

29 The way forward and implementation

29.1 Introduction

Any vision for the conservation of habitats and species in Hertfordshire must be shared by all those involved in wildlife and countryside issues if it is to have any chance of coming to fruition. Extensive consultation and discussion has taken place with a wide variety of potential partner organisations. The culmination of this consultation is the production of this document: *A 50 Year Vision for the Wildlife and Natural Habitats of Hertfordshire*. However, this represents only the beginning; the much harder task of achieving the *Vision* now lies ahead.

The most important parts of the *Vision* are the targets and actions within each habitat and species action plan. Success will be measured by how many of these are achieved. The responsibility for implementing individual actions under each habitat and species plan will fall to the organisations listed against each action. A lead organisation is also identified for each action. When taking forward the action plans it will also be important to ensure links, consistency and co-ordination with other biodiversity initiatives, primarily biodiversity action plans in adjacent counties, as well as regional and national plans. The lead organisation will therefore be responsible for:

- bringing together and co-ordinating the partners listed under the action;
- ensuring links with similar actions in relevant county BAPs;
- monitoring progress under the action; and
- reporting on this progress to the Biodiversity Partnership Group.

There are also important aspects which cut across all the habitat and species action plans. These include:

- setting priorities;
- building support and partnerships;
- obtaining funding; and
- monitoring and review of the vision as a whole.

The general nature of these aspects means that their co-ordination across the plan should be efficient and effective. The Biodiversity Partnership Group should take a leading role in co-ordinating these aspects.

29.2 Setting priorities

Priorities for implementing the proposals within the individual action plans will be determined by:

- the availability of financial resources;
- the greatest need for action;
- the likelihood of success given known constraints and opportunities;
- the willingness of key organisations to form partnerships; and
- the ability to capture the interest of landowners, local people, communities, businesses and other organisations.

The Biodiversity Partnership Group should take the lead in the prioritisation exercise. As a first phase of priority setting, it will also be important to identify what programmes of practical activity are currently underway or are planned. These may well be easier to deliver in the shorter term than other actions. In the light of assessing the above factors, it may be necessary to review the timing of certain actions. Current funding opportunities should also be reviewed. Currently projects include:

- Heath and Acid Grassland (action already being undertaken by a variety of organisations):

- Wildwood Project;
- Veteran Tree survey;
- Wildlife Sites project;
- Stag Beetle (nationally co-ordinated survey underway in 1998 and local funding available);
- Stone Curlew (applications for pilot arable stewardship scheme accepted from spring 1998);
- Bittern (reedbed restoration currently underway in the Lee Valley); and
- Great Crested Newt (volunteer survey organised for spring 1998).

29.3 Building support and partnerships

29.3.1 Conservation organisations

Support from statutory nature conservation organisations and non-government conservation organisations will be vital. In particular, liaison between statutory agencies, local authorities and conservation bodies is a key requirement to implementing the *Vision*. Specialist groups such as bat groups, bird groups and conservation volunteers can play a key role in survey work and delivering some action proposals. For some action plans liaison will also be required with equivalent bodies in neighbouring counties.

Lead partners for a particular action plan have a responsibility to engage the interest of people in both public and private organisations and to encourage them to participate in biodiversity proposals.

29.3.2 Landowners

Landowners are in a key position to be able to make a large and lasting impact on biodiversity. A majority of the county is under private ownership and thus much of the land over which biodiversity issues apply is under the jurisdiction of this important group. Every encouragement should be given to landowners to manage, restore and create habitats on their land. This must be backed up with financial incentives and rewards if significant progress is to be made.

The continuing availability of advice to all landowners, for matters relating to enhancing biodiversity, conservation management and grant schemes is of prime importance.

29.3.3 Community involvement

Support from local communities will be extremely important for achieving the general goal of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in Hertfordshire. The important role of local communities in bringing about the fundamental changes necessary to achieve a healthy diverse environment is stressed in Agenda 21.

Local communities can benefit environmental projects in many ways. Local knowledge and expertise, involvement in practical work and increased communication are just some of the possible benefits. Community groups split into three types: those with a direct practical involvement in nature conservation; those with a wider interest in the environment; and those without an environmental link. All need to be linked to the implementation of the *Vision*.

Encouraging 'ownership' of local projects by a community group is often a good way to engage their interest and trust. However, maintaining effective support and links within communities is a time consuming and challenging task. The role of organisations such as the Countryside Management Service, Groundwork Hertfordshire and other environmental initiatives will be crucial in this. The Wildlife Trust's 'Welcome to Wildlife' project is also crucial, targeting community groups which have not traditionally had an environmental basis, or those groups with a wider environmental interest but no involvement in nature conservation.

The provision of skills, expertise, training support and information to community and volunteer groups will help mobilise volunteer support. This volunteer support may also help advise and assist landowners in implementing many of the actions in the plan.

29.3.4 Industry and business involvement

It is widely agreed that concern for the environment must not be the responsibility of conservationists alone. The report for the UK Biodiversity Steering Group (HMSO, 1995) states the importance of developing partnerships and involving those beyond the normal range of conservation organisations. Private sector industry and businesses are examples of possible partners. Many businesses now take their responsibilities for the environment seriously, both through auditing the impacts of their business on the environment and by supporting those directly involved in environmental projects.

Green Business Groups have been established in the county to promote environmental issues and share best practice.

Businesses within the county or with local bases should be encouraged to be supportive of the *Vision*. Involvement may be through the raising of

funds, provision of skills, services and staff, assisting biodiversity projects on land in their ownership and perhaps by taking on the role of sponsor for a particular habitat or species.

29.3.5 Objectives for developing partnerships

The value of forming partnerships to take forward biodiversity is clear. The following objectives summarise the key links required:

- To seek partnerships with local communities and maximise opportunities for local community involvement in biodiversity issues by raising awareness through interpretative, educational and cultural initiatives;
- To seek partnerships with business and commerce in order to promote and support biodiversity initiatives;
- To seek partnerships with statutory and voluntary conservation organisations and local authorities; and
- To encourage landowners to participate in biodiversity projects.

29.4 Obtaining funding

Many of the project proposals in the *Vision* will not be achieved without significant financial support. Some actions, such as the provision of advice to landowners, may not involve significant costs above those already set aside by different organisations for this purpose. Proposals which require additional survey work, significant amounts of management work or the creation of new habitats may cost tens of thousands of pounds. Therefore funding must be sought either directly from available sources or indirectly from fund raising initiatives.

29.4.1 Directly attributed funding for nature conservation work

Available sources of funding include all the existing nature conservation, land management, forestry and agri-environment grants. In most cases such grants go direct to the landowner to carry out specific work or management. Potential recipients of grants are competing against others for a limited supply of money so the quality of applications must be high. The

Wildlife Sites project, CMS or FWAG can assist with Countryside Stewardship or Woodland Grant Scheme applications.

Some groups may have access to funds that are not available to others. For example, the Wildlife Trust may have access to funds secured for work on a particular habitat or species, through the Wildlife Trusts nationally. The local bat group would be eligible to apply for a grant from the Bat Conservation Trust Bat Support Fund. Groundwork Hertfordshire have access to government money for land restoration projects and the Watling Chase Community Forest is a priority for Countryside Commission funding. Therefore partnerships and the involvement of a large number of groups and bodies should be encouraged.

29.4.2 Other potential sources of funding

Other potential sources of funding include the Heritage Lottery Fund, the EU funded Life II scheme and the Landfill Tax scheme via HELP (Hertfordshire

Environmental Landfill Partnership). The Environment Agency is able to undertake enhancement work during its rolling programme of river management.

Business and industry may contribute financially particularly if public relations opportunities exist. Smaller local companies may also be willing to contribute to one-off local projects or become involved in local sites or species initiatives.

There are many grant-giving charities that can make money available for nature conservation projects.

Other smaller sources of funding include the Rural Action grants for community based projects in rural

areas, which may include nature conservation projects. In addition, many local authorities give grants for environmental projects, such as the Dacorum Environmental Improvement Fund or the CMS administered grants.

29.4.3 Objective for funding

Develop and implement a co-ordinated strategy for fundraising to support priority projects within the *Vision*, through the Hertfordshire Environmental Forum, by 1999.

29.5 Monitoring and review

The monitoring and review of the *Vision* is a key action. To assess whether targets detailed within the individual habitat and species action plans are met and, if not, to identify solutions to why these targets have not been met, it is essential that adequate resources are allocated to survey and monitoring. Changes in circumstances such as policy or budget allocations will affect whether targets continue to be realistic and practically achievable.

The *Vision* should be viewed as a document which will evolve in the future according to perceived nature conservation needs. The initial "active period" is 10 years, but an annual review of habitat and species plans would be appropriate. This review would take into account new information about a particular resource and determine whether existing proposals need refining (e.g. the timing of individual actions) and also whether new proposals or new action plans (particularly further species action plans) are required. The annual review would also review progress to date and highlight major areas of activity for the coming year.

29.5.1 Objectives for monitoring and review

- To establish, in partnership with others, co-ordinated programmes that will monitor the progress and success of the objectives and actions within action plans, by 1999.

- To produce an annual statement on progress, recording the extent of key habitats and species and the level of community, commercial, nature conservation organisation, local authority, NGOs and landowner participation in biodiversity initiatives.
- To produce a complete review of progress every five years, in 2003 and 2008 and assess future actions to be undertaken.