



# Declaration of support for the revised Worcestershire Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2007-2017

## What Bromsgrove District Council can help to achieve

The UK approach to conserving biodiversity depends on partnership; involving statutory, voluntary, academic and business sectors, nationally and locally, in delivering biodiversity enhancement, for its own intrinsic value, for the vital life-support services it provides, and because it enriches people’s lives.

## What we are asking Bromsgrove District Council to give

- Support for the principles of preserving and enhancing our natural environment and its wildlife that underpin the BAP process.
- Commitment to helping achieve the targets and actions written for the habitats and species within the revised Worcestershire LBAP.

On behalf of

### ***Bromsgrove District Council***

I pledge my support for the Biodiversity Action Plan process and to working with the Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership to successfully deliver the targets and actions within the Worcestershire Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

**Signed**

**Position within Authority**

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**Dated**

.....



### Local Biodiversity Action Plan species and habitats of particular relevance to Bromsgrove District Council

#### *Water vole*

The water vole is critically endangered within Worcestershire with the only known surviving populations centred on the canal, stream and ditch network around Bromsgrove town.

#### *Bats*

High-quality roost sites are as important as high-quality foraging habitat. Bats will roost in a range of habitats and structures and these will differ from species to species. Potential roost sites include damaged or veteran trees, barns, churches, bridges, old and new buildings of all types, and in many cases people's homes. Bat species that have in the past relied on natural underground structures, such as caves, have become well adapted to using man-made structures.

#### *Hay meadows*

The total England resource of unimproved lowland hay meadows and pastures is estimated to be around 7282ha. Whilst the total extent of the Worcestershire resource remains unknown, to date approximately 1200 hectares have been surveyed and sites continue to be regularly discovered. Based on these figures it has been estimated that the county supports over 20% of England's remaining lowland hay meadows.

#### *Acid grassland*

Acid grasslands occur on free-draining and often sandy acidic soils. They are found in the Wyre Forest and Bromsgrove Districts of north Worcestershire and in association with the Malvern Hills.

#### *Veteran Trees*

Veteran trees are of particular value for the fungi, lichens and bryophytes and, most importantly, for the huge range of invertebrates (1700+ species) associated with decaying timber. Since veteran trees are usually hollow, they are also important nesting and roosting sites for bats and birds. The rural landscape around Bromsgrove contains remnants of ancient countryside and hidden away in old hedgelines, pockets of ancient woodland and field corners are many veteran trees.

#### *Canals*

Canals provide a green corridor into urban areas, with a mixture of freshwater and terrestrial habitats that can be very important for wildlife. Associated wetland habitats are often species-rich, some of which are relicts of formerly widespread habitats such as unimproved grassland, marsh and carr. Canals can help in the re-colonisation of the countryside by otters and canal tunnels can provide roosting, foraging and hibernation sites for bat species. In Bromsgrove the canal system is of particular importance for water voles.

#### *Urban*

Areas of urban greenspace such as gardens, school grounds, allotments, parks, churchyards and cemeteries can provide valuable wildlife habitat and allow people the opportunity for contact with nature near to their homes. The value of brownfield sites to wildlife, particularly invertebrates, must also not be underestimated.

Your support for this LBAP will also demonstrate commitment to:

### **The NERC Biodiversity Duty**

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act came into force on 1 October 2006 and introduced a new biodiversity conservation Duty for public authorities. Section 40 of the Act states that: “*Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity*”.

The duty requires public bodies to think more holistically about biodiversity conservation and think laterally about the delivery of services. Consideration of biodiversity conservation can be a catalyst for the implementation of innovative approaches that are beneficial to people as well as wildlife. Defra has issued national guidance setting out how local authorities can fulfill this duty. Within this guidance, one of the means of demonstrating compliance with the Duty is identified as:

*Demonstrating a commitment and contribution to key local biodiversity initiatives, such as LBAPS, and contributing to delivery of outcomes for BAP listed priority species and habitats and LBAP listed species and habitats, where appropriate.*

### **Community Strategy priorities**

The Bromsgrove Sustainable Community Strategy embraces the LAA vision of ‘*A better environment for today and tomorrow*’, with climate change, the protection of natural habitats and maintaining biodiversity identified as important issues for the District. The public consultation exercise undertaken during production of the Strategy showed that well-kept parks and green belt areas and access to the countryside were things that residents enjoyed about living in Bromsgrove. Within the Sustainable Community Strategy Action Plan, the District Council has identified progress towards achieving BAP targets and actions as a key output.

### **Worcestershire’s Local Area Agreement**

The Local Area Agreement between the county’s major service providers and central Government determines how we will work towards the priorities identified for the county and how they will be funded. Themes within the Worcestershire LAA include ‘*A better environment for today and tomorrow*’ for which outcome B4 is ‘**To protect and improve Worcestershire’s natural environment/biodiversity**’. We must also now measure delivery of these priority outcomes against a selection of the 198 new Performance Framework Indicators for local authorities introduced by Government in 2007. This will require our Local Strategic Partnership to measure and report on progress towards up to 35 of these indicators chosen at local level, plus 17 statutory targets. The LAA is currently being re-negotiated to incorporate the new Performance Framework Indicators.

## The Biodiversity Action Plan process

In 1994 the UK became the first country to start working towards a national biodiversity action plan, following the signing of the **Convention on Biological Diversity** in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) drew together existing instruments and programmes to coordinate and drive conservation work at national and local levels through identifying priorities for action and setting biological targets for the recovery of species and habitats.

**The Worcestershire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)** was first published in 1999, one of the first English counties to do so. The revised Worcestershire BAP now consists of 19 habitats and 25 species; some of these are also UK priorities, some of regional or local significance.

<b>LBAP Species</b>		<b>LBAP Habitats</b>	
S1	Otter	H1	Arable Farmland flora and invertebrates
S2	Dormouse	H2	Traditional Orchards
S3	Bats	H3	Ancient and Species-rich Hedgerows
S4	Water Vole	H4	Scrub
S5	Noble Chafer	H5	Woodland
S6	Nightingale	H6	Veteran Trees with Lowland Wood Pasture and Parkland
S7	Allis and Twaite Shad	H7	Wet Woodland
S8	Adder	H8	Reedbeds
S9	Slow worm	H9	Fen and Marsh
S10	Great Crested Newt	H10	Wet Grassland
S11	White-clawed Crayfish	H11	Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
S12	High Brown Fritillary	H12	Lowland Hay Meadows and Neutral Pastures
S13	Brown Hairstreak	H13	Lowland Calcareous Grassland
S14	Common Club-tail	H14	Lowland Heathland
S15	Stag Beetle	H15	Road Verges
S16	Violet Click Beetle	H16	Urban
S17	Hornet Robberfly	H17	Canals
S18	Black Poplar	H18	Ponds and Lakes
S19	True Service Tree	H19	Rivers and Streams
S20	Farmland Birds including skylark, tree sparrow, corn bunting, lapwing, grey partridge, yellowhammer, barn owl, linnet and reed bunting		
S21	Wood White		
S22	Grizzled Skipper		
S23	Pearl-bordered Fritillary		
S24	Common Fan-foot		
S25	Drab Looper		

In 2002 Defra published **Working with the grain of nature – A biodiversity strategy for England** with the aim of embedding biodiversity conservation into plans, policies and programmes across all sectors.

**Conserving Biodiversity – The UK Approach** was published in 2007 by Defra on behalf of the UK Biodiversity Partnership, who also published a new UK BAP list of 1149 priority species and 65 priority habitats. The four devolved administrations of the UK are working together to translate these priorities into programmes of work delivered by partnerships of statutory, voluntary, academic and business organisations at the level most appropriate to the needs of biodiversity. **Conserving Biodiversity – The UK Approach** sets out the Government's vision and approach to delivery of biodiversity targets within the devolved government framework.

Key to delivery is the **ecosystem approach**, defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity as *the integrated management of land, air, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way, and which recognises that people with their cultural and varied social needs, are an integral part of ecosystems*. The regional Landscapes for Living project is embracing this approach and will provide us with a mechanism for targeting projects and resources to best effect at a landscape level.

A refresh of the England biodiversity strategy is currently being prepared by Natural England, which will determine how delivery of BAP targets is approached by LBAP partnerships.

### The revision of the Worcestershire Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Over the last 12 months the Worcestershire LBAP has been reviewed and rewritten to take account of recent changes in legislation, policy and guidance. Many of the targets and actions in the original plan had been achieved and these needed updating to reflect the new challenges and opportunities facing us over the next 10 years.

Success stories from the first LBAP include:

- Worcestershire is one of, if not the, most important county in the UK for populations of common club-tail dragonfly. The species is found on the River Severn right through the county and also now on the tributary rivers Teme and Avon.
- English Nature (now Natural England) funded a programme of scrub control and the introduction of grazing across the Malvern Hills to restore the acid grassland habitat. This work has also had a positive impact on the high brown fritillary butterfly population, with survey sightings up to 24 from a low of 2 in 2000.
- Surveys and records received from the public indicate that otters have returned and are present on all of the county's major watercourses and many smaller waterways. This reflects the overall UK trend and represents a clear success story for the improvement in quality of our rivers and streams.
- The restoration and management of traditional orchards is being carried out by many organisations across the county. The LBAP now includes the orchard-specialist noble chafer beetle, which continues to be discovered at new sites throughout Worcestershire.

## The Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership

The Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership is steered by a coordination group consisting of representatives from 16 organisations, including Bromsgrove District Council. Outside of this many more organisations, working at county, regional or national level, comprise the wider biodiversity partnership. All of them have responsibilities in protecting and enhancing the biodiversity of the county in various ways: through directly managing our countryside and urban green spaces; by informing and educating the public on green issues; or by ensuring the development of our housing, transport and economic infrastructure adopts the best principles of sustainable development.

## Summary of some of the legislative and policy background to nature conservation in the UK

<b>European Legislation</b>	
Water Framework Directive 2000	Requires all inland and coastal waters to reach “good status” by 2015. It will be implemented at a River Basin level and must include ecological targets. It has the potential to drive parts of the spatial planning process as well as having significant impacts on the flood defence and water quality sectors.
EC Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna 1992 ('The Habitats Directive')	Introduces Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and modifies the Birds Directive Special Protection Areas (SPAs). These sites of European importance are given special safeguards in national legislation and member states are expected to designate and protect them where appropriate. It also places duties on member states with respect to a suite of protected species (e.g. dormouse, great crested newt, otter and all species of bat).
EC Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds 1979 ('The Birds Directive')	Gives protection to wild birds and introduces the concept of Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which covers sites of international importance for migratory birds.
<b>UK Legislation</b>	
Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006	Section 40 of the Act places a new legal duty on <u>all</u> public bodies to ' <i>have regard...to the purpose of conserving biodiversity</i> '. The Act also makes provision for the creation of Natural England and updates the lists of species and habitats generated under Section 74 of the CROW Act 2000.
The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2003	Transposes the requirements of the Water Framework Directive into UK law.
Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW)	Updates and strengthens the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to SSSIs, protected species etc. Provides a list of habitats and species of principle importance that the Secretary of State must take into account in planning matters.

## APPENDIX 2

The Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 ('the Habitats Regulations')	Transposes the requirements of the EC Habitats Directive into UK law.
Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended since)	Main legislation for species protection. Provides significantly improved protection for SSSIs.

<b>UK Policy</b>	
Conserving Biodiversity – The UK Approach. DEFRA 2007	Prepared by the UK Biodiversity Standing Committee on behalf of the UK Biodiversity Partnership. It sets out the vision and approach to conserving biodiversity within the UK's devolved framework for anyone with a policy interest in biodiversity conservation.
<p>Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development 2005 (PPS1)</p> <p>Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change - Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1</p> <p>Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation 2005 (PPS9)</p>	<p>The first Planning Policy Statement, PPS1, describes the principles the Government expect planners to consider in delivering Sustainable Development.</p> <p>The Planning and Climate Change supplement sets out how planning should help achieve development with lower carbon emissions and more resilience to climate change.</p> <p>PPS9 gives detailed guidance on dealing with biodiversity in the planning system.</p> <p>Many other Planning Policy Statements will have indirect impacts upon wildlife interests such as PPS25 (Flood Risk), and PPG17 (Sport, Open Space &amp; Recreation).</p>
Working with the Grain of Nature: A Biodiversity Strategy for England. DEFRA 2002	Government strategy aimed at ensuring that biodiversity considerations become embedded in all main sectors of economic activity: public and private.
Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan (1994)	UK response to the Convention on Biological Diversity 1992 from which this plan stems.
<b>Regional and Local Policy</b>	
Restoring the Region's Wildlife – Regional Biodiversity Strategy for the West Midlands	The regional-scale response to the UK BAP process.
Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan 2007	Sets out the targets and actions that the Biodiversity Partnership will work towards over the next 10-year period for the conservation of habitats and species of local importance.
District Community Strategies and Local Development Framework documents	All the Districts have protection and enhancement of the natural environment as a core component of community strategies. Several Local Planning Authorities have taken the positive step of producing LDF documents specifically relating to biodiversity.