

BMBC Biodiversity Officer Report
Barnsley Biodiversity Trust AGM 28TH January 2015

1. **Dearne Valley Green Heart 'Nature Improvement Area' (NIA).** The government-funded 3-year national NIA pilot will come to a close at the end of March: it looks highly likely that no further central funding will be provided but the Partnership expect to continue to work together. Pete Wall has secured some short-term funding for his own NIA Project Manager role which should assist this. BMBC has contributed by:
 - a. Exceeding our grassland mowing changes to benefit wildlife – these will continue beyond the lifetime of the national pilot.
 - b. Continuing to aim for our 3-year woodland creation target: the 3rd winter's planting started at Worsbrough Canal Basin in December and will carry on into March.
 - c. Drafting planning policy changes with Doncaster and Rotherham Councils which we expect to be adopted during March. This will encourage biodiversity enhancements on major developments.
 - d. Because Wombwell Ings Extension project will not be delivered on time BMBC has helped out by allowing £50,000 of the underspend to be used to create a new wetland feature on Carlton Marsh LNR – in the South-East corner of the site.

Other NIA projects include:

- a. Houghton Washlands nature reserve - already in operation but the River Dearne overflow/ bypass channel (using the old course) now not expected until after the 3-year pilot.
 - b. Riparian mammals group, led by YWT, concentrating on water voles and otters. Yorkshire Water have just started their Sandybridge Dyke meander project will help water voles.
- 2 **Local Plan.** The latest public consultation on a draft Local Plan (land use plan) has just ended and a 'publication version' is expected for consultation this summer, followed by adoption in Spring 2016.
 - 3 **BMBC staff changes.** I have just moved into Planning Policy although nothing else has changed – I haven't lost or gained any tasks. My ex-colleagues in Parks Services, including Russ Boland who manages most of the nature reserves, will be moving into the Communities Directorate in April, working under Phil Hollingsworth. No cuts are planned.
 - 4 **Planning application consultations.** These remain a very high priority. In the last few months several major applications have been received relating to sites proposed under the draft Local Plan for employment sites alongside the Dearne Valley Parkway at Birdwell. One of these is BMBC Highways' application to construct a new gyratory road system at Birdwell to support the wider developments. The 2 other current ones are for large areas north of the Parkway on the reclaimed Rockingham Colliery site. I have required further ecological information for all 3 applications, however it is likely that in time they will get approval subject to additional mitigation/ enhancement being provided. Other applications of note include the proposal to build a house on Scout Dyke Reservoir LWS (which I objected to but which the Planning Board approved in September) and the North Gawber ex-colliery site which got approval for housing (but on which we able to preserve some of the more valuable habitat).
 - 5 **The Local Sites Partnership.** The annual biodiversity indicator report to DEFRA (Single Data List 160) was '16.7% sites in positive conservation management' which is down on last year (18.3%) mainly due to the adoption of 19 new Local Geological Sites which do not have any obvious management. Stainborough Park LWS was moved into 'positive' but Worsbrough Reservoir LWS only just stayed positive. Russ Boland has been having a lot of work done on West Haigh Wood LNR/LWS this winter with FC grant to improve biodiversity, especially by thinning out dense stands of young trees. The LSP voted to disband its meetings and move to delegating its roles to two Panels – a LWSP and a LGSP to remove duplication of wildlife issues.
 - 6 **Dearne Valley Landscape Partnership** – Work commenced in July using £2 million of HLF grant for built heritage, biodiversity and cultural heritage projects over 5 years. Parks' sites on the provisional list for funding are Cliffe Wood LWS (Dearne Valley Park LNR), West Haigh Wood LWS/LNR and Parkhill Nature Reserve LWS brick kilns (bat roost). Roseanna Burton will be leading on biodiversity issues.
 - 7 **Barnsley Biological Records Centre** – see separate update from Mike Guy (quarter 3 report, 2014/15) at Sheffield City Council, our service provider/ partner. Because of their continued good service to Barnsley I am making the case for extending the contract beyond its current end of March 3 and ½ year period.