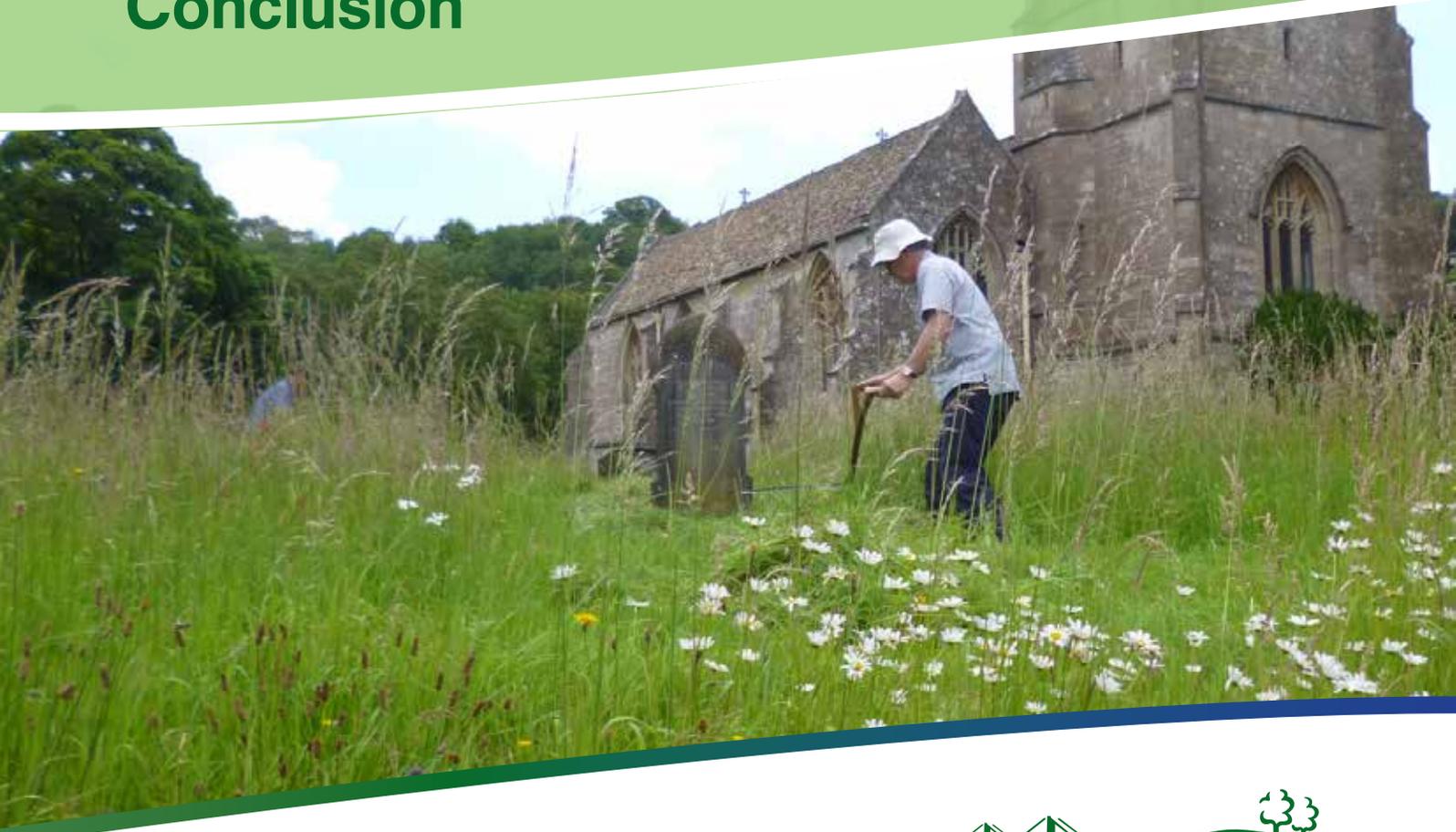




Biodiversity Action Plan 2006-2015

Conclusion



Introduction

The UK signed up to the international convention on biodiversity in 1992 and the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) was the delivery mechanism chosen. A document was written by South Gloucestershire Council with the full involvement of a large biodiversity group and other outside partners.

The plan contained a list of priority species and habitats which will remain as a material consideration in the planning process. In addition 186 actions were drawn up, of which many have now been completed. The plan was a useful way to prioritise conservation activities for key species and habitats and to help different groups to work together. Despite these successes biodiversity has continued to decline in South Gloucestershire and across the UK (State of Nature 2014).

Biodiversity loss is now considered by many leading scientists to be one of the biggest threats to humanity.

It is widely acknowledged that biodiversity needs to be tackled at a much bigger, landscape scale (Making Space for Nature, Lawton); with local projects contributing. The Biodiversity Action Group is currently looking at parish actions that can contribute to England’s challenging habitat targets (Biodiversity 2020 DEFRA).



Using a pole lathe at Three Brooks LNR

“

A high quality environment is critical to South Gloucestershire Council and the action plan helped highlight key actions for wildlife. The plan and its delivery would not have been possible without the dedication of local conservation volunteers and wildlife surveyors.

”

Colin Hunt, Lead member for Planning (SGC)

“

If South Gloucestershire is to remain “a great place to live and work” everyone needs to continue to recognise the great environment which contributes so much to that greatness. More and more we are realising that you can’t fence off precious sections of our countryside but must involve everyone in recognising and valuing where we live. Planning for the environment can be at a local level as long as we all have the same focus for our efforts; wildlife does not recognise parish, county or national borders. We must keep our wonderful environment at the forefront of our thinking as we move forward in planning how South Gloucestershire can maintain its vitality in years to come

”

Fen Marshal, Chair of Biodiversity Action Group (BAG)



South Gloucestershire BAP summary of progress 2006 – 2015.

South Gloucestershire BAP Priority Habitats, UK Priority Species and Local Species	No. of BAP actions completed	No. of actions with some progress	No. of actions no information reported	Total
Habitats				
Arable farmland	3	2	2	7
Broadleaf woodlands	7			7
Hedges and field margins	6	1		7
Old meadows and pastures	8	2		10
Orchards	8			8
Ponds, rhymes, rivers and water bodies	5			5
Saltmarsh and coastal floodplain	4	2	1	7
UK priority species				
Bullfinch	5			5
Dormouse	4	1		5
Great Crested Newt	3	1	1	5
Lesser Horseshoe bat	3		1	4
Song Thrush	5	1		6
Tassel Stonewort	3	3		6
White-clawed Crayfish	5	1		6
Hedgehog	3	2		5
Local species				
Adder's Tongue Spearwort	3			3
Barn Owl	4	1		5
Bath Asparagus	2	1		3
Bithynian Vetch	3			3
Glow Worm	3	1	1	5
Slow-worm	3	1		4
Wild Service Tree	3			3
2011 interim report	70	30	19	119
Total	93	20	6	119

The table above illustrates that:

78% of BAP actions are complete or significant progress has been made

17% of BAP actions have some progress

5% of BAP actions have no information reported.

Note: Where an action has been categorised as red it should not be assumed that no action has taken place. In a number of cases information against actions has not been forthcoming. It should also be noted that we are assessing whether the actions have been achieved, not how successful they have been in improving the conservation status of a particular habitat or species.

South Gloucestershire Council would like to thank all the organisations and volunteers who have helped to achieve the actions set out in this BAP.

Case studies

Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) is a newly formed community led organisation which aims to deliver practical river restoration in the Bristol Avon catchment, which will contribute to many of the BAP river actions. Through promoting an ecosystem-based approach, they aim to re-connect communities to their rivers and help river users and lovers better appreciate and improve their local rivers and streams. The water framework directive listed the Bristol Frome as bad and from 2014 BART is working with the Environment Agency and others to improve conditions on the South Gloucestershire Bradley Brook and Ladden Brook tributaries. www.bristolavonriverstrust.org

Inglestone and surrounding commons are being restored to favourable condition with funding from Natural England through their Higher Level Stewardship agreement. As well as contributing to the grasslands actions; ponds and wetlands are being restored with partners including the Millennium Seedbank at Kew and Bristol Zoo benefiting Adder Tongue Spearwort and Tassel Stonewort. Volunteers have been trained to help monitor Great Crested Newts at Inglestone as well as the Three Brooks reserve in Bradley Stoke.

Orchards have been one of the most successful habitat actions with many communities, parishes and schools now with their own orchard and/or apple day. In 2012 Sarah Wells, a fabulous volunteer, went through old parish maps highlighting the 90% of orchards that have been lost.

The Forgotten Landscape is an exciting Lottery funded landscape project based along the Severn estuary 2015-2018. The project will deliver actions from the BAP for orchards and saltmarsh as well as great crested newts and additional actions for water vole.

www.aforgottenlandscape.org.uk

White clawed crayfish are now assumed to be extinct from South Gloucestershire. The population was struggling with non-native signal crayfish and disease. Bristol Zoo and partners' removed some from the Frome which went into a breeding and rehoming programme.

B-lines is a landscape scale grassland restoration project. Buglife and Avon Wildlife Trust are working together locally to link up key wildflower routes for pollinating insects contributing to the grassland BAP. www.buglife.org.uk
Since 2008 14 nominated council road verges have signs



Abbotswood Apple Day 2015

“ Reversing the decline in biodiversity is a huge challenge, given the scale and pace of loss of nature and wild spaces – even more so for our region, which has one of the fastest-growing human populations in the UK, with the consequent development pressures. Notwithstanding the scale of the problem, safeguarding our natural environment is a challenge we must meet. As well as having its own intrinsic value, nature provides us with everything we need for our own survival, wellbeing and economic prosperity ”

Taken from Avon Wildlife Trust's Vision (AWT)

“ Successful wildlife conservation needs to be based on robust science. BRERC relies on many talented and dedicated volunteers to continue to augment our baseline data on which the BAP was originally produced. ”

Bristol Regional Environmental Record Centre (BRERC)



Surveying a wild flower meadow at Wapley Bushes LNR, Dodington

and management plans to ensure the grassland and species such as glow worms are well cared for. This has been another of the very successful actions with these verges now abundant in wildflowers and new partnership working with the Greater Bristol Pollinator project www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/getbristolbuzzing

Avon Bat Group are carrying out extensive and ongoing research into roost sites across the area, and most especially for horseshoe bats around Tortworth and a range of bat species within the Avon Valley Woodlands Local Nature Reserve near Hanham. www.avonbatgroup.org.uk

The Dormice on Your Doorstep project delivered many of the BAP actions, educating volunteers and landowners about dormice and surveying many hedgerows and woodlands finding some new populations but highlighting an overall scarcity.

Hedgehog numbers in the UK are sadly plummeting with a national campaign to help them www.hedgehogstreet.org. The Yate based volunteer rescue centre continues to be as busy as ever helping injured and sick animals www.hedgehogrescue.co.uk.

View of the Avon Valley near Hanham



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At a personal level I think the BAP is a good tool as a reminder that we need to be proactive and keep an eye on things, not just the target species. I would like to see it continue in some form into the future, to ensure continuity. There's too much short-termism in my view where wildlife is concerned.

Ken Anstey,
South Glos Biodiversity Action Group (BAG)
and Avon Bat group

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“

Even with the emphasis moving away from them nationally, BAPs have a crucial role in conserving wildlife at a local level, not least because they provide a mechanism for planning authorities to develop policies to protect a variety of species of flora or fauna – such as glow-worm, for example - which do not have legal or national status and which might otherwise slip through the net.

Dave Willis,
South Gloucestershire Council Ecologist

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Many in the farming community of South Gloucestershire have been going the extra mile to protect and enhance the countryside in which they farm for decades. Natural England's new Countryside Stewardship scheme is open and we hope the transition will be smooth allowing new and existing applicants to continue delivering good environmental practices, alongside the production of food.

South West Farming
and Wildlife Advisory Group

”

Chittingen Warth



“

More emphasis should have been put on habitats in the BAP. However because most of the habitats are in private ownership the whole process of protection, restoration and creation is dependent on forging relationships with those landowners. At the same time economic constraints have meant that the field officers workload has been spread wider so they are unable to devote as much time and resources as previously. So for the future the B.A.P. needs:

1. To be more focused
2. To develop a system whereby community or parish based volunteers talk to landowners.
3. Special interest groups should be brought together and develop a network/system to inform each other and work together.
4. The professional agencies need to work with well-informed amateurs who often have greater specific expertise

**Richard and Pauline Wilson,
South Glos BAG and Southwold AWT**

“

It was a pleasure to work with so many knowledgeable and dedicated people and some wonderful things have been achieved. However the scale of public support, understanding and protection needed was always going to be massively aspirational. It is deeply sad that species are currently going extinct from South Gloucestershire.

**Sally Pattison,
South Gloucestershire Council
Biodiversity officer**

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“

We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.

Anon

”

South Gloucestershire has a rich history in orchards - though many today have been lost.



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