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WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2021

Winchester City Council

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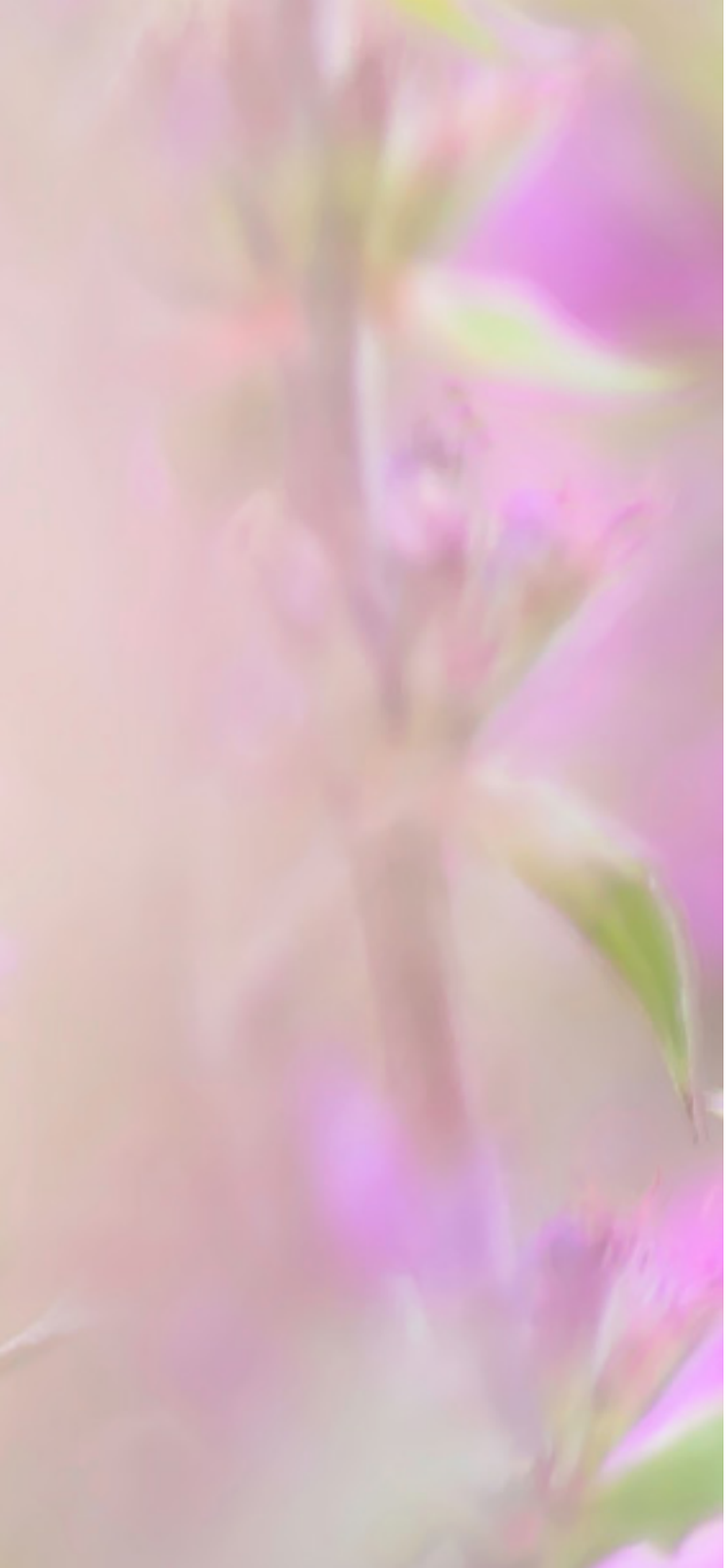


FOREWORD

Welcome to Winchester City Council's second Biodiversity Action Plan.

Our planet is currently facing a Climate and Ecological emergency. This Plan is a vital part of our Carbon Neutrality Action Plan, which was developed following the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in June 2019.

Biodiversity is such a wonderful asset to those of us who live, work and visit the District: partly through its ability to help reduce the impacts of climate change but also for the range of benefits it provides. Sadly, we are losing biodiversity at an alarming rate and the Council is determined to do what it can to help protect, enhance and restore it. We have therefore produced this action plan which sets out our strategic approach going forward.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped create this plan. During these difficult times, consultation has been restricted but we have held a series of presentations and invited feedback on our proposals and ideas. Indeed, one of the key aims of this document is to improve our communication with everyone who shares our passion. We must all act now to reverse the decline we are seeing in biodiversity across our District and beyond.

This document has purposely been kept succinct. It sets out the key facts and issues which have influenced our decisions. It has also been written in a way that can be easily updated.

Another key aim of this document is to provide ways for us to assess whether what we are doing is having a benefit. This is always difficult as many factors influence how well biodiversity is faring. However, each year the Council will undertake monitoring and survey work to allow us to make informed decisions.

We have set ourselves some tough targets:

- We aim to deliver 80% of the actions within each Annual Action Plan.
- We pledge to use all our influence to try and make biodiversity net gain a priority for new developments.
- We will strive to be an exemplar when managing our own habitats whether they be wildflower meadows, parkland or any future renewable energy sites.

I am delighted that we are once again driving forward our desire to put biodiversity at the heart of what the Council does and to ensure we achieve our wider aim of responding to the climate emergency.

Cllr Lynda Murphy
Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency
January 2021

"BIODIVERSITY IS ALL LIVING THINGS, FROM THE TINY GARDEN ANT TO THE GIANT REDWOOD TREE. YOU WILL FIND BIODIVERSITY EVERYWHERE,IN WINDOW BOXES AND WILD WOODS, ROADSIDES AND RAINFOREST, SNOW FIELDS AND SHORE"

(THE UK BIODIVERSITY STEERING GROUP REPORT 1995)

1. INTRODUCTION

BIODIVERSITY AND WHY IT MATTERS

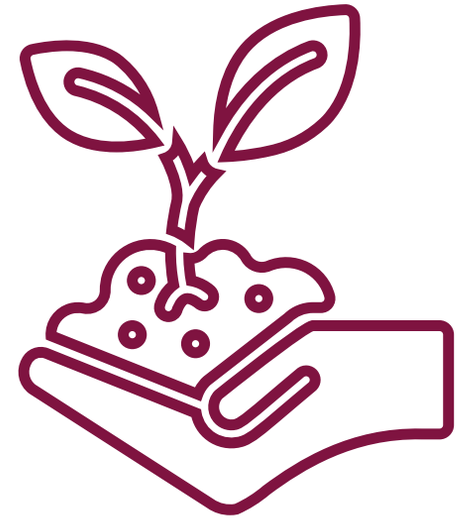
The variety of life on Earth and its biological diversity is commonly referred to as biodiversity. It includes all species of plants and animals and their interrelationships.

It is important as:

- It provides many of the essentials of our lives including oxygen, food, water, clothing, medicines and much loved landscapes.
- It contributes to climate stability, for example up to a fifth of all soil carbon in the UK is locked away in grassland (1).
- It is a key test of sustainability. If species and habitats are disappearing society is not making sustainable decisions.
- It boosts business with more than half the world's GDP (44 trillion) being highly or moderately dependent on nature (2).
- It provides nature-based solutions to help buffer us from natural disasters such as floods and storms.
- There is a moral right for people to have access to and benefit from the services biodiversity provides, as much as they have a right to expect access to health and education.
- Human health ultimately depends upon ecosystem products and services (3)
- Environments rich in wildlife benefit wellbeing through emotional, social and psychological benefits (4).

Winchester's biodiversity is therefore a tremendous asset. It gives the district a distinctive character, supports farming, forestry, tourism and other economic enterprises, provides many of our basic needs as well as being a wonderful environment for spiritual enjoyment, health and wellbeing.

In addition, the City Council has both a legal duty to consider biodiversity across all its functions to help halt the loss of biodiversity and seek opportunities to reverse the decline (See Appendix ii - List of current relevant legislation and documents).



(1), (2), (3) & (4) See Appendix iii on page 29


DESPITE ITS IMPORTANCE,
WE ARE LOSING
BIODIVERSITY AT
AN ALARMING RATE !
NOT ONLY IS THIS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE,
BUT ALSO AN ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND MORAL ONE.

2. THE NEED FOR AN ACTION PLAN

Local context

A large number of priority habitats (as defined by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and listed under Section 41 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 [as amended]) have declined in Winchester from 2006 to 2018 including the loss of:

- 19.2 % Lowland Calcareous Grassland,
- 44.9% Lowland Meadow,
- 12% Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland,
- 8.6% Wet Woodland and
- 69.1% Wood Pasture & Parkland.
- As of 2020, 20% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the Winchester district (our nationally important sites) are not in favourable condition (5).
- However, there have been some exceptions such as an 11% increase in the area of Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh.

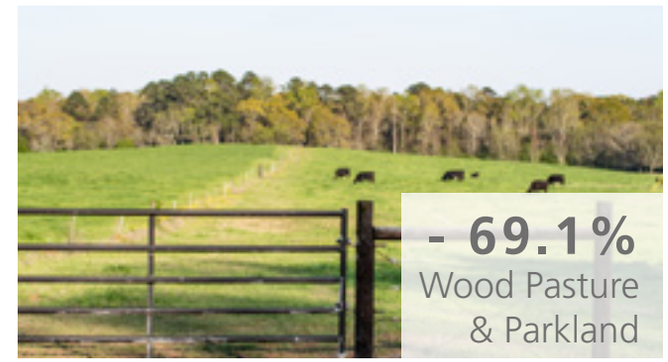
It is important to note that in 2018, 87.71% of land within the Winchester district was not designated (i.e. not a Local or National Nature Reserve, Wetland of International Importance, Special Area of Conservation [SAC], Special Protection Area [SPA], Site of Special Scientific Interest [SSSI] or Site of Importance for Nature Conservation [SINC]). In fact, 43.9% of priority habitat in the Winchester district was located outside these designations (5). This highlights the potentially significant impact that changes within non-designated sites (open spaces, gardens, farmland and development areas) could have on biodiversity, as our understanding and monitoring of these sites is considerably less than for the European, national and locally protected sites.

In addition, the full extent of priority habitats in Hampshire is not fully known and may never be fully known due to the dynamic state of our countryside and the difficulties of obtaining access to many areas. The Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) is working with its funding partners to improve information on priority habitat extent and condition through the Hampshire Habitat Survey Programme and from other survey data that becomes available. This information is used by HBIC to maintain a GIS layer mapping the extent of broad and priority habitats in Hampshire.

Similarly, many species are in decline across Hampshire. For example:-

- Great crested newt, skylark, grey partridge, serotine bat and dormouse are all declining and the number of species showing a decline in Hampshire increased from 35% to 48% between 2008 and 2018 (5).

Some declining species are highly specialist and only found in certain habitats but we are also now losing species which were historically widespread and common. This picture is being repeated nationally (6).

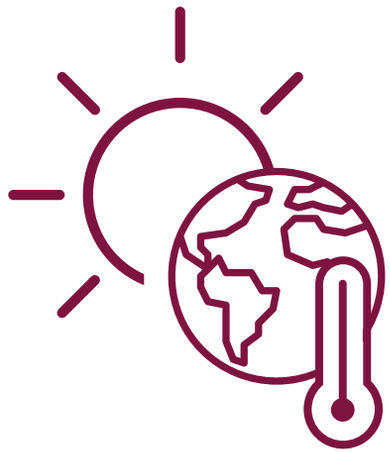


(5) & (6) See Appendix iii on page 29

2. THE NEED FOR AN ACTION PLAN

National Context

Biodiversity in the UK has been massively depleted by centuries of habitat loss, management changes, development and persecution. This loss to biodiversity has continued within the last decade due to agricultural management, inappropriate development, climate change, hydrological change, urbanisation, pollution, woodland management and invasive non-native species putting significant pressures on wildlife.



- There has been a 13% decline in average species abundance since 1970 (this has fallen by 6% over the last 10 years).
- There has been a 5% decline in average species distribution since 1970 (6). This is even more significant considering biodiversity had already declined substantially prior to collecting the 1970 baseline data.
- Biodiversity loss has also been recorded across broad categories of animals. For example, it is estimated that the total number of breeding birds in the UK fell by 44 million between 1967 and 2009 and the long term decreases in average abundance in butterflies (16%) and moths (25%) have not been slowed (6).
- Decline is also evident within entire habitats. Between 2014 and 2016, 62% of all UK sensitive habitats (almost 100% all England habitat) exceeded the recommended "critical nutrient load", above which they are at risk of harmful effects (6). Most semi-natural habitats and over two thirds of our wildflowers require low levels of nitrogen in order to survive (6).
- 97% of wildflower meadows were lost between the 1930s and 1984.
- Four UK high temperature records were broken in 2019 and there was a 12% increase in above average rainfall with significant flooding events (7).
- Phenology (the timings of natural events such as bird nesting season and when spring bulbs first appear) is also changing. For example, in 2019 the first leaves appeared on trees nearly ten days earlier than on average and dropped 12 days later than average. The changes in the timings of natural events can have a huge impact on biodiversity (7).
- We are seeing the impact of new pests and diseases sweeping through once common species. For example, ash dieback is now beginning to really impact on our landscape.

Our understanding of loss of biodiversity is compounded by the 'Shifting Baseline Syndrome' which is when each generation sees its experiences as the norm/baseline for understanding. This results in the loss in biodiversity being measured from each generation's memories and experiences, not the memories and experiences of previous generations. Therefore each generation does not have a true understanding of the changes which have occurred previously and what has been lost.

However, biodiversity loss is not inevitable and it is not yet too late to reverse this decline. There have been some incredible success stories both nationally and locally in recent times such as the recovery in numbers of otter, peregrine and water vole (Appendix i - Conservation Success Stories). In addition, public support for conservation continues to grow, with Non Government Organisation expenditure up by 26% since 2010/11 and a 40% increase in time donated nationally by volunteers since 2000 (6). There are also a number of exciting projects and policy commitments aimed at recovering the UK's wildlife including; nature-friendly farming, climate change mitigation schemes, legally binding limits for pollution emissions, habitat restoration, landscape-scale conservation projects to restore ecosystems, community engagement and citizen science, reintroduction schemes and management of non-native species.

Urgent and concerted efforts on a local, national and global scale have the potential to bring about transformation change. The City Council has an important role to play in helping to reverse the loss at a local level.

(6) & (7) See Appendix iii on page 29

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3. AIMS AND OUTCOMES

Aims and outcomes of the Winchester City Council Biodiversity Action Plan 2021

The Winchester City Council Biodiversity Action Plan 2021 (Winchester BAP 2021) sets the strategic direction for how Winchester City Council will respond to the need to protect, enhance and restore key biodiversity across the district with a particular focus on the Council's own operations. This document replaces the 2005 Winchester City Council Biodiversity Action Plan and will be reviewed annually, with a more substantial review undertaken in 2026.

It is primarily a document for Council use and focuses on those actions the City Council has direct control over and can deliver within its work programmes as there is a clear need for immediate action. It does not exclude the Council working in partnership with others and continuing to seek wider benefits. In addition, it is intended that the document will set an example for others by targeting our resources for the greatest benefit and demonstrating what can be done independently but which together makes a difference on the ground.

Tree Planting

Key Aims

The key aims for the BAP 2021 are to:

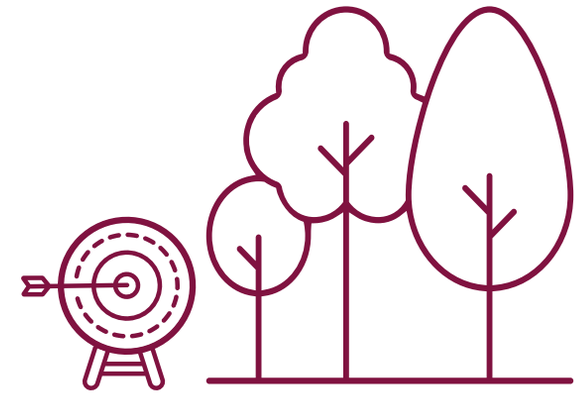
1. Provide a strategic direction for WCC in terms of how the Council will help halt the biodiversity loss and deliver enhancements to restore key biodiversity over a 5 year period as part of the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan;
2. Identify realistic and achievable short term and long term actions, focussing on:
   - **a.** Halting the loss of habitats and species;
   - **b.** Recreating habitat to restore biodiversity (including off-setting and biodiversity net gain);
   - **c.** Adaptation and resilience for species and habitats;
3. Provide clear evidence, support and input for key policy documents including the Local Plan and to support the Council's wider Carbon Neutrality Action Plan and Council Plan;
4. Monitor biodiversity decline and the effectiveness of the work undertaken to help address this;
5. Engage with others and effectively communicate the work of the council to a wider audience;
6. To strive to be an exemplar in the management of our own estate, helping to inspire others to do the same;
7. Identify opportunities for working in partnership to achieve maximum benefits; and
8. Deliver more within limited resources.

Outcomes

The key outcomes which will be delivered by this Plan are:

- Ensuring the Council meets its legal obligations in relation to protecting, conserving and enhancing biodiversity across all Council functions.
- Ensuring the Council is best placed to respond to national drivers such as Biodiversity Net Gain within the planning system and local drivers such as the Climate Emergency declaration.
- Demonstrating how the Council is delivering work which benefits biodiversity and helps deliver the Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP), thereby meeting its legal and moral duty to have regard for biodiversity. To include, but not limited to the priority actions identified in the CCAP ie
  - Plant at least 100 trees annually on Council land
  - Include provision of green/natural features within the Council's programme of play area improvements.
  - Deliver works which protect and support the Councils existing tree stock
  - Increase the number of wildflower meadows, grassland and wetland on council owned land.
- Providing sound and appropriate wording for key policy documents including the Local Plan and demonstrating delivery of that policy.
- Providing better understanding of the impact WCC has on delivering biodiversity gain.
- Prioritising limited resource to those areas where the City Council has greatest impact.
- Identifying annual actions and monitoring and reporting on work achieved.
- Delivering at least 80% of actions identified in the annual action plan.
- Raising awareness of the opportunities available to everyone to help make a difference on the ground.

The BAP will be a **'LIVING DOCUMENT'** and will adapt and change annually to take account of new information and to prepare and deliver an annual action plan.



(8) See Appendix iii on page 29

3. AIMS AND OUTCOMES

How it fits with other plans and policies and delivery mechanisms

The 2021 BAP is closely linked to a number of City Council key plans and strategies . In particular it supports the delivery of Council priorities of "tackling the climate emergency and creating a greener district" and "living well" as identified within the current Council Plan 2020 – 2025 (8).

In addition, the Winchester BAP 2021 is a subset of the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan and provides a focus on the biodiversity aspects of the Council's wider carbon neutrality work and feedback on progress made. It will also feed into other WCC documents such as:

River Itchen - near Martyr Worthy

- The Local Plan
- Tree Policy
- Green Infrastructure framework (currently in development)
- River Maintenance Action Plan (not yet written)
- Playing Pitch Strategy
- Housing Strategy

See Appendix ii - List of current relevant legislation and documents.

- WCC Position Statement on nitrate neutral development
  - Natural England published advice for Local Planning Authorities on 2nd June 2019 which sets out the requirement for all new development in the Solent region to achieve nitrate neutrality.
  - The Solent water environment is internationally important for its wildlife and is protected under the Water Environment Regulations and the Conservation of Habits and Species Regulations as well as national protection for many parts of the coastline and their sea.
  - Natural England's advice has outlined serious concerns about high levels of nitrogen and phosphorous input in this water environment with evidence that these nutrients are causing eutrophication (a process which causes excessive growth of green algae) which is having a detrimental impact upon protected habitats and bird species.

(8) See Appendix iii on page 29

The Winchester BAP 2021 will also feed into and help deliver actions within partner documents including:

Biodiversity Action Plan 2021
Winchester City Council

- **South Downs Management Plan**
  South Downs National Park Authority documents
- **Biodiversity Action Plan for Hampshire 1998**
- **South Hampshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2017 - 2034**
  PfSH (Partnership for South Hampshire)
- **PfSH South Hampshire Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan**
  (June 2019)
- **Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy**
  Bird Aware Solent
- **East Hants Catchment Partnership Action Plan**
- **Nature Improvement Areas and Biodiversity Recovery Plans**
  Newly emerging

Finally, the BAP will take account of and ensure the City Council properly implements national policy including the Environment Bill (draft at time of writing) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (Appendix i i - List of current relevant legislation and documents).

Ancient Tree

4. HOW WE WILL DELIVER THE PLAN

Existing work

The City Council has already taken significant steps to halt the decline in biodiversity within the district in the last few years. For example Winchester City Council has:

- Provided a dedicated resource based within the City Council whose primary focus is ecology and biodiversity.
- Secured the creation of a new nature reserve in Winchester at Barton Meadows (in partnership with CALA Homes and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust).
- Changed the management of sites owned and managed by the City Council to benefit biodiversity including Whiteshute Ridge, Abbotts Barton, West Hill Cemetery, Greenacres in Otterbourne and Hillier's Haven.
- Undertaken surveys of key sites to assess whether the changes in management are being effective and to better understand local populations of key species and habitats.
- Undertaken a series of surveys, as part of the reroofing works for council owned housing properties to ensure the Council is taking appropriate account of biodiversity during these works. This includes putting up bird boxes, bat boxes and bat access tiles.
- Created new areas of wildflower meadows including Magdalen Hill Cemetery (linking to the Butterfly Conservation land), Water Lane, St Giles Hill, Joyce Gardens, St Matthews Field, St Cross roundabout and Sainsbury's roundabout.
- Undertaken an annual tree planting programme to ensure that trees lost on Council land are replaced and to encourage additional tree planting where appropriate. In 2019/20 the City Council planted 590 trees and 20 different species including apple, oak, liquid amber, hawthorn, blackthorn and sweet chestnut.
- Assessed planning applications to ensure compliance with ecological legislation and policy including Biodiversity Net Gain and to comment on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).
- Ensured Local Plan Policy and guidance is in line with current and upcoming legislation, such as the Environment Bill and mandatory requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Recovery Strategies.
- Assessed and responded to requests and notifications under the Hedgerow Regulations.

Pyramidal Orchid from Barton Meadows
©Ellie Green

Top - Marbled White Above - Wildflowers Westhill cemetery
©Richard Smith

Delivery of the Plan

To deliver the work identified in the Plan, Winchester City Council will use the following mechanisms:-

- Focus on delivering work which benefits key habitats and species (see section 5 on page 18).
- Statutory functions such as planning (including the Local Plan), nitrate neutrality, biodiversity net gain, hedgerow regulations and tree protection.
- Ensuring the Council is compliant with relevant legislation e.g. re-roofing works and undertaking works to the Council's wider estate.
- Recognising the need for long term investment and commitment to biodiversity land management initiatives and projects, ensuring the council achieves long term benefits rather than short term gain.
- Managing council owned land to benefit biodiversity as well as delivering other initiatives.
- Undertaking specific projects such as land management initiatives, management of our existing tree stock and grassland creation.
- Across team working within the Council to increase awareness of the importance of biodiversity and ensure all teams support biodiversity where feasible.

- Partnership working e.g. working with Ideverde to deliver biodiversity benefits, continuing to support partnership such as the East Hants Catchment Partnership and Meon Valley Catchment Partnership and creating and supporting other relevant partnerships as and when required.
- Community led initiatives and volunteering e.g. North Pond Conservation Group, Bishops Waltham, tree planting, annual volunteer surveyors and grassland management.
- Wider engagement and communications e.g. biodiversity day, social media and community projects.
- Seeking external funding opportunities for works.

Community led initiatives

Species-rich grassland survey - Whiteshute Ridge

Chesil Tunnel bat roost checks

4. HOW WE WILL DELIVER THE PLAN

Annual Action Plan

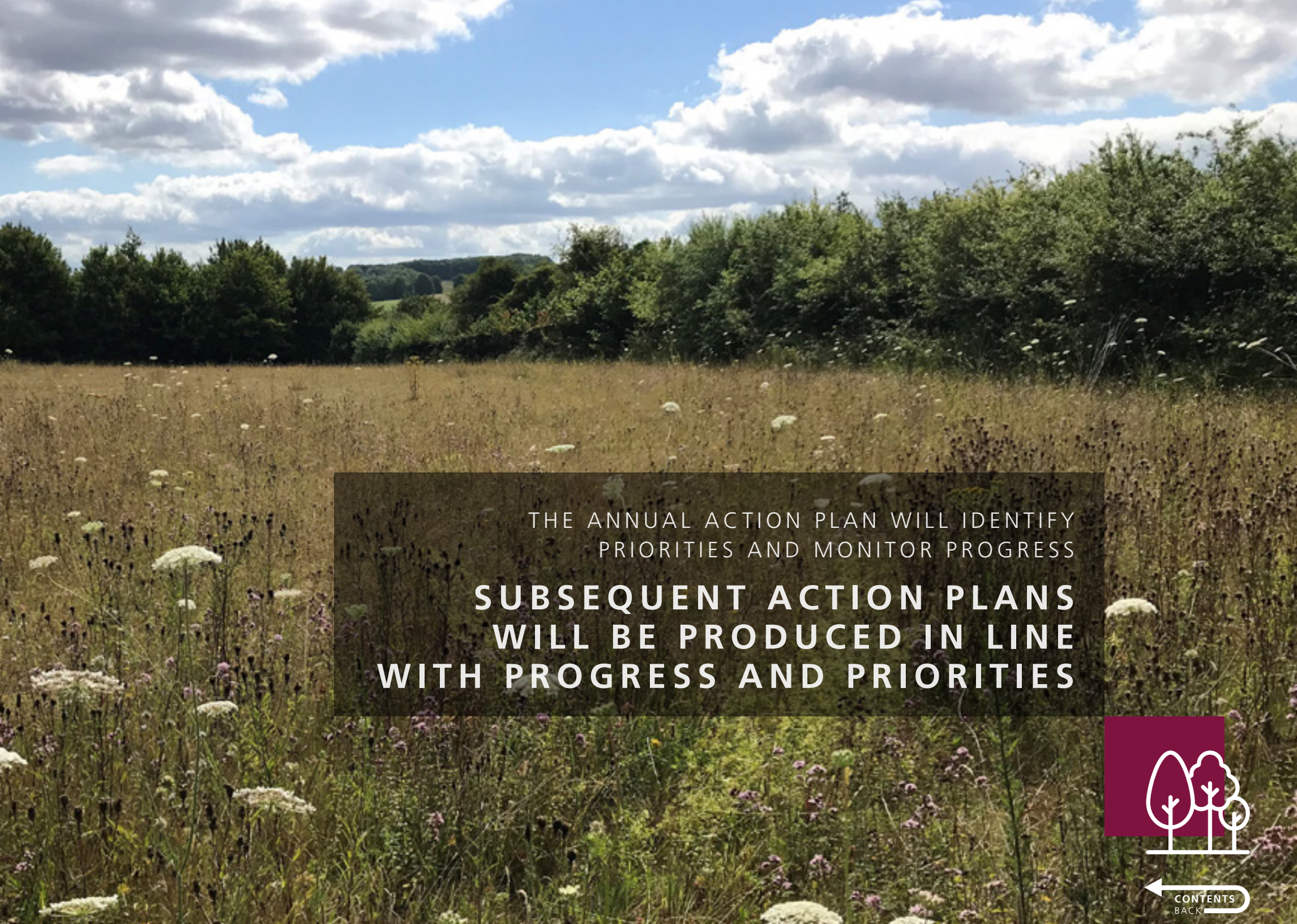
To bring the work together in an easily accessible form, an annual action plan will be written, actioned and reported on.

This annual action plan will identify priorities, align with existing funding and resources and allow the City Council to monitor its progress. Each year work will focus on the following key areas:

- Delivery of the Council's statutory function in relation to Development Management, Forward Planning, Enforcement; Hedgerow Regulations; and Tree Protection.
- Work associated with the wider council estate focusing on cross team implementation to deliver benefits, for example protected species work delivered by the New Homes Delivery Team; surveying and management of WCC tree stock delivered by the Natural Environment and Recreation Team and Neighbour Services and ensuring the council is compliant with wildlife legislation.
- Undertaking appropriate management of existing land holdings including key grassland sites, working with partners who manage land on our behalf and seeking new opportunities where feasible.
- Project delivery including habitat creation.
- Working with partnerships/volunteers/community.
- Engagement with residents, community groups, schools, formal groups, partners and others.
- Monitoring and surveying.

The annual plans will be stand alone documents available on line. The first Action Plan, which comes into effect in January 2021, can be found at the end of this document entitled Biodiversity Action Plan 2021 – delivering the action Year 1. The development of each subsequent action plan will be an ongoing process, with the new plan produced annually by the end of November.

Tree Surveying



THE ANNUAL ACTION PLAN WILL IDENTIFY PRIORITIES AND MONITOR PROGRESS

SUBSEQUENT ACTION PLANS WILL BE PRODUCED IN LINE WITH PROGRESS AND PRIORITIES

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5. THE SPECIES AND HABITATS WHICH WILL BE TARGETED FOR ACTION WITHIN THIS BAP

How these habitats and species were chosen

It is not possible to undertake works which benefit all species and habitats in Winchester, as this would be unrealistic working within the available resources. Rather the BAP identifies a number of key species and habitats which will provide a focus for our work. Four habitats and 22 species have been identified, chosen because they fulfil at least three of the following criteria:

- Species which have viable/significant populations within the Winchester District or priority habitats which are widespread across the District.
- Species or priority habitats which can be influenced by WCC (through site management, projects, statutory duties, partnership or engagement).
- Species or priority habitats which are rapidly declining through Britain and/or Hampshire and are therefore a conservation priority.
- Flagship species which are highly characteristic to Winchester and popular with the general public.
- Indicator species which reflect the state of an environment and/or indicate the diversity of other species within an area.
- Species or priority habitats which are surveyed regularly on WCC sites and/or those which there is data available for monitoring on a district or county scale.

Otterbourne wood

Key habitats

Four wildlife habitats have been included in the BAP as shown in Table 1. These have been kept as broad classifications in order to include a large variety of habitats without producing an extensive and complex list. This is crucial because declines are evident within many specific priority habitats as explained within section 2 above. Including the habitats in this way will allow for actions and projects from a site to landscape scale and will encompass a huge proportion of the biodiversity within the district. For the purpose of the BAP the following definitions will be used in respect of the four key habitats:

Species-rich Grassland

Unimproved or low nutrient input priority grasslands including Lowland Calcareous Grassland, Lowland Meadow, Lowland Dry Acid Grassland, Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture. These priority habitats are included in the Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan (HBAP) and are monitored as part of the HBIC annual report. Road verges of Ecological Importance (RVEI) and non-priority grassland habitats which are aimed at maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, such as newly planted wildflower areas, are also covered by this category.

Trees and Woodland

Individual trees and groups of trees planted, owned or managed by WCC as well as trees deemed to be of wider importance through the planning and TPO process.

Semi-natural broadleaved, mixed & yew woodland in line with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) UK BAP broad habitat type. This is all inclusive of ancient and non-ancient woodland, traditional orchards, lowland beech, yew woodland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, wet woodland, wood-pasture and parkland priority habitats. These priority habitats are included in the Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan (HBAP) and are monitored as part of the HBIC annual report.

Chalk Rivers

Rivers and streams that rise from aquifers in chalk.

Hedgerows and Arable Field Margins

Arable field margins are herbaceous strips or blocks around arable fields that are managed specifically to provide benefits for wildlife (JNCC). This includes margins sown with wildflowers for pollinators, to provide seed for birds or left as tussock grassland.

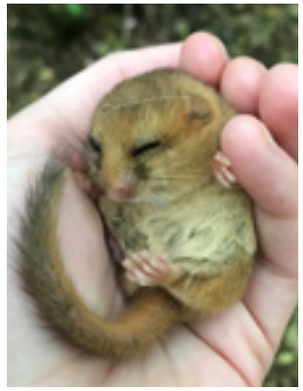
Hedgerows are defined as any boundary line of trees or shrubs over 20m long and less than 5m wide, and where any gaps between the trees or shrub species are less that 20m wide (JNCC). They should be at least 80% native woody species.

The four habitats included in the WCC BAP 2021 and the criteria they meet

HABITATS INCLUDED IN THE BAP	CONSERVATION ATTENTION					ZONE OF INFLUENCE				
	Present	Flagship	Indicator	Declining	Data/monitoring	WCC sites	Projects	Planning/ statutory function	Partnership	Engagement
Species-rich grassland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Woodland and key individual trees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chalk rivers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Hedgerows and arable field margins	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		

6. KEY SPECIES

Twenty two species are included in the BAP (table shown opposite) covering a range of taxonomic groups; which are representative of the various habitat types present in both rural and urban areas of the district. Bats are referenced as a group and include serotine; pipistrelles; brown long-eared; daubenton; barbastelle and bechsteins. Factsheets providing further detail on conservation status, distribution, threats and possible conservation initiatives are enclosed - Key Species and Habitats Factsheets.



Hazel Dormouse

Great Crested Newt & Smooth Newt

Stag Beetle

Bee Orchid

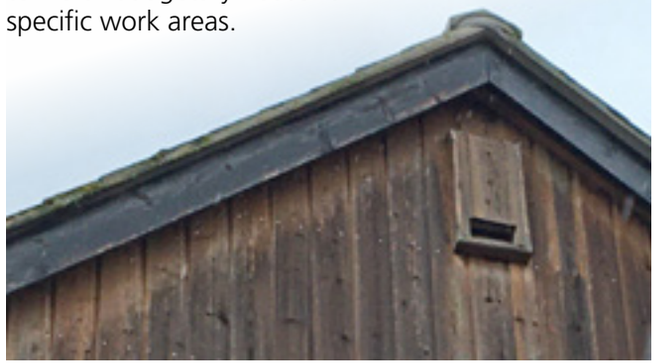
House Sparrow

SPECIES INCLUDED IN THE BAP	CONSERVATION ATTENTION					PRESENCE IN CHOSEN HABITATS AND GARDENS					ZONE OF INFLUENCE				
	Present	Flagship	Indicator	Declining	Data/ monitoring	Species-rich Grassland	Trees and Woodland	Chalk Rivers	Hedgerows & Field Margins	Gardens	WCC sites	Projects	Planning/ statutory function	Partnership	Engagement
Hazel dormouse	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		
Bats	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Water vole	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
Hedgehog	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Swift	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
House sparrow	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		
Skylark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓				
Grey partridge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓				
Great spotted woodpecker	✓	✓					✓		✓	✓	✓				✓
Great crested newt	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Slow worm	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		
Common lizard	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		
Common toad	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
White-clawed crayfish	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓						✓	
Stag beetle	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		
Southern damselfly	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓			✓				
Bumblebee	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				
Chalk hill blue butterfly	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓			✓	
Silver spotted skipper	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓					✓	
Stripped lychnis moth	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	
Green winged orchid	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓		
Bee orchid	✓	✓				✓					✓				✓

7. FUNDING

One of the key issues influencing the delivery of this plan is funding. Due to the current financial situation, particularly as a result of the Covid 19 virus, funding for biodiversity work is limited. However the City Council has an annual budget for delivery of key work and to deliver our statutory functions relating to planning, hedgerow regulations, trees and open space. Therefore the City Council will be initially focusing on delivering work which can be funded via existing budgets. However, the Council will seek additional funding or look to achieve greater benefits from existing resources going forward. This is likely to be in the form of sponsorship; partnership working, volunteering, community projects, grant applications and a constant review of the wider Natural Environment and Recreation Team budget to ensure existing budgets are used as effectively as possible.

To aid delivery, the annual Action Plan will include the anticipated cost of each work stream and also identify any external funding available for delivery. The ongoing Action Plan will also include potential cost/ funding to allow us to plan ahead in terms of budgetary needs for specific work areas.



Bat box installation on a new home
©Richard Smith

Swift
© Tim Norris at Hampshire Swifts

8. REPORTING AND MONITORING

Annual Action Plan

We have a target to deliver 80% of all actions in the annual action plan each year. Whilst this is an ambitious target, the Council needs to ensure it delivers these actions in order to help reverse the decline in biodiversity and reflect the Councils ambition to take action immediately.

All actions will be monitored and reported on an annual basis through an update to the Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, through the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan and through the quarterly finance and performance reporting process.

In addition, the Council will continue to develop its monitoring and survey programme in relation to impacts on biodiversity. This will include collecting and receiving data from the following sources:

1. WCC biodiversity surveys (including botanical; reptiles; invertebrates; mammals; bats and nesting birds on WCC houses).
2. Hampshire Swift (HS) surveys.
3. Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) annual reports.
4. HBIC Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) reports.
5. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT) annual reports on land they manage on the Council's behalf.
6. Additional reports and surveys from consultants as necessary.

WCC biodiversity surveys

Internal biodiversity survey work started in summer 2018 (when additional resource was secured) and has increased each year since. Surveys are currently undertaken by officers and volunteers at four sites (Whiteshute Ridge, West Hill Cemetery, Greenacres and Magdalen Hill Cemetery extension) which are specifically managed to benefit biodiversity. This now includes monitoring of botany, reptiles, butterflies and hazel dormice.

Public access to reporting and monitoring data

WCC biodiversity surveys (including data collected by volunteers, student projects, hedgehog project and records from the public) will be compiled in brief reports in December, at the completion of each Survey season. This will include methodology, results, conclusions and recommendations. This information will be available on request and will be shared with HBIC. However the headline data will be incorporated into the reporting mechanisms for the Climate Emergency Action Plan which will be more widely reported and published on the City Councils website.

In addition, the council will review how it gives residents and communities access to information via the website with the aim of regularly providing updates on delivery of actions and how biodiversity is faring across the district. This is likely to include map based data in line with current Government thinking.

However, it will not be possible to report on all Winchester BAP species and habitats as access to specific information is limited. We will be able to report on how effective our work has been and whether we need to amend and adjust our approach going forward.

> "WE WILL BE ABLE TO REPORT ON HOW EFFECTIVE OUR WORK HAS BEEN AND WHETHER WE NEED TO AMEND AND ADJUST OUR APPROACH GOING FORWARD."

9. SUMMARY

This document has purposely been kept short and succinct as the Council wishes to focus its energies on action. However, it is important as it sets out our aims and objectives in helping to change the increasing loss of the key resource of biodiversity. It is also a 'living document' in that it will continue to change and adapt to needs through the annual action plan.

It marks the start of our next phase of work, building on what we have already achieved and allowing us to focus on where we have the greatest impact. We understand that we are only one small part in turning the tide of biodiversity loss but that we have a key role to play. We accept that there is more needed than we alone can deliver, and that it is essential we set ourselves achievable and realistic targets which we deliver, rather than expecting too much and delivering too little.

We also look forward to continuing to work with others to make action happen on the ground. Biodiversity action is synonymous with partnership working and we will continue to play our part in delivering effective partnerships so that we can all achieve more.

Tree Planting

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TURNING THE TIDE OF BIODIVERSITY LOSS

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Ovington River

APPENDIX I

Conservation Success Stories

Otter

In the 1950s and 1960s otters underwent a sudden and catastrophic decline throughout Britain. By the 1970s, their range was vastly restricted and the otter had completely disappeared from most of the rivers in central and southern England in just 50 years. Although they continued to hold on in Scotland, Western Wales, the West Country and parts of East Anglia. The cause of this decline is attributed to the combined effects of organochlorine pesticides (OCP), pollution and habitat destruction, particularly the drainage of wet areas (9).

However, their future now looks much brighter. OCPs were banned in the mid-1980s and conservation action saw the creation of "otter havens" where river banks were planted-up and kept free from human disturbance. This gave otters the chance to spread back into many areas and by 2011 they had returned to every county in the UK (6).

Peregrine Falcon

Persecution in the Second World War and the use of OCPs led to the disappearance of the Peregrine Falcon across much of England. In 1961 there were as few as 385 pairs estimated in the UK and Isle of Man (10). However, the fortunes of the Peregrine have been much improved since the banning of OCPs and since they were given full legal protection as a schedule 1 species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Results from Bird Atlas 2007-11 show a 40% expansion in the breeding range since 1988-91, with the recolonization of many former breeding territories and a steady increase in the population with 1,437 breeding pairs found in the UK and Isle of Man in 2002 and 1,769 pairs in 2014 (10).

There are now "high profile" pairs that are breeding within urban centres such as Winchester, Salisbury, Bath and Bristol with nest-cameras bringing the antics of these birds to a new and broad audience.

The Peregrines moved to Winchester Cathedral in 2017 when their home of 6 years, the Police Headquarters on Romsey Road, was demolished. Following the installation of a raised nesting tray in 2018, three chicks successfully fledged the nest. This was followed by four chicks in 2019 and 5 chicks in 2020, an exceptional accomplishment for this species.

Water Vole reintroduction on the River Meon

Water Voles are a vital part of river ecosystems but preceding this project they were considered locally extinct within the River Meon. This project was funded and managed by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), Meon Valley Partnership, Environment Agency (EA) and HIWWT with support from Natural England (NE), Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), Hampshire County Council (HCC), landowners and the Wild Trout Trust's Pasco James memorial fund. The aim was to improve the habitat in and on the banks of the river for all wildlife, and in turn make the river more resilient to droughts and floods.

In 2013 the first water voles were released at Titchfield Haven. There have now been over 2833 water voles released across 20 sites from sea to source (11). This is the UK's largest water vole reintroduction within a river valley and the only project of its type to have ever taken place in Hampshire. The latest surveys show that water voles are now established on the river and are doing well.

Winchester SSSI's and SINC's

In 2018 80% of land designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the Winchester district was in a positive condition, either "Favourable" or "Unfavourable – Recovering". This is a 0.01% increase from 2017 and a 0.9% increase since 2006. The area of land in Winchester designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) increased by 4.2% from 6,484ha (623 SINCs) in 2005 to 6,758.49ha (691 SINCs) in 2018 (5). Part of the increase in percentage relates to West Hill Cemetery which achieved SINC status in November 2017 and is owned and managed by Winchester City Council. This is significant because it means that the area of priority habitat covered by non-statutory designations has increased.

Enhancements to sites owned by WCC

St Faiths Meadow is a great example of a site which has improved in condition. The meadow is managed by HIWWT on behalf of WCC and changed from 'unfavourable unchanged' from 2010 to 2012 to 'unfavourable recovering' in 2016. Two notable species and priority habitats (Purple Moor Grass and Rush pasture) which were absent in 2010 were also recorded in the meadows in 2016 (12). Another example where changes in management have improved the site condition is at Winnall Moors. In one particular area (The Sling) the number of plant species recorded during a NVC survey increased from 44 in 2006 to 88 in 2016.

WCC Wildflower Project

In the past 4 years WCC has successfully created new wildflower areas at eight sites including St Cross roundabout, Water Lane, Joyce Gardens, St Giles Hill, St Matthews Field in Weeke, Magdalen Hill Cemetery extension, Sainsbury's roundabout and a new nature reserve at Barton meadows. In addition a further 3 areas were created and the Parish Community Wildflower Project was launched in autumn 2020. The newly created areas have produced an array of beautiful flowers which not only benefit pollinators but also contribute to improving health and wellbeing within the district. The Magdalen Hill Cemetery extension was sown with seeds collected from Magdalen Hill down (a nature reserve managed by Butterfly Conservation) in order to provide well connected, high quality chalk grassland for some of our more rare butterflies. During the first WCC butterfly surveys (summer 2020) ten species of butterfly were recorded using this relatively small area, including small copper, small blue and chalk hill blue, proving just how successful and worthwhile this project has been.

The management of our biodiversity rich grassland sites such as Whiteshute Ridge, West Hill Cemetery and Greenacres in Otterbourne is also included in this project. The management is closely monitored and has been changed to ensure the greatest benefits for biodiversity. For example at Whiteshute Ridge a small number of HIWWT's British White Cattle now graze the grassland from October to March. This has proved to be an effective method of controlling scrub (such as Bramble) and has increased the diversity in sward height and flowering plant species. At West Hill Cemetery the management has been changed so that the grassland is cut twice a year and arisings are removed from site to reduce the nutrient input. This has similarly proved to be an effective way of managing this site and has resulted in an increase in slow worm from 2018 to 2019 and 2019 to 2020.

Swift boxes included in the WCC Re-roofing Programme

In partnership with the WCC Property Services Team and Hampshire Swifts (HS) we introduced the standard practice of providing and fixing a swift box on every WCC property re-roofed since December 2018. In Highcliffe there is now a total of 73 swift boxes (this includes boxes put up by WCC and private residents) of which 75% were occupied by nesting birds in summer 2020. This demonstrates the success of this work in enhancing biodiversity.

See Inserts - Key Species and Habitats Factsheets

(9), (6), (10), (11) & (12) See Appendix iii on page 29 - Swift image © Tim Norris at Hampshire Swifts

APPENDIX II

List of current relevant legislation and documents

Council documents

- The Council Plan
- Carbon Neutrality Action Plan
- Position Statement on Nitrate neutral development (https://www.winchester.gov.uk/planning/wcc-position-statement-on-nitrate-neutral-development)
- Local Plan
- Tree Policy
- Green Infrastructure framework (currently in development)
- River Maintenance Action Plan
- Playing Pitch Strategy
- Housing Strategy

National policy

- Environment Bill (draft at time of writing).
- Government 25 Year Plan 2018
- National Planning Policy Framework 2019
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
- Wildlife and Countryside Action 1981 (as amended)
- Countryside and Rights of Way Action 2000
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
- Hedgerow Regulations 1997

Partner documents

- South Downs Management Plan
- Hampshire County Council BAP
- PUSH (Partnership for Urban South Hampshire) South Hampshire GI Strategy 2017 - 2034
- PUSH South Hampshire Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan (June 2019)
- Bird Aware Solent - Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy.

APPENDIX III

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