

## **Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land**



### **Description**

This habitat involves derelict industrial land such as former colliery sites, disused railways, mineral and clay extractions, urban gardens, allotments, road verges and public open space which form a very significant resource for wildlife. Individual areas are small, but cumulatively provide an area far in excess of that of nature reserves, indeed the combined area for built-up and amenity areas is greater than the area of semi-natural habitats in Barnsley.

Post-industrial land, such as spoil heaps, is nutrient and mineral deficient. Colonising vegetation is therefore often sparse and sometimes unusual. Spectacular assemblages of both natural and introduced plants occur on some sites, and often in surprising locations, due to the introduction of alien soils and other materials (eg. railway ballast). The habitat is important for Bumble Bees and also for other invertebrates.

Within built-up areas there are important semi-natural sites, such as ancient woodland or meadows. It is increasingly appreciated that there are also recognisable 'natural' urban habitats which develop on waste ground and derelict sites. Often these contain a mix of native and alien introduced species such as Buddleia, creating a very diverse ecosystem. Whatever their origin, these sites offer many people their only opportunity to appreciate the importance of biodiversity.

### **National Status**

The local significance of this habitat, when reproduced at national level, would achieve even greater importance. Demand for house building land is likely to put increasing pressure on the countryside and, whilst garden conservation cannot in any way replace lost habitats, it can provide a very significant resource for many common and vulnerable species.

### **Local Status**

Barnsley has a land area of 32,833ha and from this the total of built-up and amenity land is 7,336ha, more than the total for all the semi-natural habitats in Barnsley put together.

Although post-industrial areas cannot be left as landscape eyesores, it is very important now to preserve 'mini habitats' within these areas to conserve species such as Little Ringed Plover and other important species. Due to agricultural intensification, these colonised sites offer the last remaining pocket for many important species of flora and fauna.

### **Legal Status**

Some species within this habitat have legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. Sites listed in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as Natural Heritage Sites (NHS) have a presumption against development but have no protection against operations which do not require planning consent.

Some trees will be protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) or policies relating to Conservation Areas.

### **Links with other Action Plans**

Many of the species with action plans are found in urban areas. These include:

SAP1	Hedgehog
SAP2	Bats
SAP3	Water Vole
SAP5	Grey Partridge
SAP7	Kestrel
SAP8	Little Ringed Plover
SAP9	Lapwing
SAP10	Barn Owl
SAP11	Skylark
SAP12	Tree Sparrow
SAP14	Great Crested Newt
SAP18	Glow Worm
SAP19	Dingy Skipper

## **Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline**

- New development, causing loss of natural habitats.
- The loss of some large gardens in built-up areas to facilitate higher density development.
- Deliberate targeting of naturally vegetated derelict sites for development or landscaping.
- Unsympathetic management of open space, including inappropriate use of chemicals.
- The felling of trees for safety, especially those with cavities, removing nesting sites for birds and roosting sites for bats. In some instances hibernating bats have been killed by tree felling.
- The use of toxic timber treatment chemicals in roof spaces, poisoning bats.
- The conversion of old buildings/barns etc. to residential or other use without taking account of existing wildlife.
- Removal of 'weed' species which produce nectar and seeds for wild creatures. Many cultivated plants and flowers are not as attractive to wildlife as native species.
- Over-manicured gardens providing few opportunities for wildlife. Most gardens have space for a bit of 'wilderness' where wildflowers are allowed to flourish.

- Property repairs causing loss of roosting sites for birds and bats, especially the entombing of bats in wall cavities etc. by blocking access holes.
- The infilling of garden ponds for safety.
- Overstocking garden ponds with fish can result in loss of plant and invertebrate populations.
- Danger from new roads and traffic, especially where new roads cross traditional migration and feeding routes for Badger, Otter, Frogs and Toads.
- Unsympathetic reclamation schemes failing to retain species.
- Poor aftercare and maintenance of sites which have been landscaped to accommodate wildlife.

## **Current Local Action**

- Some monitoring and recording of wildlife on sites by Barnsley Natural History Society, Barnsley Bird Study Group and other individuals.
- Current management schemes.
- Open space management.
- Environmental projects.

## **Proposed Local Action**

- Provide advice and support for the creation and management of wildlife areas in school grounds, parks and other green spaces.
- Survey and complete a register of all Ancient and Veteran Trees.
- Identify any areas of remnant orchards within the urban built-up areas in Barnsley.
- Promote the concept of green gardening for wildlife to members of the public, including the value of safe and sympathetically designed garden ponds.
- Extract information from the *Barnsley Bird Study Group Breeding Bird Survey* to provide populations and mapping of breeding Grey Partridge, Little Ringed Plover, Barn Owl, Song Thrush, Skylark, Dunnock, Grasshopper Warbler, Starling, Tree Sparrow, House Sparrow and Linnet.
- Survey and monitor all known Harvest Mouse sites and potential new locations and advise appropriate management.
- Survey urban built-up areas for the presence of Grass Snake and Toad and advise appropriate management.
- Encourage the appropriate management of urban built-up areas to benefit Bumble Bees.
- Monitor reclamation schemes to ensure that valuable habitats are not lost without adequate provision for replacement/enhancement and potential for the creation of new habitats.
- Encourage participation among farmers in Environmental Stewardship and Countryside Stewardship Schemes.
- Survey the remaining areas of derelict land to identify existing wildlife value and factors supporting key species such as Badger, Green Hairstreak, Wall Brown Butterfly and Bumble Bee.

## **BMBC Planning Policy Actions**

- Review, prioritise and invest in improving degraded and derelict sites in the urban fringe to enhance their value for biodiversity.
- Encourage the creation of new habitat through the requirement made under Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 9, to incorporate biodiversity enhancements into development wherever possible.
- Develop a booklet on land management for urban wildlife, including case studies of good practice, as guidance for planners, land managers and others. Particularly promote the concept of wildlife corridors and green networks.
- Target professional bodies (planners, engineers and surveyors) through seminars and their institutes, to ensure that they understand the contribution they can make in terms of biodiversity gains through the development process and management of open space.
- Promote the importance of brown field sites and urban green networks for biodiversity among land use planners.
- Assess all brown field land against Natural Heritage Site (NHS) criteria and define qualifying sites in development plans.
- Promote the Green Space Strategy, setting out a clear programme of action for the protection and management of the urban green network.
- Produce Nature Conservation Strategy, setting out a clear programme of action for the protection and management of biodiversity sites.
- Seek to ensure that, through the development process and other mechanisms, every resident has access to urban wild space.
- Define all urban woodland that fulfils the NHS criteria and

identify in development plan (Local Development Framework).

- Ensure that new development, from a few houses to large-scale development, actually contributes to biodiversity. Ensure that, where appropriate, native planting is used. Where biodiversity is lost as a direct consequence of development, compensatory habitats should be provided.
- Where derelict land or former mineral extraction sites of low biodiversity value are being converted to green space, there should be a presumption in favour of restoring and creating habitats of conservation value, particularly where these will link to or extend existing habitats.
- Ensure that all important trees and woodlands under perceived threat are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).
- Ensure that important features such as highway trees, Notified Road Verges and ancient Hedgerows are protected through legislation and the planning system.
- Lobby the Royal Town Planning Institute to promote the inclusion of urban and post-industrial biodiversity issues into accredited courses.
- Develop a methodology to identify NHS sites of local community value by 2012. Encourage the local authorities to give these particular protection through the planning system.
- Incorporate good design practices into development plans. Develop and publish design guidance to provide alternatives where habitats will be lost, for example by installing bat bricks.
- Ensure that developers establish areas of new native woodland as part of new residential, commercial and industrial developments. Maximise opportunities offered by Section 106 agreements.
- Produce a register of all contaminated land in the borough and, whenever possible, take into account the requirements of local biodiversity when designing remedial treatment strategies.
- Identify ownership of all areas of vacant and derelict land with nature conservation value. Advise owners of biodiversity value and appropriate conservation management actions.
- Provide information on best practice for biodiversity to Local Authority service departments, developers and landowners.

Prevent loss of biodiversity associated with brown field land resources by:

- 1) Having regard to the protection and enhancement of habitats when considering the allocation of sites, in line with the approach set out in PPS 9 and the priorities set out in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP).
- 2) Having regard to the priorities set out in the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) in the interpretation of Unitary Development Plan (UDP)/LDF policies (and any supporting SPGs/SPDs).
- 3) Providing technical advice on the severity, implications and nature of suspected breaches in planning control (either conditions or unauthorised development).
- 4) Awarding appropriate site protection through designation, based upon routine environmental monitoring and assessment.
- 5) Ensuring that all partners and relevant landowners, service

providers and operational contractors are informed of the existence and importance of brown field land (both designated and non-designated sites).

### **BMBC Development Control Actions**

- Through planning control, ensure that viable networks of wildlife sites and corridors are maintained in all urban areas. Seek opportunities to create areas of new habitat through approved development.
- Maximise the biodiversity value of amenity planting and landscaping schemes by using locally native species and incorporating features such as bat boxes wherever possible.
- Ensure landowners review the management of existing urban green spaces – this to include, Council-owned public open space, highway land, churchyards and land in private ownership, such as business parks and factory grounds. Where appropriate, improve on site management to maximise its potential for wildlife.
- Review management of public green space, industrial sites and derelict land to provide suitable undisturbed grassland habitat for various BAP species.

### **BMBC Building Control Actions**

- Assess the impact renovation will have on wildlife before any work is undertaken and adopt biodiversity related building control regulations.

### **BMBC Land Ownership and Management Actions**

- Review specifications for grounds maintenance works in the context of sustainability commitments.
- Plant native trees and woodlands on appropriate public open spaces and in the urban fringe.
- Ensure Local Authority parks and related contracts contain basic habitat management criteria.
- Produce a strategy for the management of allotments and their integration with nature conservation.
- In appropriate areas of public and private open space, develop more low maintenance alternatives ie. reduce the area of short sward amenity grassland and area of strimming around plantations to encourage the creation of 'biodiversity banks' and pocket wildlife areas in housing estates, industrial grounds etc.
- Include biodiversity and sustainable practice in all parks management plans by 2010.
- Provide guidance on the management of derelict land sites for birds.
- Review management of public green space, industrial sites and derelict land to provide suitable undisturbed grassland habitat for Skylark.
- Continue to work in partnership with Coalfield Heathland Project to maximise biodiversity potential of Barnsley MBC Wogden Foot, ex-railway sidings site.