

Better Environment Thematic Group of West Lancashire LSP

Minutes of Meeting Thursday 24th May 2012

Present: Richard Small (Chair) - Liverpool John Moores University
Tina Iball - WLBC, Environment
Lindsay Beaton - Wildlife Trust
Dominic Rigby - LCC, Environment
Dave Dunlop - Wildlife Trust
Tim Graham - Wildlife Trust

1. Introductions and apologies

RS welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

Apologies had been received from:

Steve Kent - WLBC, Leisure
Dominic Carr - WLBC, Planning Policy

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meetings were agreed to be a true record.

RS informed the group that we have not received any expressions of interest for the position as new Chair for the group; however this will be his last meeting. RS intends to announce his intention to step down at the LSP Executive group meeting the following day.

A discussion regarding individuals who may be interested in joining the group, or possibly chairing the group followed. TI to make contact with those mentioned. TI

It was suggested that the Natural Environment sub group should continue in its present form but the Built Environment sub group could be considered for amalgamation into another Thematic Group. TI to investigate. TI

3. ETG Action Plan 2012-13 and Progress Updates

The group worked through the action plan, providing progress updates against actions and updating the action plan document for the 2012/13 period.

Please see Progress Report October 2011 to May 2012 for details of the progress made over the last two quarters. The revised 2012/13 action plan is also available.

Actions that came out of this exercise include:

- TG agreed to investigate progress of action 2.e: Purple Ramping Fumitory, as updates have not been received through BAP. TG
- TI to investigate if Green Partnership Awards could be utilised to help provide volunteers to help with pond clearance works at Pond Close, Tarleton. TI

4. **Local Nature Partnership**

The Lancashire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) was founded last June and successfully secured funding to continue engagement works in late September. The partnership then applied to become an official LNP in April 2012 and have held a number of events to promote their work. To date, the LNP are still awaiting confirmation that the group is recognised as an official LNP.

Results from preliminary engagement highlights the groups priorities as:

- Development of an ecological framework for Lancashire
- Climate change
- Catchment management projects
- Green infrastructure
- Water and coastal issues
- Opportunities to access the natural environment
- Support for volunteers
- Health and wellbeing

The next stage of works will identify specific projects and joined up working with partners, at both strategic and lower level delivery.

Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region are also going through a similar process to achieve official LNP designation.

More information can be found by following this link:

<http://www.lancswt.org.uk/index.php/local-nature-partnerships>

5. **Second Homes Funding**

The following applications were successful in their application to the last round of the Second Homes Fund:

- Enhancing the Wetland for Waders and Watchers, The Wildlife Trust.
- The Spark Lane Bridge Project, British Waterways.

This years Second Homes Fund has been shared equally between all Thematic Groups, to spend on projects that will help implement our action plan and the LSP Sustainable Communities Strategy. The Group therefore has £1,690 to spend in 2012-13. The relevant forms were signed and subsequently returned to the LSP Exec to gratefully accept this funding.

The group were asked to consider projects they would like to put forward for consideration.

TI to enquire with regards to application forms and allocation procedures.

6. **Any Other Business**

Cath McNamara has now left the Council. Sue Griffiths is the new contact for the LSP Secretariat.

8. **Date of next meeting**

To be arranged electronically for Mid August time.

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Environment Thematic Group of West Lancashire LSP

Progress Report October 2011 to May 2012

Action 2.h – Increase/ enhance access - Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park.

Access works between Martin Mere and Mere Sands Wood are nearing completion. Enabled through receipt of a Local Sustainable Transport grant, partners have been established and most actions are underway. Various other projects within the regional park are in the planning stages for the next year, including the final link to Rufford. However, this still needs to secure funding to go ahead. An application to DECC's Parks for Communities fund may be submitted, if deemed eligible.

Action 2.i – Mere Sands Wood

LCC Gateway funding has been secured to support an application for planning permission for the new facilities. New leaflets and interpretation boards have been produced to improve the educational facilities. A revised Management Plan for the reserve has been finalised.

Action 2.j – Douglas Linear Park

The Parish Council has employed Groundwork to undertake a feasibility study and land searches for the area. The Group meet twice a year to progress and are currently identifying available funding streams to help move the project forward.

Action 3.a – Water Voles

Funding for the Water Vole project finished last year but the project may continue. The findings of the project identified West Lancashire as a key site, with populations high enough to achieve BHS standard, however this will require support from volunteers to undertake continual monitoring for 3 years.

Action 3.b – Dragonflies

Development of the national Atlas Survey of Dragonflies is complete across Lancashire.

Action 5.e – Burscough Community Woodland

Site investigations have found that soil depths are not deep enough to allow planting all over the site. Tree planting would require too much organic matter, however investigations are currently underway to allow planting on some of the site.

Action 6.c – New and Built Structures

Green roofs have been developed on four hides at Mere Sands Wood. Information regarding 'green roofs on your home' is available to visitors.

Action 7.c – Community Woodlands and Orchards

Over 70 trees have been planted at Scutchers Acres in Burscough. Maps are now available to enable easy access to the orchard.

**West Lancashire Local Strategic Partnership
Environment Thematic Group**

Natural Environment Action Plan for West Lancashire

Introduction

This document has been produced by members of the Natural Environment sub-group of the West Lancashire Local Strategic Partnership. It aims to address some of the key issues affecting wildlife in the District of West Lancashire and to complement the Lancashire Biodiversity Action Plan.

The document is reviewed and updated quarterly, and builds upon the issues identified by partners during the development of an earlier Wildlife and Landscape Action Plan published in May 2002. The key issues identified are:

- The maintenance and enhancement of key habitats and species
- The influence of water management practices
- The impact of coastal changes and their management
- The fragmentation and isolation of habitats and elements of the landscape
- Increased public access to the countryside and green spaces
- The consideration of wildlife and landscape issues in land use planning
- Increased public awareness of biodiversity and the effects people's lifestyle choices have on the natural environment.

The impact of agricultural practices was also highlighted as a key issue in the 2002 Plan, though action points were not developed in previous issues of the Plan. Instead these relevant actions relating to agricultural practices have been incorporated within Section 2 (The maintenance and enhancement of key habitats and key species). The current update also includes a new section considering urban habitats. This fits with the development and launch of the Urban Habitat Plans by Lancashire's Biodiversity Partnership. While many urban biodiversity issues could fit into sections 5 (fragmentation and isolation) and 6 (land use planning), its increasing relevance and the development of the habitat plans for Lancashire mean that they need separate consideration.

All the species and habitats that are explicitly referred to in this action plan are recognised in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) as being amongst those under the greatest threat. Most are also the subject of action plans in the Lancashire BAP. They have been selected for inclusion in this action plan because they fall into at least one of the following categories:

- They are represented within the Borough and are declining in either population size or area or, in the case of habitats, declining in quality;
- The Borough either holds important populations of the species or areas of the habitats on a regional, national or international basis;
- The habitat or species is particularly characteristic of the Borough;
- The organisations that have contributed to this action plan are in a position to have a positive impact upon population size, habitat quality or extent, or awareness amongst the general public.

Arable farmland birds have been included here because a dramatic decline in the populations of many farmland bird species was observed from the mid 1970s and the proportion of land used for arable cropping in West Lancashire is well above the average for the county and the UK as a whole. Such species will of course benefit indirectly from actions included in the Habitat Action Plan for Arable Farmland within the Lancashire BAP.

Progress on all the actions contained in this Plan will be monitored and reported annually to the Environment Thematic Group of the West Lancashire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) by the Lancashire Biodiversity Manager, and then to the full West Lancashire LSP.

Many of the actions in the Plan contribute to actions contained in the Lancashire Biodiversity Action Plan, and these are indicated with an asterisk. Progress on these particular actions will also be reported on the national Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS; www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk), which is a publicly accessible website.

This action plan will be updated every two years by organisations on the Environment Thematic Group along with other delivery partners.

Objective 1: To provide a system for sharing and storing ecological data throughout the county of Lancashire and develop services for Local Authorities to meet statutory obligations.

One of the most frequently-encountered barriers to the conservation of wildlife is a shortage of appropriate ecological data. Often it simply isn't possible to answer basic questions such as: What kinds of wildlife do we have? Where are they? Are populations increasing, stable or declining? Is habitat quality improving, unchanging or deteriorating? If the necessary information were readily available, it would enable wildlife enhancing schemes and projects to work more effectively, facilitate better-informed planning and policy decisions, and highlight both localised and wider threats and opportunities for species and habitats. It would also allow us to monitor the effects of our actions, adding to our understanding of what works and what doesn't.

General

Action	Measure	Partners	Conditional Upon	Timescale
1.a. LOCAL RECORD CENTRE <i>Maintain a county wide local record centre through the Lancashire Environment Recording Network (LERN)</i>	Secure a sustainable funding stream.	LCC, NE, TWT, EA, RSPB, Lancashire Local Nature Partnership.		April' 2013
1.b.LANCASHIRE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT SERVICE <i>Continue provision of the Lancashire Natural Environment Service to monitor BHS sites and increase the number in positive management</i>	Support delivery of Lancashire's Natural Environment Service and aid positive management of sites. Secure a sustainable funding stream.	LCC, WLBC, TWT, LBP, Lancashire Local Nature Partnership.		April' 2013

Objective 2: To maintain and enhance the quality, quantity and awareness of West Lancashire’s key natural habitats and species.

Important wildlife sites are areas of land which are closest to their ‘wild’ state, where the influence of human activities has been minimal or where traditional farming and other sympathetic land management practices have survived. These sites support a rich variety of wild plants and animals. Other kinds of site that can have a high biodiversity value are those that have been developed in the past and are now derelict, neglected or underused, such as disused railway lines or urban ‘wasteland’.

West Lancashire is a stronghold for a number of key habitats and species identified both nationally and locally in Biodiversity Action Plans. These habitats may suffer from inappropriate management or a lack of awareness of their benefit for wildlife, and basic information on species numbers and distribution is often lacking. However, this can be addressed through practical tasks, awareness raising activities, survey work and the promotion of advisory services.

Action	Measure	Partners	Conditional Upon	Timescale
2.a BIODIVERSITY AND WILDLIFE ISSUES <i>Attend or hold annual event to promote project work or issues in West Lancashire area.</i>	Attend West Lancashire Green Fayre or hold other event annually.	WLBC TWT		Annually
2.b. MOSSLANDS* <i>Promote and review opportunities to acquire and restore mossland sites in West Lancashire.</i>	Engage with Landowners to encourage take up of agri-environment grants. Provision of consultation advice to planning authorities. Implementation of a wider ‘Mosslands Vision’ across Lancashire.	WLBC EA TWT LCC		March 2013
2.c. ARABLE FARMLAND BIRDS (Lapwing, Grey Partridge, Barn Owl etc.)* <i>Promote and encourage the take up of</i>	Encourage arable landowners to join the Environmental Stewardship Scheme . 40% of land under Entry Level and 5% of land under Higher Level	RSPB NFU WWT		March 2013

measures to help farmland birds.	<p>Agreement (% of total area of farmed land in West Lancs) with ELS/HLS management secured on 8 farms in West Lancashire.</p> <p>Encourage farmers to join the Volunteer and Farmer Alliance Project (farmers grant access for volunteers to survey their land for birds).</p> <p>Encourage farmers to join the Corn Bunting Project to use farming practices that benefit farmland bird assemblages, using Stewardship application.</p>	NE		
<p>2.d. BROWN HARE* Brown Hare Conservation and Recording Project.</p> <p>Develop a project to deliver habitat for Brown Hare conservation across wider region.</p>	<p>Organise & deliver training for the annual formal Brown Hare survey.</p> <p>Encourage public participation in the Lancashire Brown Hare Survey to record Brown hare sightings (8 volunteers from West Lancs participating. 20 records from West Lancs submitted).</p> <p>Analyse the results from casual web-based recording of sightings. Deliver habitat for Brown hare conservation across the region. Identify key areas for management.</p>	TWT FWAG LCC BTO WLBC BAP Partners		January 2013
<p>2.e. PURPLE RAMPING FUMITORY* Investigate possible demonstration or reintroduction sites using seed produced through current projects.</p>	<p>Identify potential sites identified and establish viable populations.</p> <p>Update associated section of the Lancashire BAP.</p>	WWT LL NE		March 2013
<p>2.f. GREAT CRESTED NEWTS Investigate populations at Pond Close, Tarleton.</p>	<p>Conduct population assessment.</p> <p>Completion and implementation of pond management plan, to ensure weed clearance at appropriate time of year.</p>	WLBC LJMU		May/ June 2013 March 2013
<p>2.g. INCREASE/ ENHANCE ACCESS - RIBBLE COAST & WETLANDS REGIONAL PARK</p>	<p>Completion of Access Strategy.</p> <p>Improvements to the section from Martin Mere to Mere Sands Wood an MSW to Rufford station.</p>	RCW partnership	Partners time Funding – bids pending	March 2013

Increased provisions for visitors/ tourism.					
2.h. MERE SANDS WOOD Increased provisions for visitors/ tourism.	Commence re-development of the visitor centre with improved visitor and educational facilities.	TWT	Funding	March 2012	
2.i. DOUGLAS LINEAR PARK Development of a linear park between Tarleton and Hesketh Bank.	Provide support for the development of a linear park.	Douglas Linear Park Partnership WLBC	Funding	March 2013	

Objective 3: To ensure that water and riparian habitat management practices are carried out that benefit both water quality and species that inhabit aquatic habitats.

The wetlands of West Lancashire include sites of regional, national and international importance, hosting a valuable wildlife resource. These wetlands form a landscape of distinctive character, formerly dominated by the historic Martin Mere. Thousands of kilometres of drainage ditch now criss-cross the District and form an important network, with the canal and river corridors linking these wetlands. Some sections of these networks are in poor condition and fragment the populations of the species which inhabit them. Many of the water habitats in West Lancashire are threatened by run-off and eutrophication, abstraction, in-filling and neglect.

Action	Measure	Partners	Conditional upon	Timescale
3.a. WATER VOLE* NW England's Lowland Water Vole Project. Implement water vole friendly catchment management works.	Advise landowners and managers of water bodies and watercourses in the project area (incl. Douglas and Mersey catchments) on water vole-friendly management practices when opportunities arise. Investigate BHS designation at appropriate agricultural ditches in West Lancashire. Continued training, volunteer support and monitoring required for 3 years.	EA TWT FWAG UU BAP Partnerships	Funding	March 2013

Objective 4: To undertake projects which support and enhance natural coastal systems and habitats across West Lancashire.

The inherently dynamic nature of coastal systems, the impact of climate change on sea levels and the coincidental balancing by geological processes, all influence the internationally important Ribble Estuary and its marshes. Policy decisions regarding managed retreat, sea wall defences and tidal barriers will have a major impact on the marshes and mosslands immediately inland of these. Furthermore, loss of land and habitat on the coast could lead to a squeeze on land uses further inland.

Action	Measure	Partners	Conditional Upon	Timescale
4.a. SALT MARSH* <i>Restoration of further arable land to salt marsh.</i>	Hectares restored.	RSPB EA NE RCW	Resources	March 2013

Objective 5: To identify suitable sites and initiate habitat creation projects, and to manage urban sites in ways that benefit wildlife.

The fragmentation of habitats (and therefore the species that inhabit them) can arise from a variety of causes, such as development, inappropriate land management or changes in land use. This has adverse effects on the continuity of landscape character and reduces the quality of habitats within it. Wet woodland provides vital stepping stones between many of the aquatic environments described in sections above, and supports populations of species important both locally and nationally. Some urban sites also have the potential to be beneficial for wildlife. If managed appropriately they can act as stepping stones for the movement of species within and between urban and more rural areas of the District.

Action	Measure	Partners	Conditional Upon	Timescale
5.a. LOWLAND GRASSLAND* <i>Support the development of Forever Meadows Project to bring grassland sites into beneficial management within the Borough.</i>	Number of surveys conducted, management plans produced and successful management agreements in place.	TWT WLBC NE FWAG		Autumn' 2012
5.b. GORSE HILL NATURE RESERVE <i>Heathland and grassland restoration.</i>	Hectares of Heathland and grassland restored. Hectares of woodland established.	NWET		Ongoing

5.c. <u>RUFFORD OLD HALL</u> Grassland restoration.	Hectares of improved grassland brought into wet grassland management.	NT		Ongoing
5.d BURSCOUGH COMMUNITY WOODLAND Creation of a community woodland at Platts Lane, Burscough.	Conduct site investigations and, dependant on findings, produce a woodland design.	WLBC LCC Global Renewables	Findings of site investigations Funding	March 2013

Objective 6: Improve the quality of wildlife information available to planning authorities and raise awareness of applicants/ developers and planning case officers of the needs and protective legislation concerning particular species of wildlife.

Land use planning is underpinned by the principles of sustainable development and planning authorities are required to balance economic, social and environmental considerations when allocating land for particular kinds of development and when considering development proposals. Often, however, the needs of wildlife are in conflict with people’s need for development to provide employment or new homes (for example). At a local level, proper protection of wildlife species and habitats in land use planning relies on both strong local development policies (based on sufficient and up to date information concerning the distribution and status of wildlife in the area) and on the informed application of those policies at the development control stage to ensure that the best possible planning decision is made in each case. Greater awareness by applicants/developers, planning case officers and councillors of the sensitivity of particular habitats and species, and of the protection afforded by legislation, will help to minimise the adverse effects of development on wildlife whilst maximising opportunities for biodiversity gains.

Action	Measure	Partners	Conditional Upon	Timescale
6.a. ECOLOGICAL GUIDANCE FOR DEVELOPERS <i>Produce and make available guidance on ecological impacts of development proposals for developers and Local Planning Authority case officers.</i>	Development of Local plan incorporating biodiversity policies in line with National Planning Policy Framework.	WLBC and consultees		March 2013

6.b. RED SQUIRREL* <i>Adhere to the objectives of the red squirrel buffer zone i.e. planting guidelines etc.</i>	Buffer zone officially recognised by WLBC and principles applied to that part of the zone within West Lancs.	WLBC LCC FC	Funding	March 2013
	Ongoing monitoring and recording of sightings.			
6.c. NEW AND BUILT STRUCTURES <i>Encourage the inclusion of biodiversity elements into new developments (e.g. bat tiles, swallow eaves, green roofs, living walls and rain gardens).</i>	Encourage take up in relevant new developments. Develop a Green Infrastructure Policy within the Local Plan.	WLBC LCC TWT RSPB	Resources of BAP Partnership	March 2013
6.d. NEW AND BUILT STRUCTURES <i>Enforce appropriate management, survey and mitigation for nesting birds and bats in existing buildings and conversions.</i>	Follow best practice in terms of planning application and enforcement.	WLBC LCC		Ongoing

Objective 7: Improve the quality of wildlife information available to Local Authorities and relevant groups in urban areas to promote the conservation of urban biodiversity and manage urban habitats for wildlife and people together with promoting wider adoption of biodiversity elements into the designed landscape.

Urban areas can hold significant sites for biodiversity conservation, and are particularly important due to the fact they are the areas in which most of the public interact with their natural environment. This also adds impetus through potential interaction of the BAP with education, greater access to the public, and in policy and planning agendas. Significant community work and benefits to wider agendas, such as sustainable communities, identity and place, health and well-being, can be made through biodiversity work in urban areas. Many actions may fall between sections 5, 6, and 7, and where this may happen it is intended that actions be included in the section that covers the major elements of the action. For example small number of sites may be managed for conservation and included in section 7, until this action develops to aiming to counteract isolation and fragmentation specifically, when it would move to section 5.

Action	Measure	Partners	Conditional Upon	Timescale
7.a. PARKS AND GREENSPACE <i>Promote the management for, and integration of, biodiversity within parks and urban green spaces. Manage and create urban wildflower meadows in relevant areas.</i>	Support events for parks/greenspace management and biodiversity. Inclusion of green infrastructure within the Local Plan. Coronation Park wildflower meadow managed to maximise biodiversity.	WLBC TWT GS LCC LBP		March 2013
7.b. SCHOOL GROUNDS <i>Promote maintenance and creation of wildlife areas for biodiversity and education.</i>	Minimum of 1 school annually.	TWT WLBC LCC		March 2013
7.c. COMMUNITY WOODLAND AND ORCHARDS <i>Monitor and assess contribution of Traditional Orchard site to urban biodiversity.</i>	Survey and monitoring of Gorse Hill Nature Reserve. Aid creation of community woodland and orchards.	NWET WLBC LCC		March 2011
7.d. ALLOTMENTS <i>Support development of community schemes and promote to local residents.</i>	Improve provision of community food growing initiatives. Improve management of existing sites e.g. water provision, access etc. Encourage community support.	WLWG WLBC		March 2013
7.e. GREEN PARTNERSHIP AWARDS <i>Support for community environmental projects.</i>	Financial support and technical advice for 10 community environmental projects annually.	LCC WLBC	Applications	March 2013

Abbreviations of Partners

ARGNM	The Amphibian and Reptile Group for North Merseyside
ARGSL	The Amphibian and Reptile Group for South Lancashire
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
BW	British Waterways
EA	Environment Agency
FC	Forestry Commission
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
GLW+W	Groundwork Lancashire West & Wigan
GPL	Groundwork Pennine Lancashire
GS	GreenSpace
LCC	Lancashire County Council
LL	Landlife
LRF	Lancashire Rural Futures
LJMU	Liverpool John Moores University
MBC	Mersey Basin Campaign
NE	Natural England
NFU	National Farmers' Union
NT	National Trust
NWET	North West Ecological Trust
RCW	Ribble Coast & Wetlands Regional Park
PCs	Parish Councils
RSPB	The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
TWT	The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside
WLBC	West Lancashire Borough Council
WLEN	West Lancashire Environmental Network
WWT	The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust