



Progress Report October 2008 – March 2009

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1. Linkages to national and local BAPs

1.1 UK BAP

Copies of newsletters were passed to the UK BAP officer to keep them informed of local progress and issues. The Project Officer was invited to attend the England Local and Regional Strategy Group meeting in February as one of two representative LBAP officers, but was again unable to attend due to prior commitments.

1.2 Regional

The Project Officer has attended a number of regional meetings within the period including East Midlands Biodiversity Full Partnership and the Steering Group as the chair/representative of the regional LBAP officers group. The regional LBAPs met in December and February to discuss common issues such as the Natural England Memorandum of Agreement, BARS and the promotion of the NERC Biodiversity Duty. A workshop was arranged in January for LBAP officers from the West and East Midlands to meet to discuss the content and format of the LBAP Funding and Communication strategies.

The Project Officer has responded to requests for information from the East Midlands Biodiversity Partnership.

1.3 Links with neighbouring LBAPs

Close contact and liaison has been maintained with the Peak District and National Forest LBAPs as well as Nottinghamshire and Staffordshire LBAPs. Discussions have taken place with the officer for the National Forest regarding digitising BAP habitats in National Forest Tender Schemes.

1.4 Greenprints

The Project Officer chaired one Chesterfield Greenprint Steering Group meeting in December and during the Sustainability Officer's maternity leave has maintained close contact with officers at Chesterfield Borough Council. The Project Officer also responded to the UK Biodiversity Reporting round in November on behalf of the Chesterfield Greenprint.

The Bolsover Biodiversity Network (BBN) has continued to be successful with key partners and groups working towards the targets. The Project Officer chaired one meeting in January. Comments have been fed to officers at Bolsover District Council on the progress towards the actions and targets in the Greenprint.

The Project Officer made formal comments on the Erewash Greenprint during its six week consultation phase. These mainly related to ensuring the targets were aligned with the Lowland Derbyshire LBAP to aid with reporting on progress. It is hoped that the document will be finalised and launched in the next financial year.

2. Local Feedback

2.1 Annual Forum

The 2008 Annual Forum took place on Friday 10th and Saturday 11th October. The event, jointly organised and run with the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group, had an overall theme of *Biodiversity in the Urban and Brownfield Environment*. It was attended by over 140 people, including many LBAP partners and associated community groups.

Feedback from attendees was very positive, especially popular were the networking opportunities the event presented.

Work has now begun on the 2009 Annual Forum. The theme of *Wildlife Recording* was discussed at the LBAP Steering Group and it was suggested that the event should be open to the general public as well as the LBAP Partners and community groups. A provisional date of Saturday 19th September has been set at Derby University. A programme of speakers and workshops is currently being produced. It is expected that the programme should be finalised and booking forms sent out with the July newsletter.

2.2 LBAP Steering Group

The Steering Group of the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership met on 26th February. Ten members of the partnership were represented and participated in discussions. Reports were received from the habitats groups, Greenprints, partners on recent projects and achievements. The Project Officer presented the draft Funding and Communication strategies and steering group members took part in an exercise to help prioritise the actions.

2.3 Servicing and expanding the partnership

In the report period more local groups and organisations have formally joined the LBAP partnership within the period:

- Antony Gell School Foundation
- Ashover Parish Council
- Barlborough Parish Council
- Clifton Parish Council
- Cromford Parish Council
- Dale Abbey Parish Council
- Dethick, Lea and Holloway Parish Council
- Doveridge Parish Council
- Draycott Parish Council
- Findern Parish Council
- Friends of Poolsbrook Country Park
- Hognaston Parish Council
- Holbrook Parish Council
- Ironville Parish Council
- Killamarsh Parish Council
- Kirk Ireton Parish Council
- Little Eaton Parish Council
- Mackworth Parish Council
- Mapperley Parish Council
- Newton Solney Parish Council
- North Wingfield Parish Council
- Repton Parish Council
- Ripley Town Council
- Risley Parish Council
- Smalley Parish Council
- South Wingfield Parish Council
- Stanley and Stanley Common Parish Council
- Staveley Town Council
- Tibshelf Parish Council
- Willington Parish Council
- Woodville Parish Council

There are now 92 partners in the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership, including 35 community groups, 29 Parish/Town Councils and one landowning estate.

During the report period, the Project Officer has visited, or communicated with, a number of LBAP partners and local groups to discuss various issues including current and future projects and funding. LBAP Partners visited include, Lea Valley Project, Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire, Severn Trent Water, Meynall Langley estate, Friends of Mickleover Meadows, Findern Footpaths Group, Moss Valley Wildlife Group, Derbyshire County Council, Derby City Council, Pleasley Pit Nature Study Group, Dove Valley Community Project and Ogston Bird Club.

3. Making the LBAP accessible

3.1 Communication strategy

A Communications Strategy has been written for the Partnership for the 2009-2011 period. The draft document was presented to the Steering Group in February and a prioritisation exercise was undertaken to help steer the document's action plan. The completed document reviews the existing communication tools, such as the website and newsletter, and makes suggestions developments and new tools. Particular emphasis is placed on the need for a Communications and Outreach Officer for the Partnership.

3.2 Website

The usage of the Derbyshire Biodiversity website has remained high and so far during March almost 100 people are accessing the website every day (Table 1)! The statistics package continues to show a high usage, especially more during evenings and over weekends. The species and habitats pages are still the most visited part of the site followed by the Lowland Derbyshire LBAP page. Whilst most visitors stay less than two minutes on the website, 9.1% of visitors are logged onto the site for more than an hour.

Table 1: Website usage October 2008- March 2009

Month	Unique visitors	No visits of	Average no of visits per day	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Oct 2008	1382	2020	65.16	6298	33199	1.25GB
Nov 2008	1378	2072	69.07	6046	27238	1.16GB
Dec 2008	1228	1740	56.13	5853	18873	1.19GB
Jan 2009	948	1291	41.65	3631	16428	784.7MB
Feb 2009	1125	1636	58.43	4162	21996	614.9MB
March 2009 (up to 23 rd March)	1233	2247	97.7	8316	1681	1.09GB

The Communications Strategy highlights a number of additions that are needed to the website. The Project Officer has discussed these with the website contractor and will be receiving rough quotes for work in the new financial year.

3.3. Newsletter

Quarterly newsletters were produced and distributed in October and January. The next newsletter is due out in mid-April. Contributions have continued to come in from LBAP partners as well as local community groups. Feedback from LBAP partners and local groups has continued to be very favourable.

3.4 Talks

The Project Officer has given a number of talks in the last six months:

- LBAP Partnership - Stanley and Stanley Common Wildlife Group (7th October),
- Interpretation and promotion of the NERC Biodiversity Duty in Derbyshire at a national training course on the Biodiversity Duty at Plas Tan Y Blywch, Snowdonia (16th October)
- Chaired and gave LBAP partnership - WildDerby Partnership (24th November),
- NERC Duty Presentation - Bolsover Parish liaison Meeting (25th November),
- NERC Duty Presentation - South Derbyshire Parish Liaison Meeting (14th January)
- LBAP Partnership - inaugural meeting of Elmton and Creswell Wildlife Group (23rd February)
- NERC Duty Presentation- CHART Board Meeting (12th March)

3.5 Annual Report

The 2007/8 Annual Report was finalised, published and distributed to all LBAP Partners in October. As in previous years the report included information gathered from over 75 organisations and recorded progress towards the LBAP targets.

Work will begin on gathering data from the 2008/9 Annual report in April/May. Some initial information was gathered on large BAP contributions eg HLS, as part of the Funding Strategy.

4. Implement Habitat Action Plans

4.1 Woodland

The Woodland Group met in Bakewell on 4th March. Progress is continuing on the development of a landscape project within the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site. The East Midlands Woodland Bird Project has attracted some very attractive funding from the Forestry Commission's Woodland Improvement Grant Scheme. This scheme will be presented to private owners of ancient woodlands as part of a drop-in session organised at Cromford Mill in May. The event will be publicised to appropriate Local Wildlife Site owners via direct mailing from Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

The Project Officer attended the steering group for the East Midlands Woodland Bird Project to represent the Partnership and to ensure that the scheme will be promoted to appropriate owners. Information of the scheme has been distributed to appropriate local authorities with woodland estates.

4.2 Grassland and Heathland

The Grassland Group has not met since 24th June 2008. However, there has been excellent progress made on the grassland targets through the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme and via various projects such as the Bolsover Grassland Project, Wild About Nature and Ashover Heathlands Project.

4.3 Wetland

The Wetland Group met on 18th November where the Project Officer gave an update on progress towards targets and partners were asked to add information. The meeting was followed by a site visit to Markham Vale to look at the various wetland issues associated with the large-scale development and mitigation programmes.

Members of the wetland group have also been involved in the River Basin Management Plan consultation being led by the Environment Agency.

4.4 Farmland

The Farmland Group has not met in the last six months, but further progress has been made surveying hedgerows in Chesterfield. The Phase I of the Moss Valley area hedgerow survey project was successful and 56 hedgerows were surveyed during the summer. An application for Phase II will be submitted to DEFRA's grant for hedgerows survey by the end of March.

The RSPB received two years worth of funding from the Countdown 2010 fund. The Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Farmland Bird Project will concentrate on advising and liaising with landowners on land management for farmland species, especially birds.

5. Implement Species Action Plans

Liaison has been made with a number of special interest groups/recorders to establish base-line data for a number of priority BAP species. The intention is to put up distribution maps, based upon 1km grid squares, on the Derbyshire Biodiversity website.

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is continuing to monitor otter and water vole populations through its volunteer monitoring programmes.

White-clawed crayfish have been found at a number of sites. Liaison with Stephanie Peay, a known crayfish expert, has shown that it is relatively simple to assess a potential ark site for crayfish. This would be part of the Lowland Derbyshire Aggregate Levy Sustainability Project that the Project Officer has been working up.

6. Increasing capacity of partners in key sectors to implement HAPs and SAPs

6.1 BAP Audits

Following the completion of the Project Officer's biodiversity audit for Severn Trent Water (Foremark and Staunton Harold), ranger staff have recently employed FWAG to work up a HLS application for the sites.

The Project Officer has carried out a biodiversity audit for Amber Valley Borough Council and is currently working on one for Bolsover District Council. These audits quantify the amount of BAP habitats owned by LBAP partners, and therefore calculates the contributions that partners can make to LBAP targets.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

7.1 BARS

Progress on persuading LBAP partners to use BARS has been slow. At the LBAP Exec Steering Group in October, it was agreed to slim down the actions which partners need to report on. A pilot slimmed down Habitat Action Plan was trialled for Hedgerows and shown to Derbyshire Wildlife Trust for comment. No comments have been received to date.

The Project Officer, along with other LBAP officers, has continued to raise concern regionally and nationally regarding the national reporting of BAP information that is not disaggregated at a local level. In Lowland Derbyshire, however, we are fortunate that the local Natural England and Forestry Commission officers are able to do this.

7.2 Spatial recording

Following the approval at the LBAP Steering Group, work has begun on series of GIS layers to spatially record progress towards the LBAP targets and begin to record work that will contribute towards the next LBAP plan targets (2011 onwards). To date, the layers record current Countryside Stewardship Schemes, Higher Level Stewardship and work from some specific projects. The Project Officer has had discussion with the Forestry Commission to include EWGS schemes. BAP habitats created, restored and managed via the National Forest Tender Scheme and Changing landscapes will be digitised and added in the summer via a small contract with the National Forest Company.

It is proposed to continue adding to these layers as information is sent by LBAP partners for the 2008/9 Annual Report.

A recognised omission from the progress towards the LBAP targets is the creation, restoration and management that will occur as a result of planning permission, especially restoration schemes from mineral applications. The Project Officer is currently working up a project bid to submit to Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF) for this element of the work. This is likely to involve desk top digitising of agreed restoration schemes and some associated site surveys.

8. Community Strategies, Development Plans and similar strategic partnerships.

8.1 Local Strategic Partnerships & Local Area Agreements

The Project Officer has continued to keep in touch with the officer responsible for NI188 for the Local Area Agreement and attended a climate change workshop with the aim of ensuring biodiversity was linked to reporting on this indicator.

A meeting was held between the Project Officer and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to discuss biodiversity representation at LSPs in the LBAP area.

The Project Officer gave a presentation on the NERC Biodiversity Duty to the CHART LSP Board.

The South Derbyshire Environmental Forum has developed out of the South Derbyshire Local Strategic Partnership. This has a very flexible, practical, format where community groups and parish groups come together to share best practice and ideas. The Project Officer has attended two meetings providing advice to groups and parish councils on environmental projects. The November 2009 meeting will be themed around biodiversity and the Project Officer will be leading it.

8.2 Planning documents and other consultations

During the period the Project Officer attended a meeting to discuss the Green Infrastructure Study for Chesterfield and provided comments on the informal consultation which followed. Comments have also been provided including biodiversity in the Economic Development Strategy for Bolsover, Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire (2009-2014).

8.3 Training for LBAP Partners

There were no training opportunities in this period.

9. Raise Funding for LBAP initiatives

9.1 Funding Strategy

A Fundraising Strategy has been written for the Partnership for the 2009-2011 period. The draft document was presented to the Steering Group in February and a prioritisation exercise was undertaken to help steer the document's action plan. The completed document looks at fundraising for two elements of the LBAP including co-ordination and achievement of the remaining targets. All of the elements are costed to highlight any shortfalls in funding.

9.2 Information

Information has continued to be circulated to LBAP partners on new funding schemes with the appropriate deadlines and criteria. The Project Officer now has access to the Grantfinder database which will increase the information relevant to the LBAP partnership.

9.3 Support of Funding bids

Information gathered for the fundraising strategy showed that in the last three years the partnership has raised more than £1.75 million of external funding for biodiversity projects. In addition to this a further £2.3 million has been spent on Environmental Stewardship and £2.5 million on existing Countryside Stewardship.

The Project Officer has continued to work with various LBAP partners and local groups on funding bids for specific biodiversity projects. Support letters have been written and sent to accompany four LBAP grant applications.

9.4 Funding for co-ordination

Contributions towards the co-ordinator's post for 2008/9 were received from all local authorities in the LBAP area. They were also received from Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission.

To date, favourable responses to the request for continued funding for the Project Officer have been received from nearly all the Local Authorities, the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency.

10. NERC Biodiversity Duty

As part of the ongoing NERC Duty work with LBAP partners the Project Officer completed a NERC Biodiversity Audit both South Derbyshire District Council and Derbyshire Dales District Council.

A leaflet specifically aimed at promoting the NERC Duty to Parish and Town Councils was produced. This was sent with an information sheet on case studies and a questionnaire to all 162 third tier Councils in the LBAP area. The questionnaire asked where the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership could help the Parish Councils, for example, with advice on land management, training sessions for parish councils on planning and biodiversity. To date, responses have been received from 60 Councils. A report summarising the results is currently being written up. In addition Parish and Town Councils were asked if they wanted to join the LBAP partnership. To date, 29 have now joined, showing their commitment to biodiversity.

Following the presentation made at the CHART Board, the Project Officer has received communication from Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service asking for some advice on the NERC Biodiversity Duty.