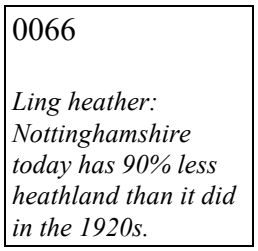
2. THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE APPROACH

2.1 Why a Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Nottinghamshire?

2.1.1 It is easy to think of biodiversity as being somewhere else, and someone else's problem. This is not true. In common with the rest of the UK, and indeed the rest of the world, Nottinghamshire is losing its wild species and habitats at an alarming rate, and something must be done if this trend is not to continue.

2.1.2 Nottinghamshire has its own special character, and its own unique variety of species and habitats. Our Local Biodiversity Action Plan attempts to reflect this local distinctiveness by setting priorities and objectives appropriate to the County, and reflecting the needs and wishes of local people.



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Ling heather: Nottinghamshire today has 90% less heathland than it did in the 1920s.

2.1.3 A large number of people in Nottinghamshire are involved in nature conservation, and over 1,000 of these are volunteers**.** This is reflected in the number and diversity of voluntary groups which exist. Perhaps the greatest strength of the biodiversity approach is its emphasis on partnership, and this plan has, by definition, a shared agenda for conserving the biodiversity of Nottinghamshire. It will provide a set of guiding principles and clearly defined targets which will allow voluntary groups, Local Authorities and Government agencies to work together towards common goals, enabling limited resources to be channelled to where they will be most effective.

Box 1: Conservation Volunteers - Examples

Members of voluntary committees
Tree wardens
Parish path wardens
Nature reserve wardens
Tree donors
People doing practical work
Bird recorders and ringers
Bat wardens
Badger advisors
Fundraisers

2.1.4 Conserving the County's biodiversity cannot be done by environmental groups in isolation. Every sector of society can have an impact on biodiversity, and biodiversity conservation therefore requires widespread involvement and support, particularly from land-owners and managers. The development and implementation of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan is a means by which this support can be harnessed.

2.2 The Main Elements of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan

2.2.1 The Nottinghamshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan is an ongoing process comprising a sequence of steps which form a long-term strategy. The process has been carried out in accordance with guidance produced by the UK Biodiversity Steering Group[1]. The main components are as follows:

1. Establish a plan partnership.
2. Agree broad objectives.
3. Review the County wildlife resource.
4. Establish a database.
5. Identify priorities within the national and local context.
6. Set specific targets and proposals for action.
7. Identify delivery mechanisms and sources of finance and advice.
8. Publish the plan and implement the agreed programme of action.
9. Establish a long-term monitoring programme to measure the effectiveness of the plan in achieving national and local targets.

2.3 The Plan Partnership

2.3.1 The core of the plan partnership is the Biodiversity Action Group (BAG), formed in 1995 from representatives of the following organisations:

The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
English Nature
The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
The Inter-authority Sustainability Working Group
Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre
Nottinghamshire County Council
Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust
The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

2.3.2 This group provided joint funding for the employment in 1997 of a Biodiversity Officer to coordinate the production of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, and has acted as steering group for the project. Many other organisations have also contributed to the production of this document by participating in the consultation, writing habitat and species action plans or providing information. A list of these organisations can be found in Appendix F.

2.3.3 The successful development and implementation of the Nottinghamshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan will depend on partnership between a wide range of organisations representing a variety of interests. All sectors of the community have a role to play in both the development and delivery of the objectives, although this role may come into effect at different stages of the process.

2.4 Principles and Objectives

2.4.1 Overall Goal

The ultimate goal of the Nottinghamshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan is to conserve and enhance the County's unique variety of wild species and natural habitats, and hence to contribute to the conservation of both UK and global biodiversity.

2.4.2 Underlying Principles

The principles underlying both the UK Biodiversity Action Plan[2], and this Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Nottinghamshire are as follows:

- Where biological resources are used, such use should be sustainable.
- Wise use should be ensured for non-renewable resources.
- The conservation of biodiversity requires the care and involvement of individuals and communities as well as governmental processes.
- Conservation of biodiversity should be an integral part of both central and local Government programmes, policy and action.
- Conservation practice and policy should be based upon a sound knowledge base.
- The Precautionary Principle (see Box 2 below) should guide all decisions where environmental considerations are involved.

2.4.3 Objectives

1. To conserve and where appropriate to enhance Nottinghamshire's unique variety of wild species and natural habitats, in particular:

    a) internationally and nationally important species and habitats;

    b) species and habitats that are characteristic of Nottinghamshire and its distinctive Regional Character Areas (section 3.4);

    c) species and habitats that are rare or threatened in the County.

2. To increase public awareness of, and involvement in, conserving biodiversity.

3. To contribute to biodiversity conservation on a national, European and global scale.

Box 2: The Precautionary Principle

The natural world is incredibly complex, and our knowledge of it, though improving all the time, is still extremely limited. Decisions concerning the environment therefore often have to be made in the absence of accurate information. This, coupled with the difficulty of applying economic values to environmental assets such as biodiversity, tends to lead to the undervaluing of natural resources.

The Precautionary Principle states that where there is a significant risk of environmental damage from an activity, the presumption should always be against it, even if conclusive scientific evidence is unavailable. The principle was adopted by the United Nations at Rio, and endorsed by the UK Biodiversity Action Plan[2] .

2.5 Reviewing the Resource and Establishing a Database

2.5.1 A review of biological records for the County was carried out by the Biodiversity Action Group members, in collaboration with other local and national experts. The aim of this was to determine which species and habitats are present in the County, and establish a draft list of priorities.

2.5.2 The main holder of species and habitat records for the County is the Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre. The Centre is currently entering all its records into a central database. We are fortunate in Nottinghamshire that a large amount of information on biodiversity has been collected over many years. However, in common with the rest of the UK, and indeed the rest of the world, we still do not know the status of many of Nottinghamshire's species, of which there are in excess of 10,000. There is an urgent need for funding for biological recording if we are to base future decisions affecting biodiversity on adequate information.

2.6 The Consultation Process

2.6.1 The basis for the initial stages of the consultation process was 'Action for Wildlife: Towards a Biodiversity Action Plan for Nottinghamshire'[3], a document produced by the Biodiversity Action Group. This described the background to the Biodiversity Action Plan approach, gave examples of species and habitat action plans, and contained the draft priority lists. The document was designed to be colourful, user-friendly, and appealing to a wide range of people. The first phase of the consultation process was in two parts: an initial approach to key organisations to gain their comments on the Biodiversity Action Group's approach to the project and to the draft lists; and a questionnaire-based survey giving individual people living in the County the chance to comment.

2.6.2 Consulting Key Organisations

If a Local Biodiversity Action Plan is to be successful, the process of writing and implementing it must involve as many organisations as possible. To this end, the Nottinghamshire plan has been produced under extensive consultation, with organisations representing a range of interests being invited to participate.

2.6.3 In July 1997, copies of the consultation document were sent out to representatives of key organisations inviting a response. To provide a means of structuring replies, each document contained a copy of the questionnaire used for the public consultation, although most organisations chose to reply by letter. The comments were utilised during the writing of this plan.

2.6.4 In November 1997, the annual Nottinghamshire Natural Environment Forum took place, to which organisations and individuals representing a range of interests were invited. The aim of the Forum was to take the consultation process a step further by discussing how the Local Biodiversity Action Plan is to be implemented. General discussions were followed by workshop sessions on community involvement, the planning system and the role of land-owners and managers. Many useful ideas and comments emerged, which will be used to guide the implementation of the plan. A list of organisations which were invited to comment, either by letter or by attending the Natural Environment Forum, can be found in Appendix F.

2.6.5 Each habitat and species action plan is produced in consultation with all those organisations given specific responsibilities under it. Once a draft plan is completed by the author, it is circulated to all relevant consultees for comment, and then edited for inclusion in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

2.6.6 The Public Consultation

One of the central objectives of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan is to raise public awareness of, and involvement in, biodiversity conservation. As a first step in this process, it is essential that species and habitats which are important to people living in the County are given a high profile in the plan. These can then be used as 'flagships' to gain public involvement and support for biodiversity conservation.

2.6.7 In June 1997, 10,000 copies of a leaflet advertising the consultation were distributed throughout Nottinghamshire. This was achieved through the public library system, through the memberships of Biodiversity Action Group organisations, and by all the Local Authorities through leisure centres, country parks etc. The leaflet explained the background to the Biodiversity Action Plan, and contained a request form for a free copy of the consultation document. At the same time a publicity campaign was undertaken, resulting in television and radio features and a number of articles in the local press. A total of 185 requests was received, the majority of which were from 'members of the public' as opposed to formal representatives of particular organisations.

2.6.8 Each respondent was sent a copy of the consultation document, containing a questionnaire and reply paid envelope. A copy of the questionnaire may be found in Appendix E. A total of 80 replies was received. These were from a variety of

respondents, ranging from those with specialist knowledge to those with a general interest in wildlife. Many were members of the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust or other conservation organisations, and so had an existing interest, as might be expected at this early stage of the process.

2.6.9 The results of the questionnaire were used to identify those species and habitats which respondents felt were characteristic of Nottinghamshire, and those which they thought should be priorities in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Respondents were also asked which species and habitats they thought were declining or increasing in the County. These results are summarised in Appendix E. Other questions were designed to find out what respondents felt should be done to conserve biodiversity, and to ask for ideas for community conservation projects.

4002

The badger was one of the species identified as a priority by consultees.

2.6.10 The results of the consultation were used during the preparation of this plan, and will influence the methods by which it is implemented. The 'flagship' habitats and species identified will be especially important as the basis for public awareness and involvement projects, and several already have their own habitat and species action plans. Very few species and habitats needed to be added to the priority lists as a result of the consultation, as most of those mentioned by respondents were already listed due to their conservation status.

2.7 Writing the Plan

2.7.1 Once the first phase of the consultation was over, the process of writing the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Nottinghamshire could begin. The format used for this plan is derived from the UK Biodiversity Action Plan[2] and Biodiversity Challenge[4], and follows guidance produced by the UK Biodiversity Steering Group[1]. It is designed to enable habitat and species action plans to be updated, and new ones added, as implementation progresses and information becomes available.

2.7.2 The UK Steering Group Report[5] sets out the format for habitat and species action plans, which is explained in more detail in sections 7 and 8. These plans describe the current situation, identify the main threats to the species or habitat, set targets for conservation and restoration, and outline the action needed to achieve these targets. The targets are in all cases designed to be ambitious but realistic. They must be measurable, and give specific timescales in which they are to be achieved. The setting of targets is a two way process, since national targets for species and habitats should be reflected locally, and local targets will inform decisions at a national level.

2.8 Priority Species

2.8.1 The biodiversity approach to conservation differs from the traditional one in that it does not concentrate only on species which are already rare. Species which are

common in Nottinghamshire may be rare or declining on a national or even global scale, and we have a responsibility to ensure that our populations of these species remain healthy. We must also safeguard common species to prevent them becoming rare in the future, especially those species which give Nottinghamshire's biodiversity its own special character.

2.8.2 The UK Biodiversity Steering Group Report[5] contains a 'Long List' of 1,250 species which are national priorities for conservation. Species which qualify under one or more of the following categories are included in this list:

1131

The skylark is declining rapidly throughout Europe, and is a UK 'Long List' species.

- threatened endemic and globally threatened species (endemic means unique to the UK);
- species where the UK has more than 25% of the world or appropriate biogeographical population;
- species where numbers or range have declined in the UK by more than 25% in the last 25 years;
- in some instances where a species is found in fewer than 15 10km squares in the UK;
- species which are listed in the EC Birds or Habitats Directives, the Bern, Bonn or CITES Conventions, or under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (section 4.9 below).

2.8.3 It is important to realise that this list is not a comprehensive record of species of conservation concern, and that several thousand other species that are believed to be nationally rare or threatened have not been included. More information is needed on the status of these species, which are mainly invertebrates, before they can be added. The Long List will therefore be reviewed as information becomes available, and **the fact that a species is not on the Long List does not necessarily mean that it is not nationally important.**

2.8.4 The list of species of conservation concern in Nottinghamshire (Appendix A) includes:

- all UK Long List species which are known to occur in Nottinghamshire;

- in the case of invertebrate groups where the Long List is incomplete, any nationally important species not included in the Long List;
- species which are rare or declining in the County;
- species which are extinct in the County, but which might be encouraged to return by habitat restoration and/or reintroduction;
- species which were identified by the consultation as being priorities for local people or characteristic of the County (most of these were already listed due to their conservation status).

2.8.5 Because the level of information available differs markedly between groups (birds are much better recorded in the County than spiders, for example), the criteria used to select county priority species varies. The detailed criteria used for each group are described in the appropriate section of the list in Appendix A.

2.9 Priority Habitats

2.9.1 The UK Biodiversity Steering Group Report[5] lists thirty-nine 'key habitats' for which costed action plans have been or will be prepared. These are:

- habitats for which the UK has international obligations;
- habitats at risk, such as those with a high rate of decline;
- rare habitats;
- habitats important for UK Long List species.

2.9.2 Of the national key habitats, fourteen occur in Nottinghamshire. In addition, the Biodiversity Action Group has identified several habitats which, although they do not feature on the national list, are important at a county level. The list of habitats of conservation concern in Nottinghamshire (Appendix B) contains:

- all UK key habitats found in Nottinghamshire;
- habitats which are characteristic of Nottinghamshire;
- habitats which are important for Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority species (see Appendix A);
- habitats which, although they often have little existing wildlife value, could become valuable given appropriate restoration, and therefore are important opportunities for biodiversity conservation.

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The ancient woodlands of Sherwood are internationally important, but only fragments of the original forest remain.

2.9.3 Eventually, it is envisaged that all priority habitats will have their own habitat action plans. It is hoped that in this way the requirements of the majority of priority species will be met. However, some species have very specific needs which cannot be catered for through habitat action plans, and for these species individual action plans are needed. The selection of the first eleven action plans to be produced was heavily influenced by the results of the consultation, in order to give species and habitats of importance to local people a high profile in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. These action plans will form the basis of public awareness and involvement projects, and will help to raise the profile of the initiative.

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