximately 1,070km roads throughout the Action Plan area. Only about 25km within the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty have been surveyed for their botanical interest.

Verge ownership is complicated. Some are owned by North Yorkshire County Council, while others originated with Hedgerow Enclosure Acts and are in private ownership.

The existing management of verges lies largely with the highways authority, North Yorkshire County Council, which concentrates on cutting main road verges and minor roads where road safety is an issue. The county of North Yorkshire is divided into seven divisional offices each managing its own verge cutting programme. Most cutting is contracted out. North Yorkshire County Council also undertakes salt storage and spreading as appropriate.

Hambleton Priority Species

- Cowslip (*Primula veris*)
- Orchids (*Orchidaceae*)
- Tower mustard (*Turritis glabra*) (UK BAP)

Other Species

- Barn owl
- Common lizard
- Cinnabar moth

Status of Priority Species

The cowslip (*Primula veris*) is a locally valued plant. It is a reliable indicator of verges that may be of higher quality.

Several species of orchid grow on verges, including twayblade (*Listera ovata*), common spotted (*Dactylorchis maculata*), early purple (*Orchis mascula*), northern marsh (*Dactylorchis purpurella*) and pyramidal orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*). There is also the possibility of rarer species such as fragrant (*Gymnadenia canopsea*) and bee orchids (*Ophrys apifera*).

Tower mustard (*Turritis glabra*) is a UK BAP priority species that was last recorded in the district at Catton in 1972. It is now thought to be extinct in Northern England. It should be looked for during appropriately timed survey work.

Cowslip (*Primula veris*) and orchids will benefit from target 3. If tower mustard (*Turritis glabra*) is rediscovered (target 4) then targets and actions will be prepared and added to the BAP.

Requirements

- Road verge survey to assess resource.
- Targeted management of notable sites.
- Marking of boundaries of notable sites with permanent and visible pegs.
- Mosaics of long and short grass.
- Timing of cuts to benefit conservation.
- Cuttings to be left for a few days to enable seeds to ripen and fall.
- Cuttings to be removed to reduce fertility.
- Manage minor habitats associated with verges, including ditches, hedges and scrub.
- Mitigation after engineering works.
- Secure containers for salted grit.
- Ensuring that contractors have plans showing location of managed sites.
- Retention of common ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) where populations of cinnabar moth occur.

Current Action

- Verges are cut on the authority of the Highways Agency (Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) for trunk roads and North Yorkshire County Council for A, B and C roads.
- Winter gritting of roads is undertaken on the authority of Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and North Yorkshire County Council. Salt piles are routinely stationed on road verges.
- Some parish councils and some farmers voluntarily cut road verges.
- Common ragwort is a notifiable weed and North Yorkshire County Council has a duty to control it on its land.
- North Yorkshire County Council and English Nature will undertake a road verge survey in the Yorkshire Wolds in 2003, gaining knowledge that can be shared.
- All road verges in the Howardian Hills AONB were surveyed in 1998. The best ones have been listed as Special Interest Verges.

Threats

- Fertilizer rich run-off from adjacent farms causing eutrophication.
- Management regimes that prevent flowering and seeding of interesting species or lead to the growth of coarse vegetation and scrub, due to poor timing of cuts.
- Storage of materials on species rich verges, e.g. stacking of straw bales, leaching of salt heaps.
- Laying of pipe lines and servicing of utilities, including failure to retain and replace topsoil.
- Road widening, repairs, culverting and other major structural disturbance.
- Accidental or deliberate introduction of species inappropriate to the locality.
- Losses of plants to pesticides from blanket spraying of ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*).
- Death of barn owls from vehicles.
- The loss of cinnabar moth colonies through removal of ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*).
- Severe and extensive cutting of verges by contractors where management is contracted out.

Cowslip (Primula veris): Cliff Megson

Other Possible Partners

- C.M. Rob Natural History Society
- Darlington and Teesdale Naturalists' Society
- Parish councils
- Nature's World, Middlesbrough

Objective

Undertake a full survey of road verge vegetation at a basic level and follow up with detailed surveys of targeted areas, to identify species rich verges. Prepare management plans for the best sites.

Targets

1. Undertake a full road verge survey at a basic level and detailed surveys of targeted sites.
2. Set up and maintain a road verge database.
3. Prepare management plans for ten species rich verges.
4. Ascertain if tower mustard (*Turritis glabra*) is extant in Hambleton.

Actions

	Partners	Target No.
Policy and Legislation		
Issue health & safety guidelines for working adjacent to the highway.	NYCC	1
Habitat and Species Protection and Management		
Undertake full road verge survey during the spring and summer, to identify important sites and key species.	HH-AONB NEYEDC PLACE	1
Undertake detailed surveys of sites identified as being important (include fauna and flora, hedges, ditches and the presence of salt bins) specifically search for tower mustard.	HH-AONB NEYEDC PLACE	1,4
Prepare a strategy for the conservation of grass verges.	HH-AONB NYCC	3
Prepare grassland management plans with landowners of the 10 best road verge plant communities.	HH-AONB NYCC	3
Prepare grassland management plans with the landowners of the 10 second best road verge plant communities.	HH-AONB NYCC	3

Prepare grassland management plans with the landowners of the ten third best road verge plant communities.	HH-AONB NYCC	3
Investigate the possibility of changing road verge specifications on NYCC tender documents, to benefit nature conservation (including the design and siting of salt bins).	NYCC	3
Research and Monitoring		
Set up a road verge database.	NEYEDC, NYCC	2
Advisory		
Provide advice to site owners on grants, schemes and current research.	NYCC	3
Communications and Publicity		
Ensure contractors are aware of sites of importance and are supplied with clear plans showing location of managed sites.	HDC	3
Encourage Parish Councils to adopt & manage important roadside verges.	HDC	3

MAGNESIAN LIMESTONE GRASSLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN

Introduction

Calcareous grassland: Graham Megson

'Lowland calcareous grassland' is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat that includes grassland formed on either chalk or limestone deposits. Magnesian Limestone grassland occurs on outcrops of Magnesian Limestone laid down during the Permian period, 225 million years ago. In terms of both its geographical position and climate, it fits between the lowland southern chalks and limestones and the upland northern carboniferous limestone. Magnesian Limestone grassland supports a unique assemblage of plant and invertebrate species, including over 13 nationally scarce plants and 84 nationally scarce invertebrates. Magnesian Limestone grassland is listed on the European Community Habitats Directive.

Status

National

Magnesian Limestone is found in a narrow band between Nottinghamshire and Tyne and Wear. The U.K. resource is 50,000 hectares.

Regional

In the Yorkshire and Humber region, Magnesian Limestone forms a narrow north-south band. Where it outcrops, important calcareous habitats occur. Approximately 9000 hectares (20% of the national resource) occurs here.

This is a characteristic habitat of the Vale of York and Mowbray Natural Area.

Local

In Hambleton the Magnesian Limestone outcrops in the Bedale and Nosterfield area, giving a small proportion of calcareous sites. Many of these have been lost to non-natural influences. Only three hectares of Magnesian Limestone grassland survives, situated on five sites. All of these are Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC's) and some are under Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreements.

- Nosterfield limekilns
- Henge (Nosterfield)
- Masham road verge (near Bedale)
- Langthorne covert (near Bedale)
- East Tanfield quarry (near West Tanfield)

Hambleton Priority Species

None

Other Species

- Orchids (*Orchidaceae*)
- Skylark (UK BAP)
- Dingy skipper butterfly

Requirements

- Grazing at appropriate levels depending upon site requirements. Grazing will be for maintenance of favourable sites or for restoration, for example where coarse species have established.
- Mowing at sites where grazing is impractical.
- Grazing or cutting timed for the autumn.
- Scrub management.
- No grass re-seeding.
- No fertilizer input.
- Available management options in agri-environment schemes.

Current Action

- No sites in Hambleton have been designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's).
- All five sites are designated SINC's.
- Some sites are under CS agreements.
- There is a CS option to manage calcareous grassland.

Common spotted orchids (Dactylorchis maculata): Peter Waterton

Threats

- Agricultural changes, including input of fertilizers, pesticide application, changes to stocking densities and conversion to arable.
- Mineral (gravel) extraction.
- Loss of grant scheme agreements.
- Development, e.g. infilling, of quarries and other workings where calcareous grasslands have developed after cessation of working.
- Disturbance, such as arson, tipping and erosion.

Other Possible Partners

- Landowners
- Swale and Ure Washlands Project

Objective

Safeguard and manage the remaining remnants of this habitat and re-create it where opportunities allow.

Targets

1. Retain all current Magnesian Limestone grassland sites in Hambleton.
2. Increase extent of Magnesian Limestone grassland in Hambleton by 33% (one hectare).
3. All sites to be under favourable management.
4. Establish the importance of existing sites for populations of dingy skipper butterfly.
5. Ratify sites as SINC if qualifying criteria are met.

Actions

	Partners	Target No.
Policy and Legislation		
Ratify sites as SINCs if criteria met.	NEYEDC, NYCC	5
Site Safeguard and Management		
Encourage owners to manage Magnesian Limestone Grassland habitat, through agri-environment schemes or similar.	FWAG DEFRA	1,3
Encourage landowners to re-create this type of habitat in appropriate areas.	FWAG DEFRA, LUCT	2

Research and Monitoring

Set up an inventory of Magnesian Limestone Grassland sites.	NEYEDC	1
Monitor sites as part of a rolling programme of SINC assessment.	NEYEDC	1,5
Undertake a survey to ascertain existence of sites for dingy skipper butterflies.	SUWP LUCT	4

Advisory

No action.

Communications and Publicity

Inform owners of Magnesian Limestone Grassland of the relevant sections of the HBAP and who to contact for information and advice.	1-4

LOWLAND HEATHLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN

Introduction

Lowland heath at Pilmoor: English Nature

'Lowland heathland' is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat.

Lowland heathland has declined by 80% nationally over the last 200 years. In southern England much has been developed for housing. In Yorkshire most losses have been to forestry and agriculture.

This is a habitat of low altitudes, dominated by heather, but with gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), scrub, bogs, wet pools and bare patches. Heathland may be sandy or peaty. It is uncultivated, but may be grazed. It has a rich diversity of species especially invertebrates and reptiles.

Status

National

The national resource covers 58,000 hectares in the UK, with most found in southern England. This is 20% of the World resource, all of which is found in Europe.

Regional

This is a characteristic habitat of the southern portion of the Vales of York and Mowbray Natural Area and the regional resource is 1,109ha.

Local

Only 45 hectares of Lowland heathland occurs in Hambleton. At Pilmoor Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), near Thirsk, the habitat is a mosaic of heath, fen and wet woodland. An area of 15 hectares of *Sphagnum* dominated mire is being invaded with willow, and silver birch (*Betula pendula*) is also colonising. The Lowland heathland origins of Yearsley Moor in the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are still in evidence, largely beneath conifer plantation.

Hambleton Priority Species

- Argent and sable moth (UK BAP)

Other Species

- Round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*)
- Adder
- Slow worm
- Common lizard
- Dragonflies

Status of Priority Species

The argent and sable moth is a UK BAP priority species and is rare in the UK. It has been recorded from only six sites in the region, including Pilmoor, where it was last noted in 1984. It was unsuccessfully searched for on one date in June 2001. This is a species of birch woodland on bogs. The larvae feed on birch and bog myrtle (*Myrica gale*) (the latter not occurring at Pilmoor).

If argent and sable moth is found to still occur at Pilmoor (target 3) then targets and actions will be prepared and added to the BAP.

Requirements

Lowland heathland benefits from the following:

- No habitat loss.
- Appropriate management.
- Restoration of afforested sites.
- Ride widening in afforested sites to maintain heathland interest for the duration of tree cover.
- **Heather management:** Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) lives for 30 years and each age stage should be represented, to give structural diversity.
- A range of micro-habitats within the heathland including bare ground, scrub, bogs and open water.
- **Fire control:** Fire is an effective management tool. Uncontrolled fires are damaging.
- **Control of invasive plants:** Plants such as bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), tor grass (*Bracypodium sylvaticum*), gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and silver birch (*Betula pendula*) can quickly become dominant. These need to be reduced but not eradicated. Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) is best eradicated.
- **Light grazing:** This traditional form of management is ideal on heathland as it controls invasive species and produces a range of vegetation heights, adding to structural variety.
- **Areas of open ground:** Bare patches are excellent for some animals, especially insects and reptiles that need to bask in sunshine.
- **Heathland ponds:** Open water is good for specialist invertebrates, with different species living in different zones of the pond.
- Seasonally wet areas and bogs are good for certain insects and plants. These have adapted to the particular ground conditions and are often rare.
- **Wildlife corridors:** These link heathland sites and aid colonisation.

Current Action

- Forestry Commission must be party to the removal of conifers from heathland under the Forestry Act 1967.
- Pilmoor is legally protected by being a designated SSSI.
- This is a key Countryside Stewardship (CS) target habitat – allowing for enhanced management and re-creation on adjacent land.
- English Nature run the National Lowland Heathland Programme.
- Research is being undertaken by agencies such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and English Nature.
- The following Hambleton District-Wide Local Plan policies are relevant:
  - i NC1: General nature conservation considerations,
  - ii NC2: Statutory Sites of Nature Conservation Interest,
  - iii NC4: Non-statutory sites of nature conservation interest,
  - iv NC5: Species protected by law,
  - v NC6: Semi-natural habitat protection and
  - vi NC7: Wildlife corridors.
- Butterfly Conservation action plan for argent and sable moth produced in 2000.
- One area of Pilmoor is grazed.

Argent and sable moth: Peter Waterton

Threats

- Direct threats from clearance and conversion to other land-uses, notably afforestation.
- Fragmentation and isolation.
- A lack of appropriate management, leading to encroachment of rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), tor grass (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*) or scrub.
- Recreational pressures, but not at Pilmoor.
- Vandalism (arson).

Other Possible Partners

- Butterfly Conservation
- BTCV (formerly British Trust for Conservation Volunteers)
- Landowners

Objective

To conserve, restore, enhance and manage lowland heathland in Hambleton.

Targets

1. Return all lowland heathland on Pilmoor SSSI to a favourable condition for nature conservation, by securing appropriate management.
2. Restore 2.5 hectares of lowland heathland on Yearsley Moor to a favourable condition.
3. Ascertain whether a population of argent and sable moth survives at Pilmoor.

Actions

	Partner	Target No.
Policy and Legislation		
No action.		
Site Safeguard and Management		
Agree and implement appropriate long term (Five year) management plans with all 3 owners of Pilmoor.	EN	1
Pilmoor - assess site and write management prescriptions.	EN	1
Pilmoor - open up 5-10 ha of sphagnum-rich ground, by clearing willow scrub.	EN	1
Pilmoor - establish grazing in a second area.	EN	1
Research and Monitoring		
Pilmoor - survey fauna and flora.	EN, NEYEDC	1
Pilmoor - survey for the argent and sable moth.	EN, NEYEDC	3
Advisory		
All landowners at Pilmoor SSSI given relevant advice.	EN	1
Communications and Publicity		
All landowners at Pilmoor SSSI given copies of relevant section of the HBAP.	HDC	1
Contact landowners of Yearsley Moor and FC, to discuss potential for restoration.	HH-AONB FC	2

FWAG have indicated that they are prepared to be a willing partner for this Action Plan.

CONTENTS SECTION 11

RIVERS AND STREAMS HABITAT ACTION PLAN

Introduction

River Swale: North Yorkshire County Council

This habitat type covers any flowing water, including rivers, streams and ditches. Rivers are dynamic and two sub-habitats are noteworthy. Both shingle beds and eroding river banks (which are dynamic) support a range of specialised invertebrates, including very rare beetles. Small streams and ditches are important, particularly as corridors for mobile species such as the otter and kingfisher. Rivers and their banks are both important.

A number of Priority Hambleton Species live in rivers or their floodplains. Specific actions are proposed to conserve them.

There is no appropriate UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for this habitat.

Status

National

This habitat is widespread across the UK, although there is a great variety of river types, depending upon the stage of the river and the underlying geology.

Regional

Rivers and streams are a characteristic habitat of the Vales of York and Mowbray Natural Area with a number of key rivers in the region.

Local

Four of Yorkshire's great rivers flow through the district of Hambleton. The Swale is completely in the district for a portion of its length and the Tees, Ure and Ouse have one bank in the district for some of their length. The Swale and Ure are classed as 'near natural' rivers. Historically, the washlands of the rivers Ure and Swale were vast.

Key rivers:

- River Swale
- River Tees
- River Ure
- River Ouse
- River Wiske
- River Leven
- Cod Beck

Important Sub-habitats

- Shingle beds
- Eroding river banks

Hambleton Priority Species

- Otter (UK BAP)
- Water vole (UK BAP)
- Little ringed plover
- Tansy beetle
- White-clawed crayfish (UK BAP)
- Depressed river mussel (UK BAP)
- A stiletto fly, *Spiriverpa lanulata* (UK BAP)

Other Species

- Water crowfoot (*Ranunculus aquatilis*) (an aquatic plant)
- Salmon
- Sea lamprey (a fish)
- River lamprey (a fish)
- Grayling (a fish)
- Bullhead (a fish)
- Sand martin

Status of Priority Species

Otter - a UK BAP Priority and the subject of national and regional action plans. The decline of the otter has been halted and it is increasing in the district (see targets 1, 3, 4 and 7).

Water vole: Peter Waterton

Water vole: A UK BAP Priority Species that is declining sharply due to mink predation and loss of habitat. Water voles have a preference for treeless sites (see targets 1 and 8). Targets to be prepared on completion of target 8.

Little ringed plover: breeds on man-made wetlands (see Lakes, ponds and associated wildlife action plan), but also on natural river shingle (see target 1).

Tansy beetle: An English Nature Species Recovery Project and a candidate species for red data book inclusion and UK BAP Priority at the next review. Restricted to York, Selby and just Hambleton. High likelihood of a re-introduction at Beningbrough on the River Ouse in the near future. Range contraction of the tansy beetle is currently being researched at the University of York (see targets 1 and 5).

White-clawed crayfish: A UK BAP Priority Species. This native crayfish has declined seriously due to crayfish plague, which is transmitted by the introduced and invasive American signal crayfish (targets to be prepared on completion of target 9).

Depressed river mussel: A UK BAP Priority Species which occurs in Hambleton. More information required on status, ecological requirements and threats (targets to be prepared on completion of target 10).

***Spiriverpa lanulata* (A stiletto fly):** This is a UK BAP Priority Species found on depositional stretches of rivers, where adults are associated with sand shoals built up at flood level and where conditions are open. One male and one female recorded from the River Swale at Great Langton (SE291965) in 1997 (see targets 1 and 6).

Requirements

- High water quality.
- Adequate supply of water
- Appropriate management.
- Environmentally sensitive river engineering and flood bank schemes.
- Maintainance of a complex of river features, such as riffles, rapids, waterfalls, bays and sandbars.
- Ongoing monitoring of water quality by the Environment Agency.
- Good quality surrounding habitat benefiting those species which do not spend all their time in water, such as dragonflies.
- Minimal disturbance - especially needed by breeding birds.
- Protection from pollution and excessive nutrient input.
- Ongoing management, especially to control non-native invasive species.
- Islands of importance for populations of plants and invertebrates.
- The 'grassland fallow' option for Countryside Stewardship (CS) arable field margins which benefits the water vole.
- 600mm diameter dry culverts under roads which assist the passage of otters.
- 300mm wide ledges under bridges are valuable for otters.

Current Action

- Research and monitoring is undertaken by the Environment Agency.
- The following Hambleton District-Wide Local Plan policies are relevant:
  - i NC1: General nature conservation considerations,
  - ii NC2: Statutory Sites of Nature Conservation Interest,
  - iii NC4: Non-statutory sites of nature conservation interest,
  - iv NC5: Species protected by law,
  - v NC6: Semi-natural habitat protection and
  - vi NC7: Wildlife corridors.
- The Environment Agency produces water-level management plans.
- Operations such as water abstraction are licensed by the Environment Agency.
- Many rivers are managed by angling clubs in ways helpful to wildlife.

- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust run an otters and rivers project.
- The Environment Agency survey for water voles, fishes, the depressed river mussel and white-clawed crayfish.
- DEFRA enforce the Keeping of Wild Fish (Crayfish) Order, 1996.
- There is a national BAP for otter, water vole and white-clawed crayfish.
- The Environment Agency is the lead partner on the water vole BAP.
- The University of York is researching tansy beetle ecology.
- Protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.
- CS options can be used to buffer agricultural run-off from flowing water.
- Otter holts are a specific capital works option under CS. Holts made from logs are preferred to concrete ones.
- The establishment of riparian strips under CS, benefits otter and water vole.

Threats

To rivers and streams

- Pollution, which may be from agricultural, industrial or domestic sources.
- Water abstraction directly from rivers reduces flow rates.
- Water transfer schemes between catchments.
- Most watercourses have been affected by river engineering works. These lead to the loss of floodplain features such as oxbow lakes, large meanders and wetlands.
- Efficient drainage in the high catchment of river basins reduces their ability to retain water. The increased speed at which rainfall passes through the system leads to flash floods and extensive flooding at some downstream locations.
- Flood defence works.
- Damage or disturbance caused by recreational use, such as bank damage from the wash from boats and trampling of vegetation.
- Nutrient enrichment from agricultural fertilizer run off changes water chemistry.
- Upstream activities can affect rivers in Hambleton, such as high silt levels caused by soil erosion following forestry operations.
- River water crowfoot beds are at risk from alterations in river chemistry.
- Introduced plants and animals can create havoc to natural systems. Problems species include mink, American signal crayfish, Canadian pondweed, giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam.
- A lack of data about the chemistry and the wildlife of rivers.
- Stocking of coarse fish into fisheries can affect the natural predator - prey balance in the lake.
- Conflict between anglers and fish eating animals, such as otter, goosander and grey heron, though not usually kingfisher.

Tansy beetle: Roger Key

- Inappropriate disturbance, including water sports, dogs and some human activities.

To priority species

- Rapid spread of introduced (non-native) mink, which predate water voles and white-clawed crayfish.
- Loss of bank habitat for water voles through engineering works, ditch clearance, etc.
- Overgrazing of margins affecting certain species such as the water vole.
- Road fatalities to otters forced to cross roads where underpasses are not available.
- River pollution and siltation affects water voles, otters, fish, white-clawed crayfish, depressed river mussel and stonewort beds. Water quality of the River Wiske is too poor for white-clawed crayfish.
- Predation by otters, mink, birds and anglers, threatening fish.
- Fish diseases, introduced accidentally when stocking rivers.
- Physical barriers, the ability of fish to migrate upstream to spawning grounds.
- Crayfish plague that kills white-clawed crayfish.
- American signal crayfish, which compete for optimum habitat with the native, declining white-clawed crayfish.
- Flooding of sand martin nest holes.
- Predation of sand martin nests by stoats, weasels, brown rats and probably mink.
- Disturbance to breeding little ringed plover.

Other Possible Partners

- Angling clubs
- Environment Agency
- Internal Drainage Boards
- Lower Ure Conservation Trust
- National Trust
- Yorkshire Otters and Rivers Project
- Yorkshire Water Services Ltd.
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
- York University

Objective

Maintain and enhance the biological diversity of rivers and streams in Hambleton.

Targets

1. Bring five kilometres of riparian habitat into favourable management for one or more priority species.
2. Assess sites against Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC) criteria for flowing water and ratify those that qualify.
3. Install ten artificial otter holts.
4. Five road and railway bridges to be equipped with ledges or underpasses to facilitate otter passage.
5. Re-introduce tansy beetle to one former site on the River Ouse in Hambleton.
6. Investigate the status of shingle bars and eroding river banks, and prepare guidelines for their conservation.
7. Monitor the distribution of the otter.
8. Investigate the distribution of the water vole.
9. Investigate the distribution of white-clawed crayfish.
10. Investigate the distribution of depressed river mussel.

Actions

	Partners	Target No.
RIVERS AND STREAMS (including shingle bars)		
Policy and Legislation		
Survey sites and check against SINC criteria and ratify or delete.	NEYEDC NYCC	2
Habitat and Species Protection and Management		
Encourage landowners to manage river banks for wildlife.	FWAG DEFRA, SUWP	1
Research and Monitoring		
Set up a database to assess and monitor the status of shingle bars on key rivers.	NEYEDC SUWP	6
Set up a database to assess and monitor the status of eroding river banks on key rivers.	NEYEDC	6
Advisory		
Prepare guidance on the conservation of shingle bars and eroding river banks.		6
Communication and Publicity		
No action.		

ASSOCIATED WILDLIFE

Policy and Legislation

No action.

Habitat and Species Protection and Management

Encourage river bank owners to install artificial otter holts where appropriate.	FWAG HH-AONB, DEFRA	3
Encourage road engineers to build culverts or otter ledges, where bridge designations allow.	NYCC	4
Investigate the ecology of the tansy beetle, and working with a range of agencies select a suitable location for a re-introduction attempt.	DEFRA	5
Assess where water voles currently occur and encourage landowners and agencies to manage bankside habitat to allow for the expansion of the water vole population.	BTCV, DEFRA	1

Research and Monitoring

Monitor otter re-population in Hambleton.	HH-AONB	7
Set up a database and survey all road bridges for obstructions to otter passage.		4
Survey distribution of water vole.	BTCV, NEYEDC	8
Survey distribution of white-clawed crayfish.	BTCV, NEYEDC	9
Survey distribution of depressed river mussel.	NEYEDC	10

Advisory

Write to river agencies on the importance of un-disturbed river shingle beds to little ringed plover.		1
Prepare & distribute advice on bridge ledges and road underpasses for otters.		4

Communications and Publicity

Raise awareness of Rivers and Streams sections of HBAP to appropriate organisations.		1
Organise the selection of a flagship species to promote this action plan.		1
Investigate involving the public in a survey of the flagship species.	BTCV NEYEDC	1

CONTENTS SECTION 12

LAKES AND PONDS HABITAT ACTION PLAN

Introduction

This action plan covers open standing water habitat and associated wildlife interest. It refers to any standing open water and includes reservoirs as well as natural and man-made lakes and ponds.

Reed fringed lake: English Nature

These water bodies range from very small sites to those covering a number of hectares. The wildlife interest depends upon the nutrient status of the water. This has been categorised as nutrient poor (*oligotrophic*); having a narrow range of nutrients (*mesotrophic*); or nutrient rich (*eutrophic*). A lake might switch from one type to another, or have two types at the same time.

Both mesotrophic and eutrophic standing waters are UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats (for large waterbodies). Most lakes are eutrophic.

Marginal habitats are important for wildlife, including reedbeds (which formerly occurred in Hambleton) and swamps.

The Vale of York was historically an extensive wetland area.

Status

National

This habitat is widespread across the UK.

Regional

Numerous small artificial water bodies are a characteristic habitat of the Vales of York and Mowbray Natural Area. The regional habitat audit deals only with the two UK BAP Priority Habitats. It lists nine mesotrophic lakes and four eutrophic ones.

Local

The Hambleton habitat audit gives a total of 121 hectares of standing water. None of the UK Priority water bodies listed in the regional audit occur in Hambleton. Lakes of both types do occur, however, and some are Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC).

Location of sites

- Mesotrophic – Oulston Reservoir, Newburgh Priory Lake, Nosterfield Local Nature Reserve.
- Eutrophic – farm ponds, village ponds.

Hambleton Priority Species

- Wetland birds
- Little ringed plover
- Great crested newt (UK BAP)

Other Species

- Mudwort (*Limosella aquatica*)(a plant)
- Stonewort beds (an aquatic algae)
- Otter (UK BAP)
- Water beetles
- Water vole (UK BAP)
- Amphibians
- White-clawed crayfish (UK BAP)

Status of Priority Species

Wetland birds: This group includes wildfowl, waders and other birds using lakes and ponds for breeding and/or wintering. Some open waters are well known for supporting nationally important numbers of ducks, geese and wading birds.

Key species in Hambleton:

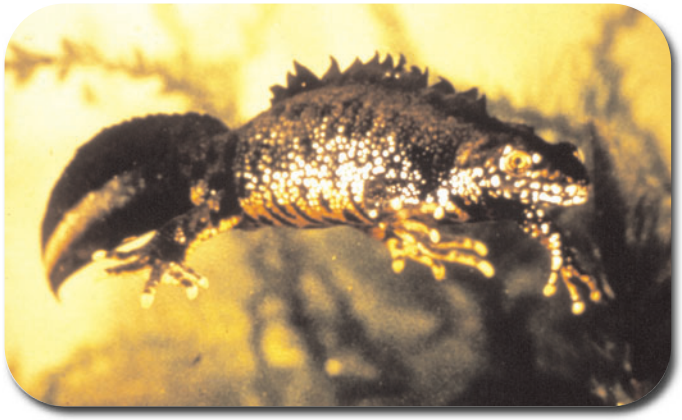
- Bewick's swan
- Whooper swan
- Pink-footed goose
- White-fronted goose
- Greylag goose
- Shelduck
- Wigeon
- Gadwall
- Teal
- Pintail
- Garganey
- Shoveler
- Pochard
- Goldeneye
- Water rail
- Ringed plover
- Golden plover
- Lapwing
- Curlew
- Redshank
- Snipe
- Sand martin
- Reed bunting (UK BAP)

Whooper swans: Simon and Jill Warwick

(See targets 1, 2, 10 and 11)

Little ringed plover: Little ringed plovers nest in man-made habitats such as gravel pits and on natural river shingle. Between 650 - 825 pairs are thought to breed in the UK, with 2 - 5 pairs nesting in Hambleton (see target 4).

Great crested newt: A UK BAP priority because the UK has a significant portion of the European population. It is threatened by loss of ponds and surrounding feeding habitat, especially pasture (see targets 1, 5 - 7 and 9).



Great crested newt: Photographer unknown

Requirements

- High water quality.
- Adequate water supply.
- Maintainance of a variety of sub-habitats. In most lakes the margins are the most important areas for wildlife and a diverse structure is beneficial. There should be deep and shallow areas and open water.
- Maintainance of a complex of pools (up to 400m apart and connected by good habitat) within a site. This helps to safeguard against local extinctions.
- Temporary pools that dry up are also valuable (some species are adapted to these conditions).
- Marginal habitats such as reedbed and swamp. The bittern (a UK BAP species) uses reedbeds for nesting and wintering.
- Good quality surrounding habitat benefiting those species which do not spend all their time in water, such as amphibians and dragonflies.
- Minimal disturbance from people and dogs - especially needed by breeding birds.
- Protection from pollution and excessive nutrient input.
- Ongoing management, especially to control invasive species such as reedmace (*Typha latifolia*), branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*) and flote grass (*Glyceris fluitans*).
- Eradication of non-native invasive species of plant.
- Water level management, using sluice gates and by maintaining inlets and outlets.
- Dredging of silt where it has built up and is threatening the viability of the pond.
- Islands, useful as breeding sites and for shelter, if well designed.
- Controlling shade, where there is a danger that the whole pond will be shaded by trees.
- Eradication of American signal crayfish.
- Management of open ground around waterbodies, for little ringed plover, especially on working mineral sites.
- Disturbance of muddy areas provides ideal conditions for the plant mudwort (*Limosella aquatica*).
- New ponds should not be created on sites with existing high wildlife value.
- Scrapes (seasonally flooded areas).

Current Action

- Nosterfield Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is managed by the Lower Ure Conservation Trust in partnership with Hambleton District Council.
- The following Hambleton District-Wide Local Plan policies are relevant:
  - i NC1: General nature conservation considerations,
  - ii NC4: Non-statutory sites of nature conservation interest,
  - iii NC5: Species protected by law,
  - iv NC6: Semi-natural habitat protection and
  - v NC7: Wildlife corridors.
- Payments are available under the Countryside Stewardship (CS) Scheme for wetland creation by farmers.
- Guidance is available from Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.
- Lakes and ponds are considered in water-level management plans produced by the Environment Agency.
- Many water bodies are positively managed by angling clubs. Angling is the most popular hobby in the UK.
- Funding for pond creation work is available from Yorkshire Water.
- Under CS, landowners can manage and create new ponds. Larger bodies of water can be buffered from agricultural run-off.

Threats

- Direct threat from drainage and conversion to other land-uses, such as housing.
- Water abstraction lowering the water table and leading to the drying of sites and the subsequent succession by scrub.
- A lack of data about the chemistry and the wildlife of water bodies.
- Damage and disturbance to conservation interest caused by recreational use (including inappropriate access by humans and dogs).
- Natural development into dry land over time, through siltation, the build up of organic debris and the colonisation of trees. Especially for small ponds and lakes.
- Radical pond clearance.
- Loss of traditional farm ponds through neglect.
- Pollution, causing death to wildlife. This may be from an agricultural, industrial or domestic source.
- Nutrient enrichment from agricultural fertilizer run off can change mesotrophic lakes to eutrophic ones.
- Eutrophication destroys stonewort beds, which form under mesotrophic conditions.
- Introduced species of plant and animal can create havoc to natural systems. Problems include mink,

American signal crayfish, Canadian pondweed (*Elodea canadensis*), Australian swamp stonecrop (*Crassula helmsii*), water fern (*Azolla filiculoides*) and Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*). Some are released by well meaning people distributing frog spawn.

- Accidental introduction of disease through stocking of wild ponds with garden frog spawn.
- Stocking of coarse fish into fisheries can affect the natural predator - prey balance in the lake.
- Overgrazing of margins can effect certain species such as the water vole.
- Development of man-made habitats preferred by little ringed plover.
- Disturbance to breeding birds.
- Loss of little ringed plover breeding sites through vegetation encroachment.

Other Possible Partners

- Angling clubs
- Local Businesses
- Environment Agency
- Gravel extraction companies
- Members of the public
- Yorkshire Water Services Ltd

Objective

Maintain the range and extent of water bodies and manage them and their adjacent habitat for the benefit of wildlife.

Targets

1. Produce an inventory of water bodies, their status and wildlife interest.
2. Create ten new water bodies exclusively for wildlife purposes (excluding garden ponds).
3. Ratify qualifying sites as SINC's.
4. Maintain current number of pairs of breeding little ringed plover (2 - 5 pairs).
5. Assess the status of great crested newt in Hambleton.
6. Restore population of great crested newts to one unoccupied site.
7. All key great crested newt ponds and adjacent areas of land to be under favourable management.
8. Retain one suitable sand pile or quarry cliff face for breeding sand martins.
9. Create a database of good amphibian ponds.
10. Maintain current numbers (five year means) of breeding and wintering waterfowl at Nosterfield LNR.
11. Create one manageable reedbed.

Actions

	Partners	Target No.
Policy and Legislation		
Check all existing SINCs against SINC criteria and ratify or delete from lists.	NEYEDC NYCC	3
Review all known great crested newt sites and ratify if SINC criteria is met.	NEYEDC NYCC	3
Habitat and Species Protection and Management		
Target the most suitable areas for the creation of lakes and reedbeds on ex-mineral sites in the Swale and Ure Washland project area, with clearly defined biodiversity objectives and supported by long term management plans.	LUCT SUWP	2,4,11
Encourage farmers to create wildlife ponds within CS agreements.	FWAG, LUCT HH-AONB, DEFRA	2
Encourage landowners and other parties to conserve important flocks of wintering and breeding wildfowl and waders on and around Nosterfield LNR.	LUCT DEFRA	10
Work with agencies, anglers and others to conserve breeding ringed plover and little ringed plover. .	LUCT	4
Create vertical sand cliffs at gravel extraction site, to encourage sand martins to breed.	LUCT SUWP	8
Create new ponds, especially near to ponds with existing populations of great crested newt.	FWAG DEFRA, SUWP	2,6,7
Create two hectares of manageable reedbed.	LUCT, SUWP	11
Research and Monitoring		
Produce an inventory of lakes and ponds and their conservation status.	NEYEDC LUCT	1
Produce an annual report of bird numbers at Nosterfield LNR	LUCT NEYEDC	10
Survey for aquatic plants at Nosterfield LNR	LUCT, NEYEDC	1
Undertake a great crested newt survey for Hambleton District	BTCV NEYEDC	5
Advisory		
Provide advice to site owners on grants schemes and current research		2,7,8,11

Prepare an advisory note for planners and other interested parties on great crested newt distribution, conservation and legislation.		7
Prepare an advice note on little ringed plover conservation.	SUWP	4

Communications and Publicity

Make targets and objectives in the HBAP known to angling clubs.	HDC FWAG	1,4
Make targets and objectives in the HBAP known to owners of lakes and ponds.	FWAG	1,4,5,7, 10,11
Organise the selection of a flagship species to promote the lakes and ponds HAP.	SUWP	1
Involve the public in a survey for the flagship species for lakes & ponds.	BTCV SUWP, NEYEDC	1
Involve local people in classifying known ponds that are exceptional for amphibians.	BTCV	3,5,7,9

FWAG have indicated that they are prepared to be a willing partner for this Action Plan.

BLACK POPLAR SPECIES ACTION PLAN

Introduction

The black poplar (*Populus nigra*) is one of the UK's most endangered and rarest timber tree. It is a large and distinctive tree whose full scientific name is *Populus nigra var. betulifolia*.

Black poplar (Populus nigra) tree: Simon Warwick

Black poplars were probably never very numerous. They do not form woodlands, but grow as individuals or in small groups in open situations, especially in broad river-valleys.

In the past, black poplars (*Populus nigra*) were valued for their timber and many were planted. However, in the mid-nineteenth century more productive cultivars and hybrid strains were introduced from abroad. Today the majority of planted poplars are of European *Populus nigra* stock, including the Black Italian Poplar (*Populus x euramericana 'serotina'*).

Status

National

A national register was begun in 1975 and includes 6,000 to 7,000 black poplars (*Populus nigra*) in England and Wales. The distribution of trees is essentially southern, although they are known from County Durham.

Regional

Very few specimens have been recorded in the Yorkshire and Humber region, where it is known from Ryedale District at least. In County Durham, several authentic, but almost certainly planted pure black poplars (*Populus nigra*) occur in the Darlington area. A handful of specimens have been verified in Middlesbrough.

Local

There is little doubt that the species should exist within Hambleton district, the flood plain environment of the Vales of York and Mowbray Natural Area is entirely suitable. Several candidate specimens have been identified from the Great Smeaton and Nosterfield areas.

Requirements

- Cuttings for propagation should be taken from the closest specimens.
- Planting should be well away from buildings, drains, archaeological sites and small wetlands as the root system is extensive and removes large amounts of water.
- Careful siting as the tree is large and casts a lot of shade.
- Trees should be 20m apart if they are to develop their characteristic shape.
- Cuttings are best planted in October or November and kept moist until the spring. They should then be grown on in a nursery for a year.

Current Action

- A number of candidate specimens have been reported.
- There is an action plan in the neighbouring Durham BAP area, where cuttings have been established.
- The species is of landscape and 'flagship' quality.

Black poplar (Populus nigra) catkin: Simon Warwick

Threats

- The majority of British black poplars (*Populus nigra*) date from the pre-hybrid time of the 1850's. It is therefore an ageing and declining population.
- Lack of genetic diversity. Both male and female trees are necessary for reproduction.
- Shortage of female trees. Males were preferred because the females produce large quantities of fluffy seed.
- Poor natural regeneration, due to site preferences of males differing from those of females, and a complex germination strategy.
- Drainage schemes and lowered water tables.
- Ignorance as to their presence.
- Difficulty in identifying pure specimens.

- Vulnerability to high winds and felling of trees for safety reasons.
- Restricted amount of suitable long term habitat for planting of new trees.

Other Possible Partners

- Environment Agency
- English Nature
- Farmers
- Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
- Lower Ure Conservation Trust
- Swale and Ure Washlands Project

Objective

To secure the presence of black poplars (*Populus nigra*) as a feature of the Hambleton landscape.

Targets

1. Establish the current status of native black poplars (*Populus nigra*) in Hambleton.
2. Maintain all current native black poplars (*Populus nigra*) in Hambleton.
3. Introduce native black poplars (*Populus nigra*) to two suitable locations in Hambleton, ensure appropriate site management and monitor growth and health.

Actions

	Partners	Target No.
Policy and Legislation		
No action.		
Site Safeguard and Management		
Ascertain land ownership for known specimens and send action plan to each.		2
Identify suitable river valley sites for the planting of new Black Poplars.	DEFRA	3
Research and Monitoring		
Locate and record black poplar types and have vegetative material confirmed as true *Populus nigra var. betulifolia* & consider making them the subject of Tree Preservation Orders.	HDC	1,2
Produce an authoritative map of black poplar distribution within Hambleton.	NEYEDC	1,2

Establish a data-base that is compatible with other registers and collates information including tree histories.	NEYEDC	1,2
Identify nursery or similar facility that can develop stocks of cuttings.	BTCV	3
Advisory		
Assemble and disseminate best practice guidance to land-owners.	DEFRA	1-3
Communications and Publicity		
Liaise with BAP officers in neighbouring authorities.		1
Prepare and make available information sheets for the public.		1-3
Engage the public in looking for and reporting likely trees.	NEYEDC	1
Use the media to investigate local associations with the tree.		1,3

The LUCT has indicated that they are willing partners for this Action Plan

CONTENTS SECTION 14

BAT SPECIES ACTION PLAN

Introduction

Brown long-eared bat: Bat Conservation Trust

From approximately April to November bats are active. During this time the males live individually or in small groups, whilst the females of a particular species within a local area gather into maternity roosts, where they give birth to their single young. During the winter, bats generally hibernate as their insect food is unavailable. Although they may travel some distance between summer roosts, winter roosts and feeding sites, and utilise several different roost sites, they repeatedly use the same sites year after year.

Status

National

Sixteen species of bat breed in the UK.

Regional

Nine species of bat have been recorded in North Yorkshire. These are listed below, together with their estimated UK populations.

- Lesser horseshoe 14,000
- Whiskered
- Brandt's 70,000 combined
- Daubenton's 150,000
- Natterer's 100,000
- Common pipistrelle
- Soprano pipistrelle 2,000,000 combined
- Noctule 50,000
- Brown long-eared 200,000

Local

Eight of these species are found in Hambleton District. The ninth species, the lesser horseshoe bat, is thought to be extinct in the county, but was last recorded from the western edge of the North York Moors National Park, immediately adjacent to the Hambleton District boundary, in the 1980s.

Requirements

- A variety of maternity and hibernation sites, including modern housing, older buildings, bridges, hollow trees, caves and tunnels.
- No disturbance.
- Building work to be undertaken when roosts are vacant.
- Safe timber treatment chemicals.
- Continuous wildlife corridors.
- Varied mix of habitats.

- Rich sources of insects.
- Livestock farming, with associated dung fauna, for lesser horseshoe bats.
- Bat boxes where natural roost sites are infrequent.
- Good publicity.

Current Action

- Bats receive protection under a range of conventions and directives, in particular the Bern Convention, the European Community Habitats Directive, the Bonn Convention and the Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe. They are protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations, 1994 and Schedules 5 and 6 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act, 1981, as incorporated by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act, 2000.
- The Bat Conservation Trust, with the support of Government agencies and volunteers, are carrying out monitoring of selected pipistrelle and lesser horseshoe maternity roosts, and conducting other surveys to monitor population trends for pipistrelle, noctule, Natterer's and Daubenton's bats, under the auspices of the National Bat Monitoring Programme.
- The National Bat Colony Survey continues to monitor population changes by encouraging householders with bat roosts in their property to count their bats each summer.
- Conservation issues are covered in the Species Conservation Handbook produced by English Nature.

Pipistrelle bat: Peter Waterton

- Volunteer licensed bat workers carry out visits on behalf of English Nature to provide advice to householders concerned about bats.
- The North Yorkshire Bat Group organises public walks, talks, exhibitions and surveys to foster a public understanding of bats and their conservation requirements.
- Hambleton District Wide Local Plan (1999) policies NC1, NC4, NC5, NC6 and NC7 are relevant.
- North Yorkshire County Council arranges surveys in advance of proposed bridge works.

Threats

- The loss of traditional sites may threaten the survival of species within the area. Typical roost sites for those species found in Hambleton are listed below.
- Reduction in insect prey abundance, due to current farming practice and inappropriate riparian management.
- Loss of insect-rich feeding habitats and flyways, due to loss and fragmentation of habitats including woodlands, wetlands, hedgerows and other suitable prey habitats.
- Loss of hibernation sites in buildings and old trees and disturbance in underground sites such as caves and disused tunnels.
- Disturbance and destruction of roosts, including the loss of maternity roosts due to the use of toxic timber treatment chemicals, unsympathetic renovation, demolition and dereliction.
- Breaks of ten metres or more in wildlife corridors.

Table 1: Typical roost sites in Hambleton District.

Species	Summer	Winter
Lesser horseshoe	Large, old buildings	Caves
Whiskered **Brandt's**	Buildings and probably trees	Caves
Daubenton's	Tree holes, bridges and buildings	Caves, tunnels and other underground sites
Natterer's	Buildings, usually older & larger properties, trees	Caves, tunnels and other underground sites
Noctule	Hollow trees, sometimes buildings and bridges	Hollow trees
Common pipistrelle **Soprano pipistrelle**	Buildings, including modern houses, trees	Disused buildings, behind sheltered boards, etc. Rarely underground.
Brown long-eared	Older buildings with large roof spaces, trees	Caves, tunnels and other underground sites.

Other Possible Partners

- Bat Conservation Trust
- Environment Agency
- English Nature
- Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
- Lower Ure Conservation Trust
- Rural Development Service
- Swale and Ure Washlands Project

Objective

To manage the countryside in ways that favour bats, and to maintain existing populations and the geographical range of all species at least at current levels.

Targets

1. Give guidance on and raise awareness of bat issues.
2. Identify five locations where areas of good foraging habitat are fragmented, and establish hedgerow links between them to encourage bat dispersal.
3. Provide roost sites by initiating two bat box schemes.
4. Provide two new opportunities for bats to colonise structures.
5. Survey and protect bats during work to buildings and structures.
6. Increase understanding of bat ecology.

Actions

	Partners	Target No.
Policy and Legislation		
Prepare best practice guidance notes regarding bats and development, to aid Development Control and Conservation Officers.		1
Support any lobbying initiatives regarding the needs of bats in land management incentive schemes, such as CS.	NYCC	1
Site Safeguard and Management		
Identify suitable sites for linking fragmented habitat by working with landowners.	NEYEDC	2
Identify suitable locations for schemes to erect bat boxes by working with local communities.		3
Undertake bat surveys prior to building maintenance carried out on Council buildings.	NYCC	5
Undertake bat surveys prior to road bridge repairs.	NYCC	5
Identify suitable opportunities to provide bridges or buildings with openings for bats, by working with local authorities and developers.	NYCC	4

Research and Monitoring

Organise a recording scheme for householders with bat roosts to take part in national monitoring programs.		6
Organise a survey of known bat roosts to determine species present, distribution and ecological requirements.	NEYEDC SUWP	6
Set up monitoring programme to assess the success of the bat box schemes.		6

Advisory

Send guidance on the inclusion of bat access features into new buildings, to architect firms.		1,4
Send guidance to arboricultural firms, Parish Councils, Parks officers and planning officers, on the importance of mature trees to bats.		1

Communications and Publicity

Produce articles/information discouraging the use of slow release ivermectins as cattle wormers.	NYBG DEFRA	1
Produce articles/information on the importance that buildings have to bats, encouraging a pride in having a bat colony within a building.	NYBG	1,5
Produce articles/information encouraging the use of bat friendly timber treatment chemicals.	NYBG	1,5
Produce articles/information on the importance and retention of old trees for bats.	NYBG	1
Promote bats and their conservation through events, including exhibitions, walks and talks.	BTCV	1

The LUCT and SUWP have both indicated that they are willing partners for this Action Plan where appropriate. EN has also made it known that they can help in the planning process but don't have a grant scheme for bats unless there is an SSSI.

CONTENTS ANNEX A

HAMBLETON BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

ANNEX A

Acknowledgements

The preparation of the Hambleton BAP would not have been possible without the involvement of many individuals and organisations. These include the naturalists who have recorded wildlife in the District, members of the steering group and members of the partnership who have offered advice. They also include English Nature, North Yorkshire County Council and Hambleton District Council for the funding and Graham Megson, the North Yorkshire County Council Biodiversity Officer, who led the project.

Bat Conservation Trust

Butterfly Conservation

BTCV

British Trust for Ornithology

Country Landowners' Association

C. M. Rob Natural History Society

Defence Estates

Darlington and Teesdale Naturalists' Society

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Environment Agency

English Nature

Forestry Authority

Forestry Commission

Forest Enterprise

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group

Hambleton District Council

Linking Environment And Farming

Learning Through Landscapes

Lower Ure Conservation Trust

North & East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre

National Farmers' Union

National Trust

North Yorkshire Bat Group

North Yorkshire County Council

People, Landscape And Cultural Environment

Rural Development Service

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Swale and Ure Washlands Project

Woodland Trust

Yorkshire Mammal Society

Yorkshire Naturalists' Union

Yorkshire Water Services Ltd

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

CONTENTS ANNEX B

HAMBLETON BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

ANNEX B

Glossary

Arable Stewardship	A series of options for farmers in the Countryside Stewardship scheme, aimed at conserving declining farmland birds and plants. The Countryside Stewardship scheme is administered by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).
Arable weeds	Wild flowers, often annuals, that grow in regularly disturbed soil in an arable environment. These do not include pernicious weeds such as thistles and goosegrass.
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	The 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act made provision for the designation of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The areas subsequently designated are, along with National Parks, England's finest countryside and benefit from special protection from local and national planning policy.
Bern Convention	A convention on the conservation of European wildlife and habitats that underlies the European Habitats Directive.
Biodiversity	The total variety of life on earth, or any part of it.
Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)	A plan to conserve or re-create biodiversity. The term may be used to describe the whole process by which this happens, or sometimes a document that sets out how this is to be achieved.
Calcareous	Containing calcium in the form of chalk or lime.
Countryside Stewardship	A voluntary scheme which offers management agreements to land managers to enhance and conserve important landscapes and wildlife habitat.
Enclosure Acts	Parliamentary Acts whereby open land held in common was enclosed.
Eutrophic (Eutrophication)	Having high levels of productivity or nutrients.
Flagship species	High profile species which can be used to illustrate wider issues in the environment.
Friable	Easily crumbled.
Habitat	A type of landscape (e.g. upland oakwood) characterised by particular types of vegetation and animals.

HAP	One of two sorts of plans contained within the HBAP document (see also Species Action Plan). A plan geared towards the conservation or re-creation of a particular habitat, such as lowland heathland.
Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan (or HBAP)	The Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan is the plan that leads the process by which action is taken locally to conserve wildlife. It deals specifically with those habitats and species for which Hambleton has a special responsibility under the UK BAP.
Herbaceous	Non-woody, dying down annually.
Invertebrate	Any animal lacking a backbone. This group includes insects (e.g. butterflies, moths, flies, bees, wasps, beetles) and non-insect invertebrates (e.g. worms, molluscs such as snails and slugs, and crustaceans such as crabs and crayfish).
Local Agenda 21	A term describing the actions we must take locally to promote sustainability. Local Agenda 21 has its roots in the Rio Earth Summit. Sustainability has been described as "the ability to meet our needs without compromising the needs of our children".
Local Nature Reserve	A site designated by the Local Authority under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. A Local Nature Reserve has an educational as well as a wildlife remit.
National Vegetation Classification (NVC)	A method of determining vegetation communities based on detailed survey data and allocating them to a recognised scientific type. The NVC is a nationally accepted system.
Niche	The very specific status of a plant or animal within an ecological community.
Mesotrophic	Having intermediate levels of productivity, with neither high nor low levels of nutrient.
Oligotrophic	Having low levels of productivity or nutrients.
Phase 1 Habitat Survey	A nationally recognised system for allocating land into broad habitat types.
Phytophthora	A fungus that attacks the roots of alder trees, leading to their death.
Ramsar Convention	An international convention on the protection of wetlands for birds.
Range	The area across which a species can be found.
Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC)	A non-statutory site designated by the Local Authority for its nature conservation interest.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Nationally important site given legal protection by the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), as amended. SSSIs are designated by English Nature.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Internationally important nature conservation site protected by European legislation.
Special Protection Area (SPA)	Internationally important site for bird conservation, protected by European legislation under the European Birds Directive.
Species	A taxonomic group into which a genus is divided, the members of which are capable of interbreeding. For example, the blackbird (*Turdus merula*) and song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) are related. They are in the same genus so share the genus name Turdus. However, they are different species and so have a specific second name.
Species Action Plan (SAP)	One type of plan contained within the HBAP document (see also Habitat Action Plan). A plan geared towards the conservation or re-introduction of a particular species such as black poplar (*Populus nigra*).
Steering Group	A group formed by representatives of local authorities, conservation organisations and business, who oversee the HBAP project.
UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP)	The BAP for the United Kingdom, which has its roots in the 1981 Rio Earth Summit. The UK Government has produced 391 SAPs and 45 HAPs, which detail actions necessary for a wide range of the country's habitats and most threatened plants and animals. The UK BAP forms the basis for all Local Biodiversity Action Plans as well as other initiatives.
Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS)	Tree planting grants administered by the Forestry Commission.
Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG)	Tree planting grants administered by the Forestry Commission.

CONTENTS ANNEX C

HAMBLETON BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

ANNEX C

Bibliography

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CONTENTS ANNEX D

HAMBLETON BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

ANNEX D

Steering group membership

Marion Archer	*BTCV*
Margaret Atherden	*PLACE Research Centre*
Heather Atkinson	*Stokesley Pride in our Town*
Malcolm Barnett	*North Yorkshire County Council*
Derek Capes	*Great Ayton Wildlife Association*
Robert Campbell	*LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming)*
Ian Dormor	*Ancient woodland consultant*
John Drewett	*Bats consultant*
John Edwards	*BTO (British Trust for Ornithology)*
Gordon Follows	*Local naturalist (moths)*
Miles Garnett	*CPRE (Council for the Protection of Rural England, Hambleton branch)*
Robert Goodison	*Rural Development Service, Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs*
Alan Harland	*Farmer*
Helen Herring	*Stokesley Society*
Paul Jackson	*Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*
Sylvia Jay	*Yorkshire Otters and Rivers Project*
David Kirby	*Bedale District Heritage Trust*
Helen Kirk	*Forest of Galtres Society*
Katherine Lart	*WATCH Wildlife Group*
Christopher Lowe	*Environmental Consultant*
Phil Lyth	*FWAG (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group)*
Joan McClean	*Harrogate and District Naturalists' Society*
Rob Masheder	*Yorkshire Wildlife Trust*
Graham Megson	*North Yorkshire County Council*
Sheila Metcalfe	*C.M. Rob Natural History Society*
Deborah Millward	*Consultant botanist*
Nick Morgan	*Local naturalist (birds)*
Geoff Myers	*Local naturalist (birds)*

William Osborne	*Farmer*
David Park	*Lafarge*
Jennifer Peakman	*BTCV*
Anne Purbrick	*BTCV*
M O Penson	*Thirsk & Sowerby Civic Society*
Rhona Pringle	*Hambleton District Council*
Denise Ray	*Yorkshire Mammal Society*
Glen Robinson	*Hambleton District Council*
Rob Scaife	*Consultant (amphibians)*
David Shaw	*Country Link*
Nan Sykes	*Local naturalist (botany)*
Carolyn Trimble	*Indigenous Woodlands Woodland Consultancy*
Tom Umpleby	*Allertonshire Civic Society*
Siobhan Walker	*Swale & Ure Washlands Project*
Simon Warwick	*Lower Ure Conservation Trust*
Peter Waterton	*Local naturalist (butterflies)*
Andrew Weston	*Woodlands consultant*
Dorothy Welburn	*Allertonshire Civic Society*
Andrew Windrum	*English Nature (York)*
Ken Wood	*Badger consultant*

CONTENTS ANNEX E

HAMBLETON BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

ANNEX E

List of Contacts

Barn Owl Trust	Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU Telephone: 01354 653026
The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC)	Marford Mill, Rossett, Wrexham LL12 0HL Telephone: 01244 573000
British Herpetological Society	c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY Telephone: 0181 452 9578
BTCV	The Apple Loft, Kiplin Hall, Scorton, Richmond, North Yorkshire DL10 6AT. Telephone: 01748 811970 E-mail: north-yorkshire@btcv.org.uk
British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)	The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU Telephone: 01842 750050
Butterfly Conservation	UK Conservation Office, PO Box 444, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5YA Telephone: 01929 400209 E-mail; ukconsoffice@butterfly-conservation.org
C.M. Rob Natural History Society	The Secretary, Tanfield House, South Kilvington, Thirsk, North Yorkshire YO7 2NL.
Council for the Protection of Rural England	The Old Rectory, South Otterington, Northallerton, North Yorkshire DL7 9HD. www.cpre.org.uk
Country Land and Business Association	Malt Shovel House, Spring Street, Easingwold, York YO61 3BJ Telephone: 01347 823803
The Countryside Agency	Yorkshire and the Humber Region, Victoria Wharf, No. 4 The Embankment, Sovereign Street, Leeds LS1 4BA Telephone: 0113 246 9222
Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)	RDS Yorks & Humber North, Otley Road, Lawnswood, Leeds LS16 5PY Telephone: 0113 230 3905 E-mail: robert.goodison@defra.gsi.gov.uk

English Nature	Genesis Building, 1 Science Park, Heslington, York YO1 5DQ. Telephone: 01904 435520 E-mail: andrew.windrum@english-nature.org.uk
Environment Agency	Coverdale House, Aviator Court, Amy Johnson Way, Clifton Moor, York YO3 4UZ Telephone: 01904 692296
Farming and Wildlife Group	South Parade, Northallerton, North Yorkshire DL7 8SL. Telephone: 01609 532288 E-mail: phil.lyth@fwag.org.uk
Forestry Commission	Wheldrake Lane, Crockey Hill, York, YO19 4FF Telephone: 01904 448778 E-mail: g.haddock@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Forest Enterprise	Outgang Road, Pickering, North Yorkshire YO18 7EL Telephone: 01751 472771 E-mail: andrew.smith@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Froglife	Triton House, Bramfield, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 9AE Telephone: 01986 873733
Game Conservancy Trust	Burgate Manor, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 1EF Telephone:01425 652381
Hawk and Owl Trust	c/o Birds of Prey Section, Zoological Society of Great Britain, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY Telephone: 0158 283 2182
Hambleton District Council	Civic Centre, Stone Cross, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL6 2UU. Telephone: 01609 779977 E-mail: info@hambleton.gov.uk
Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	c/o North Yorkshire County Council, Heritage Unit, County Hall, Northallerton, North Yorkshire DL7 8AH. Telephone: 01609 780780. E-mail: paul.jackson@northyorks.gov.uk
Indigenous Woodlands Woodland Consultancy	Sir Lawrence House, The Aske Stables, Richmond, North Yorkshire DL10 5HG Telephone: 01748 823377 E-mail: trees@indiwoods.com
Linking Environment And Farming (LEAF demonstration farms)	The National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire CV8 2LZ E-mail: robert.campbell@farmline.com
Lower Ure Conservation Trust	Sharow Grange, Sharow, Ripon, North Yorkshire HG4 5BN. E-mail: luct@swland.co.uk

National Trust (NT)	Goddard's House, 27 Tadcaster Road, Dringhouses, York YO24 1GG Telephone: 01904 702021
North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre (NEYEDC)	St. Williams Foundation, 5 College Street, York YO1 7JF Telephone: 01904 557235
North Yorkshire Bat Group	The Granary, Carlton, Leyburn, North Yorkshire DL8 4BD. Telephone: 01969 640544 E-mail: nyctalus@care4free.net
North Yorkshire County Council	Heritage Unit, County Hall, Northallerton, North Yorkshire DL7 8AH. Telephone: 01609 780780. E-mail: ecologist@northyorks.gov.uk
North York Moors National Park	The Old Vicarage, Bondgate, Helmsley, North Yorkshire Telephone: 01439 770657
PLACE Research Centre	York St John College, Lord Mayor's Walk, York YO31 7EX. Telephone: 01904 616753
The Ponds Conservation Trust	Rivers House, 21 Park Square South, Leeds, LS1 2QG Telephone: 0113 231 2356 E-mail: pondsforpeople.pct@environment.agency.gov.uk
Rural Development Service (DEFRA)	Project Officer, Unit 2, Northallerton Business Park, Northallerton DL6 2XQ Telephone: 01609 767400
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	North East Regional Office, 4 Benton Terrace, Sandyford Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE2 1QU Telephone: 0191 281 3366
Swale and Ure Washlands Project	Heritage Unit, County Hall, Northallerton DL7 8AH Telephone: 01609 779838
Water for Wildlife Project (otters and rivers)	Hollybush Conservation Centre, Broad Lane, Kirkstall Leeds, West Yorkshire LS5 3BP. E-mail: yorksotters@cix.co.uk
Wildlife and Wetlands Trust (WWT)	Slimbridge, Gloucester, GL2 7BT Telephone: 01453 890333
Woodland Trust	Autumn Park, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 6LL Telephone: 01476 851111
Yorkshire Dales National Park	Colvend, Hebden Road, Grassington, North Yorkshire BD23 5LB Telephone: 01756 752748 E-mail: tim.thom@yorkshiredales.org.uk

Yorkshire Mammal Group	Barn House, Scoreby, York YO41 1NP
Yorkshire Naturalist's Union (YNU)	Stonecroft, 3 Brookmead Close, Sutton Poyntz Weymouth, Dorset, DT3 6RS Telephone: 01305 837384
Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT)	10 Toft Green, York YO1 1JT Telephone: 01904 659570 E-mail: yorkshirewt@cix.co.uk

HAMBLETON BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

ANNEX F

List of Abbreviations

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AP	Action Plan
AS	Arable Stewardship
BASC	British Association of Shooting and Conservation
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey
BC	Butterfly Conservation
BCT	Bat Conservation Trust
BTCV	(formerly British Trust for Conservation Volunteers)
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
CLA	Country Land and Business Association
CMR	C. M. Rob Natural History Society
CN	Cleveland Naturalists
CS	Countryside Stewardship
DE	Defence Estates
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DTNS	Darlington and Teesdale Naturalists' Society
EA	Environment Agency
EN	English Nature
FC	Forestry Commission
FE	Forest Enterprise
FRCA	Farming and Rural Conservation Association
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
HAP	Habitat Action Plan
HDC	Hambleton District Council
IDB	Internal Drainage Boards
km	kilometre
LA21	Local Agenda 21
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
LEAF	Linking Environment And Farming

LFA	Less favoured area
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LTL	Learning Through Landscapes
LUCT	Lower Ure Conservation Trust
m	metre
NCC	Nature Conservancy Council
NEYEDC	North & East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre
NFU	National Farmers' Union
NT	National Trust
NVC	National Vegetation Classification
NW	Nature's World (Wildflower Ark project)
NYBG	North Yorkshire Bat Group
NYCC,	North Yorkshire County Council
OS	Ordnance Survey
PLACE	People, Landscape And Cultural Environment
RDS (DEFRA)	Rural Development Service
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SA	Soil Association
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SAP	Species Action Plan
SINC	Site of Interest for Nature Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SUWP	Swale and Ure Washlands Project
UK	United Kingdom
WIG	Woodland Improvement Grant
WGS	Woodland Grant Scheme
WLO	Wildlife Liaison Officer (police)
WT	Woodland Trust
YAS	Yorkshire Agricultural Society
YNU	Yorkshire Naturalists' Union
YW	Yorkshire Water Services Ltd
YWT	Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

CONTENTS ANNEX G

HAMBLETON BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

ANNEX 2

FEEDBACK FORM

If you would like further information or have any relevant comments on the Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan we would like to hear from you. Please complete and send this form to address give below:

Your Name: . . . . . .

Address: . . . . . .

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Postcode: . . . . . .

Telephone No: . . . . . .

Your comments or observations: . . . . . .

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The information provided above will be used by Hambleton District Council when revising the Hambleton Biodiversity Action Plan and will not be made available for any other purpose. Are you happy for the information to be used in this way?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Signed . . . . . Dated . . . . . .

Please return this Form to:

Planning Policy and Economic Development,
Hambleton District Council, Civic Centre, Stone Cross, Northallerton DL6 2UU

Telephone: 01609 779977 Fax: 01609 767248 E-mail: info@hambleton.gov.uk

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CONTENTS