6. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

6.1 A Framework for Action

6.1.1 Local Biodiversity Action Plans, and the national and global initiatives of which they are a part, signify a whole new approach to nature conservation which will require far-reaching changes in policy and practice to be truly effective. The publication of this plan is therefore only the first step in a process which will develop and evolve at both national and local levels over time.

6.1.2 This plan is designed to provide a framework for biodiversity conservation in Nottinghamshire. It cannot provide management prescriptions for individual sites, or detailed work plans for organisations, but instead provides a set of clear priorities and objectives around which more detailed work programmes can be based. The ultimate success of the plan in achieving its objectives depends on shared ownership by all partner organisations, and their long term commitment to its implementation.

6.1.3 This is not designed to be a static document. The Biodiversity Action Group intends to carry out an annual review, so that new habitat and species action plans can be added and existing ones updated. The targets in all plans have timescales in multiples of five years from 2000 to be consistent with the UK Biodiversity Action Plan[1]. This will facilitate a major review and report to the UK Biodiversity Steering Group every five years.

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Rivers and streams are among the first habitats to have their own action plan.

6.2 Roles and Responsibilities

6.2.1 The Biodiversity Action Group

This will continue to be the steering group for the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, and will act as a central source of information and advice, a catalyst for fund-raising, and a mechanism for monitoring progress and carrying out reviews. It will continue to liaise with the UK Biodiversity Steering Group, and with neighbouring county biodiversity initiatives to ensure consistency, and will remain accountable to the wider Nottinghamshire biodiversity partnership through the annual Natural Environment Forum. The Biodiversity Action Group hopes to continue the Biodiversity Officer post into the implementation phase of the plan, to perform a co-ordinating role on behalf of the Group. One of the main roles of this officer will be to design and implement a monitoring programme to record progress against targets and action points.

6.2.2 Lead Agencies for Habitat and Species Action Plans

For each habitat and species action plan, an organisation has been nominated as lead agency. The main functions associated with this role are to provide a contact point for those with responsibilities under the plan, and to take a lead in its implementation. This means co-ordinating action between organisations and setting up working groups, etc., as appropriate. There may also be responsibilities under the monitoring programme.

6.2.3 The Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership

The partnership consists of all those organisations with agreed responsibilities under the plan. It will continue to widen as implementation progresses and cross-sectoral commitments are made. It is the responsibility of each of the partners to take forward their action points through their work, and to report progress to the Biodiversity Action Group. It is envisaged that many of the actions in the plan can be achieved through the partners' existing work, although some reassessment may be required. Co-ordination between the many organisations involved in nature conservation in the County will be facilitated by the plan. Partnerships between conservation groups, land- owners and managers, and local business and industry are vital if a truly cross-sectoral approach is to be achieved in the long term.

6.3 Relationship to Other Plans and Programmes

6.3.1 Statutory Development Plans

As described in section 4.8, Local Authorities have a key role in conserving biodiversity through the statutory planning process, and are required to take full account of nature conservation in preparing their development plans. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan[1] is official Government guidance, and as Local Biodiversity Action Plans become established, they are likely to have an increasingly important relationship with the planning process. Information generated both during the production of this document and as a result of monitoring will be useful during the review of development plans, and in turn statutory plans will be expected to make a significant contribution to delivering UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plan targets. Policies should be put in place in all Local, Structure and Unitary Plans to ensure that Local Authorities' responsibilities under both UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans are met. They should also be incorporated into Regional Planning Guidance.

6.3.2 State of the Environment Reports

Some Local Authorities are undertaking State of the Environment Reports on a regular basis in order to gather information about the condition of the local environment in a structured and accessible way. This can be helpful in identifying

environmental problems and in setting baseline information against which changes can be measured. The recording of progress towards Local Biodiversity Action Plan targets will provide the necessary monitoring element for nature conservation in this process.

6.3.3 Nature Conservation Strategies

There will inevitably be some overlap between Local Biodiversity Action Plans and Local Authority Nature Conservation Strategies. However, the crucial difference is that a Biodiversity Action Plan provides a framework for action by a wide range of organisations, while a Nature Conservation Strategy directs the work of a single local authority. Nature Conservation Strategies therefore have a key role in setting out how the authority will meet its Biodiversity Action Plan responsibilities. In time, it may be that the biodiversity planning approach will supersede the Nature Conservation Strategy at a district or unitary authority level, and that 'Biodiversity Action Programmes' will be produced, translating the Local Biodiversity Action Plan to a district level.

6.3.4 Regional Biodiversity Strategies

Whilst Local Biodiversity Action Plans are generally being produced at county level, several initiatives have already demonstrated the value of a strategic framework for a region[2]. Regional Biodiversity Strategies indicate what proportion of national targets should be met regionally, and where in the region they can best be delivered, hence bridging the gap between national and local initiatives. According to the UK Biodiversity Steering Group, only species and habitats of national priority should be considered at the regional level, with identification of local priorities being left to Local Biodiversity Action Plans[3]. It is essential that any strategy produced for the East Midlands is consistent with all relevant county plans, and local targets may need to be reassessed in the light of any future initiative.

Box 3: Levels of Biodiversity Planning:

The following terms are recommended by the UK Biodiversity Steering Group:

National: '*Biodiversity Action Plan'*

Regional: '*Biodiversity Strategy'*

County: '*Local Biodiversity Action Plan'*

District: '*Biodiversity Action Programme'*

6.3.5 Other Non-Statutory Plans

There are many types of plan which influence nature conservation, including Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs), Indicative Forestry Strategies and Community Forest Plans. These plans are usually produced by a single organisation to guide its own action, and are crucial to the delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan targets. Those involved in writing and revising plans need to be aware of the targets and responsibilities identified in UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans and consider how their own plans may contribute to the achievement of biodiversity objectives and *vice versa*. Consistency of approach is essential to ensure that resources are used as effectively as possible.

6.4 Relationship to Agri-Environment Schemes

6.4.1 This Local Biodiversity Action Plan cannot in itself result in any new systems of grants or incentives for those managing land for nature conservation. Instead, it will rely on existing schemes to deliver national and local biodiversity objectives. There are a range of schemes offering grants to land managers for conservation, and the most influential of these in Nottinghamshire are the Countryside Stewardship and Nitrate Sensitive Areas Schemes, administered by the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA) on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF).

6.4.2 The Countryside Stewardship Scheme operates over the whole of the County. Payments are made for the creation and/or management of particular habitats, depending on the geographical area. Targets in Nottinghamshire at the time of writing include waterside areas in the Erewash, Soar and Idle valleys, field boundaries, and countryside around towns and cities. Target areas are set by a multi-disciplinary group at county level, and both UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plan partnerships are represented on this group by member organisations. Hence it is hoped that the setting of target areas will take Biodiversity Action Plan objectives into account, and will play a significant part in their delivery.

6.4.3 The Nitrate Sensitive Areas Scheme covers four areas on the Sherwood Sandstone aquifer. It provides opportunities for farmers to receive payments in return for voluntarily helping to protect valuable supplies of drinking water by reducing nitrate leaching. While the main aim is to reduce pollution, the Premium Arable and Premium Grass options involve the conversion from arable and intensive grassland into extensive grassland, and the maintenance of environmental features. The highest payments are for native species-rich grassland and management for wildlife, and therefore this scheme has much potential for delivering biodiversity objectives.

6.4.4 A range of other organisations provide grants for habitat management and creation, including Local Authorities, English Nature and the Greenwood Community Forest. All of these schemes could potentially deliver Biodiversity Action Plan objectives,

and it is important that the organisations concerned consider how this might be achieved. In particular, one of the most important generic actions for biodiversity

identified in section 5 is to explore the strategic use of such schemes in creating and restoring habitats in areas which link or buffer existing sites, building on the experience of the pilot Habitat Restoration Scheme in Sherwood Forest (section 4.4.4).

6.5 Public Involvement: Local Agenda 21

6.5.1 The conservation of biodiversity is a crucial aspect of sustainable development, and it is for this reason that Biodiversity Action Plans are an integral part of the Agenda 21 process. Local action for biodiversity will be encouraged through the process of public participation, involvement and ownership developed by Local Agenda 21, and a co-ordinated approach across all partners will be encouraged by the Biodiversity Action Group, guided by the priorities and issues identified in this plan.

6.5.2 A large number of initiatives are under way in Nottinghamshire to raise awareness of environmental issues and encourage local action. Many of these include a wildlife component, and can play a significant role in meeting biodiversity objectives. In addition, this plan provides an opportunity for a more focused strategy to achieve specific objectives, and a series of both county-wide and community projects will be initiated by the plan partnership as a result. The use of the 'flagship' species and habitats identified through the consultation process is one way in which action for biodiversity can be promoted, and habitat and species action plans also provide a means of inviting involvement. Surveys of easily identifiable species, practical site-based projects and publicity campaigns promoting individual action may all result from habitat or species plans.

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The water vole is very popular, and a county survey would be an excellent way to get people involved in its conservation.

6.6 Data Collection and Monitoring

6.6.1 There is an urgent need to establish an agreed baseline set of data for key aspects of biodiversity in Nottinghamshire (as in the rest of the UK) and to monitor this over time. A Local Biodiversity Action Plan, by identifying priorities and targets for data collection and monitoring, enables resources to be targeted to where they are most effective. The focus for biological data collection in the County is the Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre (NBGRC), which will take the lead in this process, supported by many other organisations. A nationwide network of interlinked county record centres is being set up to facilitate national biodiversity monitoring, and the NBGRC is in the second tranche of centres to be included in this scheme. However, as has been said elsewhere in this plan, the system for handling biodiversity information in the County is at present seriously underfunded, and unless this situation changes, the provision of the data required for (for example) land use planning decisions, sustainability indicators, State of the Environment Reports, and the successful implementation of this plan will be extremely difficult.

6.6.2 There are a number of national, regional, county-wide and local programmes that can provide information for biodiversity survey and monitoring in Nottinghamshire, and it is essential that all the organisations involved in monitoring make information available through the NBGRC. In addition to this, monitoring schemes for action plan species and habitats which are not already monitored will need to be initiated.

6.6.3 A biodiversity monitoring scheme should include the ability both to monitor the quality of the environment generally, and to quantify the extent of perceived threats by measuring their impact. Possible threats may include climate change, changing agricultural systems or development. Where populations or habitats are very small, restricted, or fragmented, the risk of extinction from threats is increased, and although the impact of the loss of a single site may apparently be insignificant, the cumulative effects of land use change are very great. A system for monitoring the long-term effects of specific threats on biodiversity should be a priority, and is particularly important for local authorities, who need to monitor the effects of their policies on biodiversity as an indicator of sustainable development.

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However invertebrate groups are generally less well recorded than birds or mammals.

Box 4: Current Biodiversity Monitoring - Examples

Nationwide (UK or Great Britain)
BTO/RSPB/JNCC Breeding Bird Survey
Butterfly Conservation 'Butterflies for the New Millennium' Atlas
The National Bat Monitoring Programme
Botanical Society of the British Isles 'Atlas 2000'
JNCC Invertebrate Site Register

Nottinghamshire
The County Audit (Phase 1 habitat survey)
The Nottinghamshire Heathland Inventory
Reptile and amphibian distribution surveys

6.7 Resource Implications

6.7.1 The UK Biodiversity Action Plan[1] commits the Government to producing costed action plans for key species and habitats. Evaluating the costs and benefits of biodiversity is a very complex and rapidly evolving field, and a number of different approaches may be adopted. The Biodiversity Action Group awaits clear government guidance, and once this is forthcoming, it is envisaged that all Nottinghamshire habitat and species action plans will be costed.

6.7.2 What is becoming clear from the work being done nationally, however, is that choosing the route of conservation often saves money for the public purse and society as a whole.

6.7.3 The 'marketed benefits' of biodiversity are relatively straightforward to value. The value of timber generated from the expansion of native woodlands, for example, or the value of wetlands in waste water treatment systems. Wildlife is increasingly being recognised as an important output of rural land use, and this has already resulted in environmental schemes which have the added benefit of supporting rural employment and income. A further form of marketed biodiversity is 'green tourism', and studies of the value of this to local economies have revealed that biodiversity can support them in tangible and important ways[4].

6.7.4 Economists continue to grapple with the difficulties of evaluating non-market benefits, such as the value of an attractive, wildlife-rich countryside to a community, or the value of woods and hedges in preventing soil erosion. Because environmental benefits such as these are difficult to value in traditional economic terms, they are often ignored or undervalued when decisions affecting them are made. This makes it all the more important that the Precautionary Principle (section 2.4) be adopted in all decisions where environmental considerations are involved.

6.7.5 This action plan makes it clear that much greater effort is needed if we are to stop and reverse the decline in Nottinghamshire's biodiversity. This will inevitably mean an increase in investment in nature conservation, although major gains can often be achieved at a relatively modest cost, or through the redirection of existing funds. The high profile of the global biodiversity initiative makes this plan an excellent platform for raising funds, and it will provide a means of ensuring that resources are targeted to maximum effect.

6.7.6 Too often, however, public expenditure is used to support activities that undermine biodiversity, leaving considerable problems which require further expenditure to address. Pursuing a more balanced, sustainable approach would therefore bring substantial savings. As stated in the first edition of 'Biodiversity Challenge'[5]:

'Some aspects of conservation do require greater effort and expenditure. However, the biggest threat to wildlife and the environment continues to come from publicly funded land-use and infrastructure programmes that fail to take sufficient, or accurate account of their consequences.'

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