



Wild Somerset

The Somerset Biodiversity Strategy
2008 - 2018

*Prepared by
the Somerset Biodiversity Partnership
(May 2008)*

The organisations below are amongst the members of the Somerset Biodiversity Partnership



The Blackdown Hills
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Forestry Commission



**Environment
Agency**



**EXMOOR
NATIONAL PARK**



Contents

1. Introduction	Page 4
2. The value of biodiversity	Page 5
3. An overview of Somerset's biodiversity	Page 6
4. An overview of the threats to Somerset's biodiversity	Page 6
5. Purpose of the strategy	Page 7
6. A biodiversity and natural environment vision for Somerset	Page 8
7. Key objectives for biodiversity conservation in Somerset	Page 8
8. Reporting and monitoring	Page 24
9. Getting involved	Page 24
10. Implementation Plan	Page 25
Appendix 1 Relevant policy and legislative context:	Page 36
Appendix 2 Current membership of the Somerset Biodiversity Partnership	Page 37

The Somerset Biodiversity Partnership is most grateful to the numerous organisations and individuals who have helped to create this document. Particular thanks are due to James Nightingale of Somerset Wildlife Trust for drawing together the initial draft and also to Natural England for kindly providing grant aid.

1. Introduction

Local biodiversity is facing an increasing onslaught. Lining up on one side is climate change, with higher temperatures set to push species to the edge of their ranges and coastlines squeezed as sea levels rise. On the other side are land use changes and an increased rate of new development, set to engulf natural habitats.

Fortunately, there is a heightened awareness of local biodiversity and the need to care for it. Many more people are taking action on an individual or community level and biodiversity is becoming a significant theme across many areas of local government. From the rescue by local people of a small copse at Sparkford, through the declaration of a vibrant network of Local Nature Reserves around Taunton, to the creation of the expansive Avalon Marshes wetland near Glastonbury, there are many inspiring examples of good practice.

But there is still an enormous challenge ahead if we are to avoid a local biodiversity crisis and the need for a strategic approach to conservation has never been stronger. This document sets out the essential components of such an approach and the hope is that it will attain widespread support.

Biodiversity and Biodiversity Action Plans

Biodiversity (short for biological diversity) is often defined simply as “the variety of life”. It is also sometimes used to refer to the totality of living things in a particular area or region. All living organisms ranging from the largest mammals and trees to the smallest invertebrates and fungi contribute to biodiversity.

Biodiversity is, everywhere, organised into three levels. At the top are the ecosystems, such as forests and lakes. Next are the species, composed of the organisms in the ecosystem from butterflies to eels. At the bottom is the variety of genes making up the heredity of individuals that compose each of the species.

Over 150 nations agreed to protect biodiversity by signing the Convention on Biological Diversity at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan sets out national targets for the conservation of our most important and threatened “priority” species and habitats.

The Somerset Biodiversity Strategy and associated Local Biodiversity Action Plans - comprising Species Action Plans and Habitats Action Plans - help turn those national targets into action, alongside meeting identified local biodiversity conservation priorities.



2. The value of biodiversity

What are Ecosystem Services?

Provisioning services

- foods (including seafood and game) and spices
- precursors to pharmaceutical and industrial products
- energy (hydropower, biomass fuels)
- supply of oxygen

Regulating services

- sink for excess carbon dioxide and climate regulation
- waste decomposition and detoxification
- nutrient cycling
- natural flood defence

Supporting services

- purification of water and air
- crop pollination and seed dispersal
- natural pest and disease control

Cultural services

- cultural, intellectual and spiritual inspiration
- recreational experiences (including ecotourism)
- scientific discovery

Preserving services

- genetic and species diversity for future use
- protection of future options in an uncertain world

Footnote: In making use of these services it is important to apply the principle of "wise use" and avoid conflicts with other sustainability objectives. For example, the mass growing of bio fuel for transport is not compatible with local food production and has brought about the destruction of rainforest biodiversity.

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, and the biodiversity it supports, is vital because of its inherent value and our moral obligation to preserve other species. An environment rich in biological diversity also provides us with so many benefits (often known as "Ecosystem Services" - see box) that we often take for granted.

We rely on a diversity of living things for our food, our medicines, our homes, our clothes and our way of life. There is also plenty of evidence to show that having access to natural green space is an important component of our quality of life, improving mental and physical wellbeing and helping to tackle serious modern day problems such as stress, obesity and social isolation.

There are economic benefits, too. For example, natural spaces and views of natural landscapes attract business and inward investment and generate tourism income. While natural habitats, such as wetlands and woodlands, provide life supporting services, such as carbon capture, flood prevention, pollution control, natural air conditioning and microclimate regulation.

In short, it is now clear that the natural environment and biodiversity are a necessity for sustainable communities, rather than a luxury, and are no less important than the provision of other public services such as schools, health centres and transport.

There is a considerable amount of law and policy guidance that reflects the increasing importance that government places upon biodiversity. A detailed list of the most significant legislative and policy context is included at Appendix 1.

A recent addition to the list is the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006. The Act places a duty on all public bodies to have "regard" for the conservation of biodiversity in carrying out their functions.

© Brian Phipps www.brianhipps.net

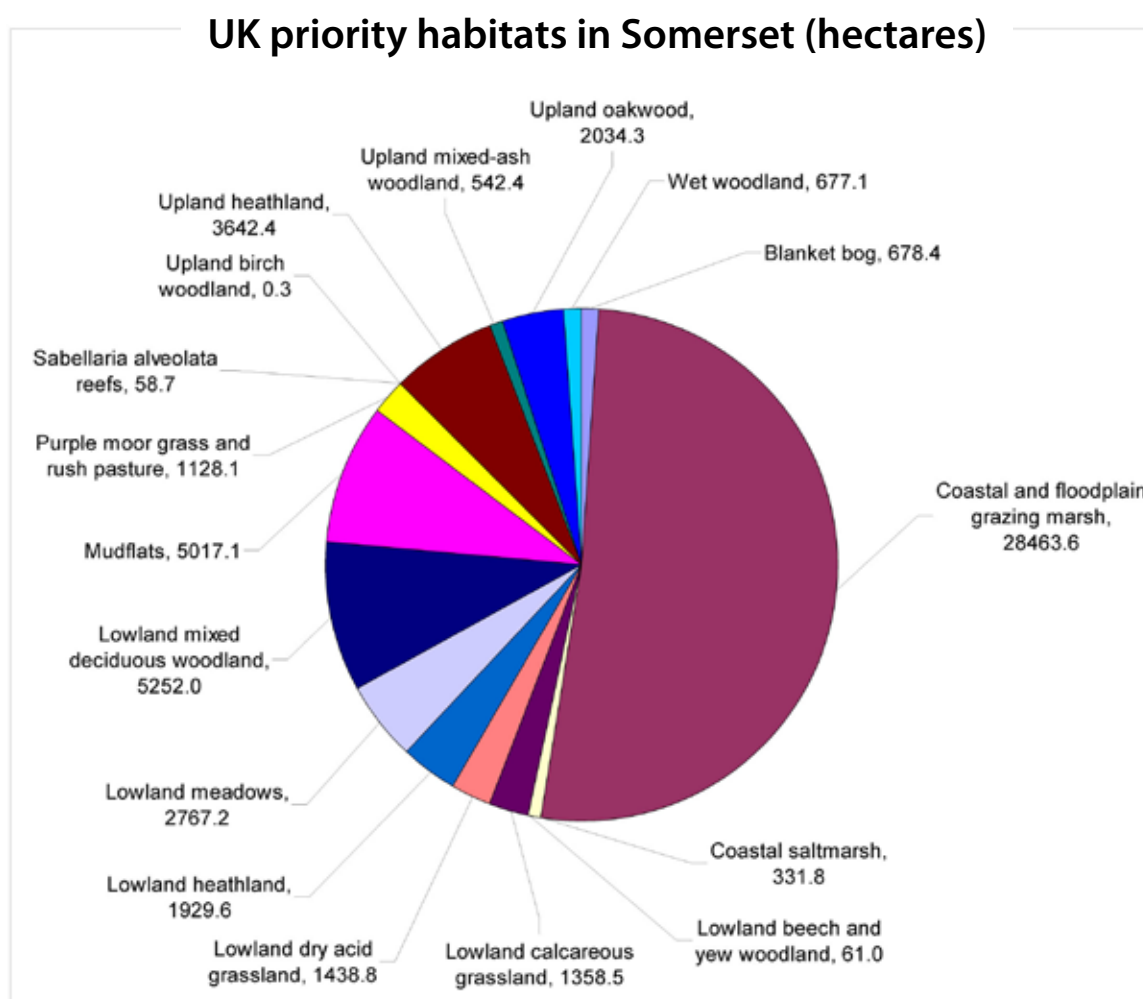


3. An overview of Somerset's biodiversity

The Somerset landscape contains a great variety of habitats which not only make the county an attractive place to live and visit, but also make it one of the most biologically diverse and valuable areas for conservation in the UK.

The county is home to seven species threatened on a global scale, including the UK's strongest site for the large blue butterfly (the result of an innovative re-introduction project), and over 200 species on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan list of "priority species", including the otter, water vole and hairy click beetle.

Within Somerset there are many European, national and locally designated wildlife sites, including: 8 Special Areas of Conservation; 2 Ramsar Convention/Special Protection Areas; 12 National Nature Reserves; 124 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and 2080 Local Wildlife Sites.

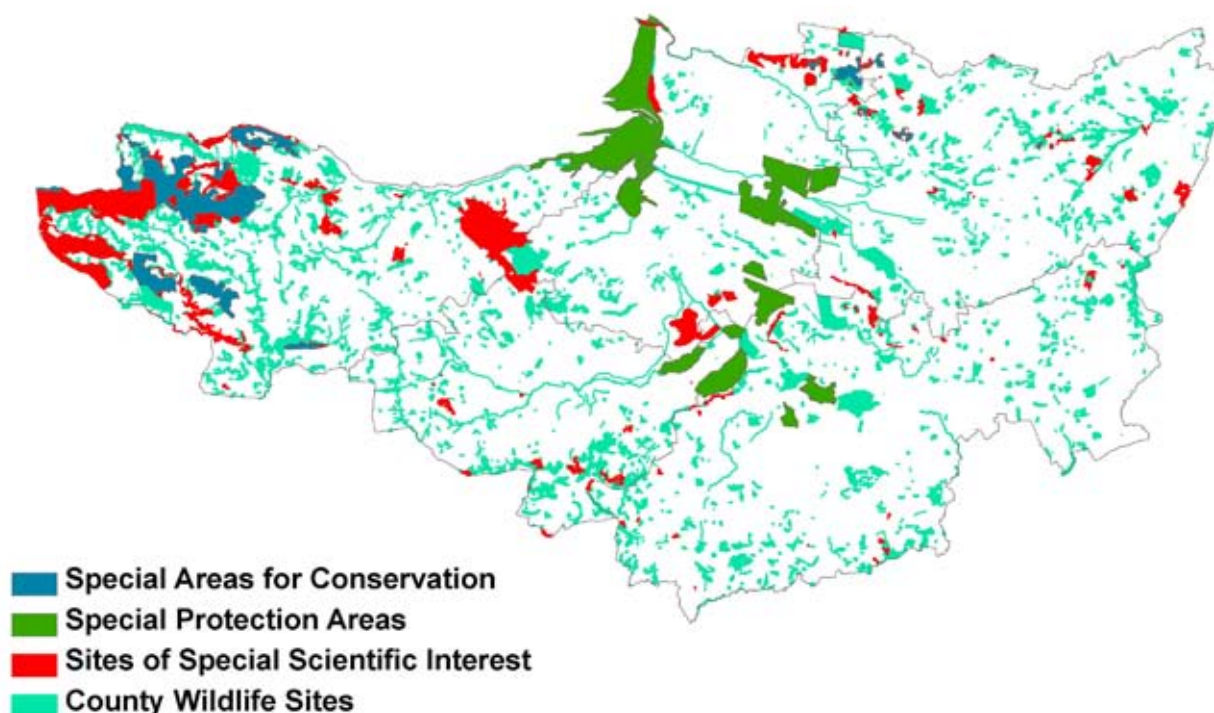


4. An overview of the threats to Somerset's biodiversity

As explained above biodiversity, both globally and locally, is under threat. Remarkable numbers of species are being forced into dangerously small numbers or becoming extinct before we have even begun to understand their true value. Recent local species extinctions include species such as grass-of-Parnassus, pearl bordered fritillary butterfly and red grouse.

In Somerset the threats to biodiversity include unavoidable climate change, habitat loss and fragmentation, intensification of farming systems (increasingly driven by rising global food demand), changes in agricultural support grants, changes in land ownership patterns, unsympathetic development, issues of water quantity and quality and aerial nitrogen pollution.

Sites of recognised wildlife value in Somerset



5. Purpose of the strategy

The Somerset Biodiversity Strategy is intended to represent a long term blueprint for successful biodiversity conservation in Somerset. It proposes a vision and long term goals for biodiversity conservation locally and sets out a series of objectives and actions aimed at making significant progress towards achieving them. It also identifies those organisations that are best placed to drive through the actions, either through their own endeavours and/or working in partnership with and enabling others.

The Strategy is deliberately rather “light touch”. It does not seek to duplicate the Local Biodiversity Action Plans or other relevant plans and strategies. It aims to complement them and make easier the task of conserving individual species and habitats. It has been drawn together by the Somerset Biodiversity Partnership, which comprises a broad range of public, private and third sector bodies. The Partnership works together for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and biodiversity of Somerset. Its members are listed at Appendix 2. The Partnership is co-ordinated, and represented by, a Somerset Biodiversity Management Group.

There is also a wider Biodiversity Forum which includes all of the members of the Somerset Biodiversity Partnership and also representatives from other relevant organisations, local groups and specialists. Many members of the Biodiversity Forum have been consulted upon and kindly contributed to the development of the Strategy and also the Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

The Strategy will be adopted by the Somerset Biodiversity Partnership and, hopefully, by a far wider audience, too, since successful biodiversity conservation can only be achieved through the combined efforts of all sectors of society.

The Strategy covers the period 2008 to 2018. It will be revised after 5 years and the targets within the Implementation Plan will be reviewed annually. The Partnership members will regularly report on the actions for which they have a responsibility. It should be noted here that the Strategy it is not intended as a “top down” imposition that ignores or replaces the existing projects and initiatives that are already being carried out by enlightened organisations, businesses, communities and individuals. The intention is to support and help grow the biodiversity conservation work that is already in progress in addition to stimulating new projects where there is a need to do so.

6. A biodiversity and natural environment vision for Somerset

The Biodiversity Partnership proposes the following vision for the natural environment and biodiversity of Somerset: For present and future generations of Somerset people live in a place where:

- The natural diversity and functions of our land and marine ecosystems have been restored and are maintained in a healthy condition for people and nature.
- Habitats and species exist at sufficient levels to ensure that they will stand the best chance of remaining viable far into the future.
- The richness of nature can be experienced at first hand across the entire rural and urban landscape.
- The physical and emotional connections between people and the natural environment are restored and strengthened.
- Future development is truly sustainable and the best is always made of opportunities for habitat restoration and enhancement.

7. Key objectives for biodiversity conservation in Somerset

The Biodiversity Partnership believes the objectives set out in this section can help achieve significant progress towards realising the biodiversity and natural environment vision for Somerset during the next decade.

There are “key actions” listed against each objective but readers should refer to the Implementation Plan that follows this section for a comprehensive list of all the proposed actions.

© Lynne Newton www.foxybiddy.com



Implement the new Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

Current Challenges:

The revision of the first generation of Somerset Local Biodiversity Action Plans has just been completed. The new Plans set out specific actions needed to conserve our priority habitats and species.

The Partnership as a whole will need to take responsibility for driving through the implementation of the Plans, helping to realise opportunities to deliver biodiversity outcomes across a wide range of their business activities, in accordance with the Strategy objectives.

Supporting the work of the Somerset Biodiversity Co-ordinator in bringing together the Partners and helping them to work together efficiently and acting as a catalyst for Local Biodiversity Action Plan implementation will be of great importance.

There is no doubt the largest challenge that the partnership faces will be in converting the Local Biodiversity Action Plans into action “on the ground”. All of the partners can help the process along by ensuring that their own activities are models of biodiversity conservation.

However, success will also be dependant upon engaging the community. In the long term biodiversity is unlikely to be secure unless the natural environment and conservation become a part of everyday life for a much larger proportion of the population.

Where we want to be in 2018:

The Local Biodiversity Action Plans to have delivered significant biodiversity benefits within the county by: Focussing time and money on the species most at risk; fostering greater partnership working between organisations and individuals and motivating and empowering substantial numbers of Somerset residents to take action for the benefit of Somerset’s natural environment.

Key Actions:

- 1.1 *Support the work of the Somerset Biodiversity Partnership and the Biodiversity Coordinator.*
- 1.2 *Contribute to the production of Biodiversity Action Plans when they need to be reviewed.*
- 1.3 *Input the outcome of Biodiversity Action Plan actions to the Biodiversity Action Reporting System - a nationally recognised system for tracking the progress of biodiversity conservation.*
- 1.4 *All Partners to conduct a biodiversity audit of landholding and operations, highlighting how best practice is being implemented.*

© Matthew Peaster www.matthewpeaster.com



Objective 2:

Sustainable development through the land use planning system.

Current Challenges:

There is a wealth of legislation and guidance focussed on biodiversity conservation. This needs to be more strongly embedded in practice and integrated with other areas of Local Authority work.

The environment and biodiversity are fundamental parts of sustainability. It is, therefore, important that policies on social or economic development do not compromise or conflict with environmental policies and it is vital that biodiversity matters are considered across the provision of all services within the county.

However, a lack of access to ecological expertise in the Local Authorities is a major hindrance. The new Somerset Local Area Agreement - which identifies local priorities for public spending - could help increase the number of local Authority ecologists. Job share arrangements between Local Authorities might also provide an answer.

Unsustainable development is a major direct threat to biodiversity in Somerset. Local Authorities have numerous land use planning responsibilities for biodiversity¹ but further measures are needed to conserve and enhance species and habitats into the future. For example, it remains the case that not all of our irreplaceable semi-natural habitats, such as ancient woodland, benefit from protective statutory designations. It is vital that precious habitats such as these are given as much protection as is possible within the land use planning system.

Some 62,500 new homes are earmarked for Somerset up to 2026. This is a real challenge in terms of protecting habitats and species. It also presents an opportunity to incorporate biodiversity within new developments. The aim should be for development to make a positive contribution to the creation of a county-wide, multi-functional, biodiversity-rich network of "green infrastructure" that will also benefit local communities.

What is "green infrastructure"?

The biodiversity equivalent of the national grid - made up of an interlinked network of natural green spaces stretching across the entire county and beyond.

The bedrock of the network should be the conservation and management of the remaining wildlife sites, with extensive habitat restoration and creation increasing the connections between them.

There is scope to deliver improvements at every scale, from installing green roofs on individual buildings, to neighbourhood nature reserves, to habitat restoration across entire landscapes.

For biodiversity, the effect will be to strengthen existing plant and animal populations and build resilience to unavoidable climate change - through enabling species to increase their chances of survival by moving more easily through the landscape. For people, green infrastructure should provide for multiple uses, such as recreation and cultural experience and other vital ecosystem services.

¹These duties are explained in detail within ODPM Circular Advice 06/2005 *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – statutory obligations and their impact within the planning system*.

While the majority of action outlined in the Strategy relates rather directly to local species and habitats it is important to understand that their future is also dependant upon whether society is able to follow a more sustainable pathway in future.

Spiralling resource consumption and waste production is already undermining ecosystems at home and abroad. Water abstraction is placing a strain on some of our finest rivers. A rising tide of plastics and other toxic pollutants is degrading the seas. And profligate energy use is adding to carbon dioxide emissions and exacerbating climate change.

Developments which serve to perpetuate these types of problems - increasing rather than reducing the “ecological footprint” of our area - must be avoided. All available tools and instruments should be brought to bear to ensure that Somerset plays its responsible part in speeding the necessary transition to a more sustainable world.

Where we want to be in 2018:

Biodiversity is accepted as a fundamental part of sustainability and fully incorporated within the decision-making processes of all organisations.

All planning decisions to be based on a detailed knowledge of likely biodiversity impacts and creative approaches to enhancing local habitats to be encouraged and enforced if need be.

The sum total of planning decisions should be adding to rather than eroding biodiversity and the ecological footprint of Somerset to be reduced to a sustainable level.

Key Actions:

- 2.1 *Local Authorities to seek to retain or acquire in-house ecological expertise as a matter of priority in order to most effectively meet statutory obligations and embed biodiversity across the whole authority.*
- 2.2 *All planning authorities to adopt BioPlan - a tool that automatically checks all planning applications against biodiversity data.*
- 2.3 *Ensure that species protection legislation is effectively enforced.*
- 2.4 *Work with planners, developers and local communities to promote habitat creation and enhancement opportunities within development.*
- 2.5 *Ensure the fullest possible protection of irreplaceable semi-natural habitats, such as ancient woodland.*
- 2.6 *Ensure all planning applications are accompanied by an adequate level of environmental evidence to enable proper testing against sustainable development principles. For anything other than minor proposals the work should be carried out by accredited professionals to recognised quality standards.*



Objective 3:

Increase in wildlife-friendly farming, forestry and sustainable rural enterprises.

Current Challenges:

The current financial incentives for farmers to manage their land for biodiversity are not strong enough.

Indeed, the long-term future of funding for agri-environment grant schemes including the Higher Level Stewardship scheme - which produces the highest returns for biodiversity - is in doubt. Furthermore increasing cereal prices available to farmers are beginning to act as a strong disincentive to get involved in such schemes at all.

We need to maintain our efforts to support landowners in managing their land for the benefit of wildlife and in ensuring that conserving biodiversity makes financial as well as environmental sense. We need to help landowners to access the available agri-environment grant schemes. While more work is also needed to promote environmental good practice on farms that are not currently benefiting from these schemes.

The role of rural enterprises, including farming and forestry, in helping to deliver biodiversity enhancement needs to be effectively communicated, together with the associated economic and other benefits of working with nature.

The impact of the more intensive farming operations needs to be fully evaluated. These types of farming systems have an impact on neighbouring wildlife habitats, for example, through the increased deposition of aerial nitrogen pollution or silt laden run off reaching watercourses. They can also lead to increased road transport and wider disruption to the countryside.

A number of studies show that organic farming, which avoids the use of artificial chemical fertilisers and pesticides on the land, has a positive benefit for biodiversity at all levels of the food chain. It depends on encouraging a diverse ecosystem to maintain soil fertility and to keep pests under control naturally. The concept of organic farming should be more widely promoted as should the wider role that farming and forestry can play in the wise use of natural resources.

© Brian Phipps www.brianhipps.net



Where we want to be in 2018:

Landowners and managers to be able to sustain a profitable business within a landscape that is rich in wildlife.

Landowners, land managers and the rural community to be aware of local biodiversity and sympathetic towards its conservation.

The links between biodiversity conservation and sustainable rural businesses to be more widely publicised and appreciated.

Key Actions:

- 3.1 *Encourage all landowners and managers to take biodiversity into account when managing their land.*
- 3.2 *Support and encourage the best use of agri-environment and forestry schemes that enhance biodiversity.*
- 3.3 *Press for sufficient funding to be made available to enable these schemes to have maximum benefit.*
- 3.4 *Encourage and help farmers to use the environment and the wildlife on their land as a marketing tool.*
- 3.5 *Encourage more farmers to consider organic farming.*



Objective 4:

Secure the future of all statutory and non statutory wildlife sites

Current Challenges:

Statutory and non statutory wildlife sites are important in their own right and represent important building blocks for expanding the network of Green Infrastructure.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest are our most important areas for biodiversity; often described as the “jewels” of England’s natural heritage. Despite their unique value, not all Sites of Special Scientific Interest have been well maintained. Consequently the government has committed to achieving favourable or recovering condition in 95% of all sites by 2010.

The system for identifying and managing non statutory sites of substantive local nature conservation value, known as Local Wildlife Sites, has varied throughout the UK. Recent government guidance² aims to provide a more uniform approach. A Local Sites Review Group is working to ensure that the Somerset selection criteria for Local Wildlife Sites are consistent with national guidance.

Local Wildlife Sites are wildlife refuges in themselves. They also buffer and connect other protected areas. They also contribute to the quality of life and the well-being of the community, with many sites providing opportunities for research and education. They are of such significance that the government has included them in the new Performance Framework for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships as the indicator for improved local biodiversity (National Indicator 197)³.

The biggest challenges in relation to these Sites are around increasing understanding of their significance, increasing the proportion that are in active conservation management and ensuring that all areas that meet the selection criteria are identified and designated.

Where we want to be in 2018:

At least 95% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest to be in favourable condition.

The value of Local Wildlife Sites to be fully recognised by all partners.

A fully comprehensive suite of Local Wildlife Sites to be achieved and the vast majority of sites to be under favourable management.

Key Actions:

- 4.1 *Achieve favourable or recovering condition in 95% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.*
- 4.2 *Support the work of the Somerset Environmental Records Centre in identifying sites that fit the criteria for Local Wildlife Sites.*
- 4.3 *Support the work of the Local Wildlife Sites Partnership in securing funding for the management of existing Local Wildlife Sites.*
- 4.4 *Advisory activity to ensure active conservation management continued or commenced at 200 Local Wildlife Sites per annum.*
- 4.5 *Undertake a programme to raise awareness of the significance of Local Wildlife Sites amongst Local Authorities and land owners and managers.*

² Defra (2006) Local Sites - Guidance on their Identification, Selection and Management

³ Department for Communities and Local Government (2007) New Performance Framework for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Single set of national indicators

Implement landscape-scale biodiversity conservation.

Current Challenges:

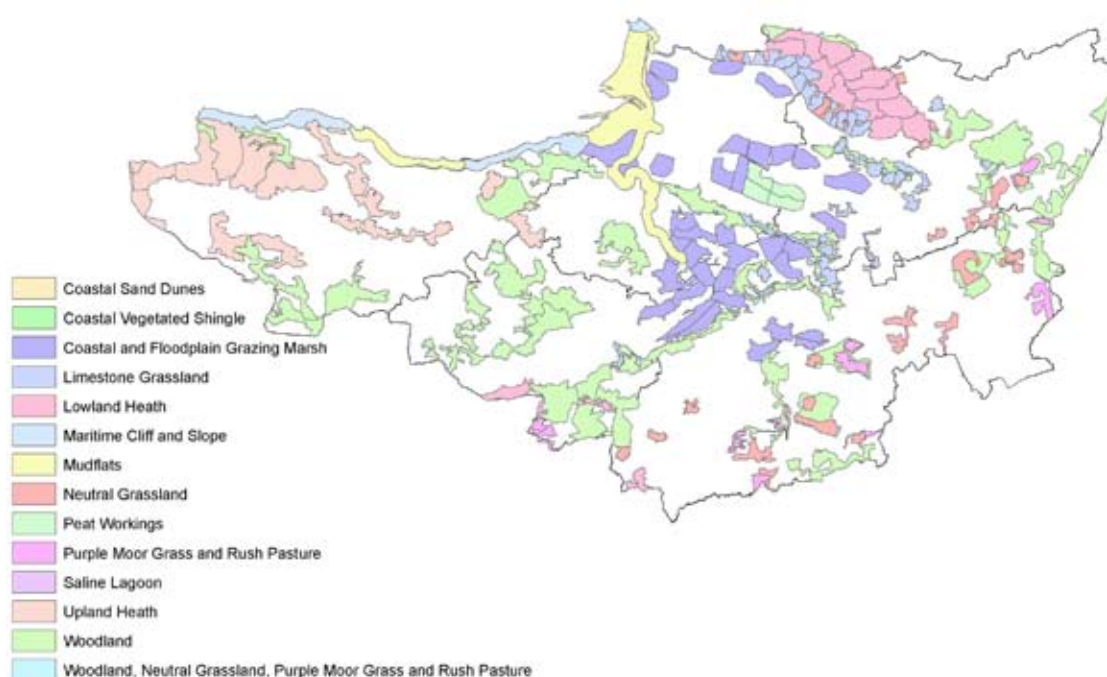
Much of our local wildlife is found within small and often isolated habitat fragments. In this state it is highly vulnerable to environmental stresses, such as habitat loss and degradation and unavoidable climate change. Securing the remaining reservoirs of biodiversity is vitally important but it is now clear that a new and more holistic approach is required that addresses conservation across entire landscapes.

Habitats restored across entire landscapes should form a key component of the network of biodiversity-rich green infrastructure that should extend across the entire county and beyond. Fortunately, the South West Nature Map⁴ project provides a ready made template for landscape scale conservation and enhancement within Somerset. It should be used by Local Authorities to help map local opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in local development documents⁵ and could also provide a basis for the efficient and effective targeting of much agri-environment support.

What is the South West Nature Map?

South West Nature Map shows the best areas - Strategic Nature Areas - to maintain and expand terrestrial habitats at the landscape scale. Strategic Nature Area identification was based upon the distribution of existing habitats in combination with other factors such as the suitability of conditions for habitat restoration and the presence of willing partners.

The map below shows the distribution of Strategic Nature Areas in Somerset. While these areas represent the best areas for biodiversity improvement it is important to stress that land outside of these areas does also contain wildlife sites and species of importance.



⁴ Nature Map was published by Biodiversity South West and can be viewed and downloaded at www.swenvo.org.uk/nature_map/nature_map.asp

⁵ South West Regional Assembly (2006) *Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West*

Objective 5:

The nature of the work to be undertaken will vary according to circumstance and the types of habitat to be conserved or enhanced. It will range from large scale tree removal for heathland restoration, through the re-introduction of conservation grazing on flower rich grasslands, to planting vast areas of trees to restore flood plain woodland.

There are already some exciting projects underway. These include: The Mendip Hills Living Landscapes Project, within the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; the Neroche Forest Project, in the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a project to restore the wetlands of the Brue Valley, on the Somerset Levels.

Where we want to be in 2018:

Substantial progress to be achieved towards landscape-scale conservation within the Strategic Nature Areas of Nature Map.

A range of measures will be needed to achieve success on the ground including: Habitat restoration projects; advice to landowners; community engagement and success monitoring.

Key Actions:

- 5.1 *All Local Authorities to use Nature Map to help map local opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in Local Development Frameworks - the main local policy document guiding planning decisions - in accordance with the recommendations set out in 'South West Nature Map: A Planners Guide'⁶.*
- 5.2 *Develop and support large-scale conservation projects, for example, through Habitat restoration projects; advice to landowners; community engagement and success monitoring.*

⁶ Biodiversity South West (2007) *South West Nature Map - A Planners Guide*

© Steve Bond



To collect and maintain biodiversity information and ensure its effective use.

Current Challenges:

Collecting, analysing and processing accurate information about species and habitats is an essential prerequisite of all biodiversity conservation.

In addition, there is a statutory requirement on planning authorities to ensure that the decisions that they make are based upon the most accurate and up-to-date biological information. Conservation organisations also require accurate information to ensure that the money that is invested in conservation projects is being used as effectively as possible.

While professional organisations have an important role to play the valuable role of volunteers should not be overlooked. Voluntary recorders spend countless hours of their own time gathering biodiversity information that could not realistically be collected by any other means. It is important that the efforts of these dedicated people are properly supported.

The main local source and repository for biological information from volunteers and professions is the Somerset Environmental Records Centre. The operation of the centre requires continuous support to ensure that the biodiversity evidence base is always as up to date and relevant as possible.

Where we want to be in 2018:

Decisions affecting biodiversity to be based on highly accurate and up-to-date biodiversity information.

A continuous programme of analysis enables a clear picture of changes in species and habitats across the county.

The Somerset Environmental Records Centre to be a vibrant and highly efficient hub for the two way flow of biodiversity information and on a secure financial footing.

Key Actions:

- 6.1 *Maintain support for the service that the Somerset Environmental Records Centre provides. Support it in co-ordinating a continuous programme to determine how biodiversity, including priority species and habitats, is changing in Somerset.*
- 6.2. *Support Somerset Environmental Records Centre's regular rolling programme of habitat mapping across Somerset.*
- 6.3 *Support the important voluntary recording and monitoring efforts of groups and individuals, including the network of individual specialists and specialist groups.*



© Emma Daniel

Objective 7:

Develop the links between business and the environment.

Current Challenges:

The links between conservation efforts and local businesses could be strengthened and the principles of social responsibility, as a driving mechanism for encouraging greater commercial involvement in local conservation efforts, need to be fully explored.

Likewise, the 'added value' that conservation projects and the natural environment can bring to local businesses requires development. With the surge in interest in local food, healthy living and escaping to the country the potential for happy marriages between business and environment interests has perhaps never been better.

There are some excellent existing initiatives that are already beginning to show the way. For example, in the Blackdown Hills AONB area alone the Blackdown Hills Woodland Association, Blackdown Hills Food and Drink Guide and Local Products Strategy all serve to strengthen the links between business and environment.

The Local Action element of the Rural Development Programme for England could have a significant role to play in meeting this objective, too. The aim of Local Action is to enable rural communities to diversify and strengthen the local economy, including "harnessing wider economic value from sustainable environmental quality".

Where we want to be in 2018:

Local businesses to be involved in conservation projects, through sponsorship, donations or staff time.

The links between conservation projects and existing local businesses are made, and products, unique to the conservation area, are marketed accordingly. For example locally produced, organic food produce and wood fuel could be marketed as having originated from land that is managed in a way that significantly improves the wildlife value of the surrounding landscape.

Woodlands, in particular, are likely to be an important source of fuel and construction materials in the future as sustainable development becomes the norm.

Key Actions:

- 7.1 *Develop conservation projects that bring 'added value' to local communities. For example, marketing the link between local food products and an area managed for the benefit of wildlife, or developing wood fuel and other traditional crafts and industries around woodland project. Local branding or labelling should be explored.*
- 7.2 *Make the most of the opportunities for links between Somerset's top natural attractions and existing local business. For example local craft shops or pubs and restaurants selling local food.*
- 7.3 *Encourage local business to help deliver Local Biodiversity Action Plan targets through work on their land and by assisting funding of local biodiversity projects*

Enable community engagement with the natural environment and biodiversity conservation

Current Challenges:

The relationship between the people of Somerset and our wildlife needs to be strengthened if the natural environment and conservation are to become a part of everyday life for far more people.

On a positive note, the natural landscape and wildlife are frequently ranked as important factors in the decisions of people to remain in, come to, or visit the county. But public awareness of the threats that biodiversity face is often limited. We should look to celebrate the fascinating and, often, spectacular wildlife that we have as often as possible. We should ensure that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy it and realise the health and wellbeing benefits that it brings.

If people are to experience nature we must ensure that they have easy access to it. Improved networks of green infrastructure within urban areas can provide wildlife habitats on everyone's doorstep and have a role to play in helping wildlife to adapt to unavoidable climate change.

By adopting standards for the provision of accessible natural green space and managing their own land holdings to make the most of their biodiversity potential, Local Authorities can play a significant role here. In particular, there is considerable potential for the creation of new Local Nature Reserves and "pocket nature parks" in almost every neighbourhood.

Likewise, in those places where increased visitor numbers would not unduly hinder conservation efforts, we should encourage people to visit our most impressive wildlife sites and ensure that facilities are in place to enable them to have the best quality of experience. The access and educational visit options of the Higher Level Stewardship grant scheme could have a significant role to play.

For those people who want to become more directly involved in conservation work we should foster and promote opportunities for voluntary work. This may be through established environmental charities or participation in one of the growing number of community groups and initiatives, which are often focussed on a particular site or local area.

Volunteers also have a critical role to play in effectively engaging individuals and communities, too. Personal change often comes about as a result of one to one conversations or getting involved in local projects. Advice and support should be available to facilitate and enable local biodiversity conservation projects. Those people who have the qualities necessary to influence others and act as "biodiversity champions" should be encouraged and supported.

The incorporation of Local Biodiversity Action Plans as part of Sustainable Community Strategies - the blueprint for social, economic and environmental wellbeing in each local area - would go a long way towards achieving greater community engagement with biodiversity.

In spite of government exhortation the extent to which this has actually happened has so far has been limited. The current round of Sustainable Community Strategy production and revision offer a significant opportunity.

Objective 8:

Where we want to be in 2018:

For more people to have connected with wildlife, to have discovered the benefits that it can offer and the ways in which they can help conserve it.

Key Actions:

- 8.1 *Encourage all landowners to take biodiversity into account when managing their land.*
- 8.2 *Encourage landowners to take up access and educational visits option under the Higher Level Stewardship scheme.*
- 8.3 *Declare suitable sites as Local Nature Reserves. Create and implement management plans that focus on improving biodiversity value and sustainability, wildlife interpretation and accessibility for all.*
- 8.4 *Explore the opportunities for disseminating local wildlife information. For example: Setting up a dedicated Wildlife Information Service to provide expert responses to biodiversity enquiries; organising road shows and practical activities in which people can participate and creating a popular guide to exploring Somerset's wildlife.*
- 8.5 *Facilitate and enable voluntary community biodiversity conservation projects and provide support for local biodiversity champions. Develop the role of volunteers in the protection and management of local sites.*
- 8.6 *Adopt Natural England's Accessible Natural Green Space Standards - and ideally also the Woodland Trust's Access standards - as the minimum standard of accessible natural green space to be achieved.*
- 8.7 *Include Local Biodiversity Action Plans within Sustainable Community Strategies.*



© Emma Daniel

Make the most of the biodiversity value of wetlands.

Current Challenges:

The Somerset Levels and Moors offer great potential for biodiversity enhancement. But, the constraints of the landscape and the complexity of management and ownership makes creating a strategic and targeted approach difficult.

Relevant partnerships, including the newly formed Somerset Water Management Partnership, will need to consider the different issues. It will need to work closely with local communities and farmers to balance the different issues and secure opportunities for integrated management of the Levels and Moors.

Changes required for water level and land management must balance the needs and expectations of home owners and farmers and realise the biodiversity potential of the wetlands. Creation of new wet woodland and other wetland habitat should be used as part of a range of measures to reduce flood risk to properties.

New Water Level Management Plans are being developed by the local Drainage Boards for wetland areas important for wildlife.

Where we want to be in 2018:

Develop and agree a vision for the sustainable management of the Somerset Levels and Moors, with substantial progress made towards turning that vision into reality.

Landscape-scale conservation projects on the Levels and Moors to be well underway.

Key Actions:

- 9.1 *Develop and implement Water Level Management Plans for the Levels and Moors that maintain existing wildlife sites and seek opportunities for environmental enhancements over large areas.*
- 9.2 *Develop a landscape-scale conservation project on the Somerset Levels with the aim of working with natural processes rather than against them to realise the multiple benefits that a wisely used flood plain can bring - a rich biodiversity, natural flood relief and a thriving economy.*



Objective 10:

Sustainable coastal and marine habitat management.

Current Challenges:

Sea-level rise and the increased frequency of storm events associated with climate change offer some major challenges for marine and coastal management.

A combination of managed realignment and habitat creation projects will be needed to maintain or increase the current area of priority habitat.

There is a lack of data on marine biodiversity, which, in the past, has made taking a strategic approach to conservation difficult.

Development, including renewable energy projects, such as the proposed Severn Barrage, may also threaten marine and coastal habitats by dramatically altering the natural processes that give rise to the habitats and species that we currently associate with the Somerset coastline.

While the Severn Estuary is a candidate Special Area of Conservation - and any development there would be subject to rigorous scrutiny through Strategic Environmental Assessment and/or Appropriate Assessment requirements - there is no statutory protection for our other marine habitats.

Fortunately a Marine Bill currently before parliament proposes the creation of statutory Marine Conservation Zones and the South West Finding Sanctuary project is already identifying suitable areas.

Where we want to be in 2018:

Consideration to have been afforded to the creation of Marine Conservation Zones around the Somerset coast to afford greater protection to important habitats and species.

The sea to be managed in a sustainable way and wisely used.

Future management of the coast should seek to work with rather than against natural systems and be consistent with shoreline management plans.

Key Actions:

- 10.1 *Accurately map out the features of biological interest around the Somerset coast (undertaking such research as may be necessary to achieve this).*
- 10.2 *Develop an agreed vision for the marine and coastal habitats and adapt existing management plans accordingly.*



Achieve successful partnership working, increase the amount of funding available for conservation work and ensure best value.

Current Challenges:

The work needed to achieve the targets outlined within this strategy, and the individual Local Biodiversity Action Plans, will undoubtedly require new resources.

Securing funding for conservation projects can be difficult. Partners will need to think strategically about what projects require funding and where the necessary monies could be sourced from.

They will need to consider joint-bids and collaborative working as a means for delivering ambitious projects that offer the most biodiversity gain and best value for money.

The Biodiversity Co-ordinator post will be crucial in liaising between partners and helping to facilitate individual and joint funding bids.

Where we want to be in 2018:

All partners to be contributing to the funding of projects that help achieve local biodiversity Action Plan targets.

As much money as is required to be channelled towards achieving conservation goals within the county

Key Actions:

- 11.1 *Ensure that funding through the Local Area Agreement is adequately directed towards biodiversity and that the links between other sectors are emphasised.*
- 11.2 *Continue the Somerset Landscape Scheme - a local, non bureaucratic, grant scheme for countryside conservation work that is administered by Somerset County Council - and help to ensure that it delivers benefits for wildlife.*
- 11.3 *Support and encourage native woodland creation and restoration to enhance biodiversity, including through the English Woodland Grant Scheme and Environmental Stewardship.*
- 11.4 *Encourage Natural England to ensure there is adequate funding in place through Environmental Stewardship.*
- 11.5 *Identify funding opportunities for conservation projects (for example, through commercial sponsorship) and explore means of enabling key players to better access them.*



8. Reporting and monitoring

It is vital that progress towards achieving the targets identified within the Strategy and the Local biodiversity Action Plans is monitored and reported on - so that future work can be properly prioritised.

All partners can report on their actions by using the Biodiversity Action Reporting System and by feeding back to the Partnership at meetings.

All lead organisations are responsible for reporting on the actions for which they have agreed to take on the leadership role.

The Biodiversity Coordinator will compile a concise annual report on progress to be widely disseminated and presented to all partners at the management group meetings.

A more formal review of the Strategy will be carried out in 2012 and there will be an annual review of the Implementation Plan.

9. Getting involved

There are many ways in which everyone can get involved in helping Somerset's wildlife and helping to put the Local Biodiversity Actions Plans and the Biodiversity Strategy into practice. Here are just a few ideas:

- Join a local voluntary community group to help carry out practical conservation projects or record and monitor wildlife in your area. Talk to your Parish Clerk or local Tree Warden to find out what is going on. Or call the Somerset Wildlife Trust or your District Council who may be able to put you in contact with a local group and make suggestions about how you can make the most difference with the time you have available. If there is no local group or project in your area why not start one up?
- Join your local wildlife charities. A lot of the work needed to deliver the actions within the Local Biodiversity Actions Plans the and Strategy will be carried out by conservation charities that receive no government funding and are therefore reliant on the support of their members. If you haven't got the time to do voluntary work of your own, then this is a good way of making a difference.
- If you are a gardener or own other land, why not investigate how easy it is to look after your plot with wildlife in mind? Not only can you then enjoy the spectacle of wildlife out of your window; you'll also be helping vulnerable species to survive into the future.
- Ask "how green is my council?" When deciding where to cast your vote, review how seriously your local council is taking biodiversity.
- Get out there and enjoy the wildlife around you!

For more information about the Somerset Biodiversity Partnership (including members' contact details) and the Local Biodiversity Actions Plans visit:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset/ete/countryside/biodiversity/index.cfm?override=subtopic&infoid=3756>

10. Implementation Plan

	Action	Lead Organisation	Other Key Partners	Target	Completion Date
Objective 1: Implement the new Local Biodiversity Action Plans.					
1.1	Support the work of the Somerset Biodiversity Partnership and the Biodiversity Coordinator.	Somerset County Council	All Partners	All partners regularly attend well facilitated meetings and along with other key stakeholders contribute to achieving the targets within the Strategy and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.	End of 2008
1.2	Contribute to the production of Biodiversity Action Plans when they need to be reviewed.	Somerset Environmental Records Centre	Natural England, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Somerset County Council, Environment Agency	Local Biodiversity Action Plans are reviewed and completed in consultation with all interested parties promptly.	August 2008
1.3	Input the outcome of LBAPs actions to the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS).	Somerset Environmental Records Centre	All Partners	Progress on all actions within the Local Biodiversity Action Plans are inputted into BARS.	2009 and ongoing.
1.4	All partners to conduct a biodiversity audit of landholding and operations, highlighting how best practice is being implemented.	All Partners	Somerset Wildlife Trust Somerset Environmental Records Centre	Methodology to be developed and audit commenced.	2010
Objective2: Sustainable development through the land use planning system.					
2.1	Local Authorities to seek to retain or acquire in-house ecological expertise as a matter of priority in order to most effectively meet statutory obligations and embed biodiversity across the whole authority.	District Councils/ Exmoor National Park Authority	Somerset County Council	All Local Authorities to have in-house ecological expertise in place.	End of 2009
2.2	All planning authorities to adopt BioPlan - a tool that automatically checks all planning applications against biodiversity data.	District & County Councils Exmoor National Park Authority	Somerset Environmental Records Centre, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Natural England	All Local Authorities have BioPlan operational.	End of 2009
2.3	Ensure that species protection legislation is effectively enforced.	Police	Natural England Somerset Wildlife Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, District and County Councils, Environment Agency	A procedure for passing on information about, and acting upon, wildlife crime is in place and made available to all partners.	End of 2008

	Action	Lead Organisation	Other Key Partners	Target	Completion Date
2.4	Work with planners, developers and local communities to promote habitat creation and enhancement opportunities within development.	County & District Councils & Exmoor National Park Authority	Natural England Somerset Wildlife Trust Environment Agency	An increase in number of substantive new developments that make a positive contribution to biodiversity is achieved	2010
2.5	Ensure the fullest possible protection of irreplaceable semi-natural habitats, such as ancient woodland.	County & District Councils & Exmoor National Park Authority	Natural England Somerset Wildlife Trust Woodland Trust	Strong site protection policies contained within all Local Development Frameworks	2012
2.6	Ensure all planning applications are accompanied by an adequate level of environmental information and assessment to enable proper testing against sustainable development principles. For anything other than minor proposals the work should be carried out by accredited professionals to recognised standards.	County & District Councils & Exmoor National Park Authority	Natural England Somerset Wildlife Trust	All planning applications subjected to a proper level of environmental scrutiny.	2009
2.7	Assist Local Authorities - through mechanism such as briefing notes, reports and training workshops - in creating and integrating effective policies for local biodiversity conservation.	Somerset Wildlife Trust	Natural England Somerset County Council	All Local Authorities have received assistance in creating and integrating effective policies for biodiversity conservation where required.	2009
2.8	Ensure that wildlife habitat on the verges of transport links are managed to benefit biodiversity where possible.	Somerset County Council & Exmoor National Park Authority		A Highways Biodiversity Action Plan is fully supported, funded and acted upon.	2009
2.9	Ensure that protected and priority species are considered properly in any application for planning permission in circumstances where the development has the potential to have an adverse impact on them.	County & District Councils & Exmoor National Park Authority	Natural England Somerset Wildlife Trust Environment Agency	All planning decisions comply with the principles of Planning Policy Statement 9 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.	2008

	Action	Lead Organisation	Other Key Partners	Target	Completion Date
2.10	Secure adequate mitigation or compensatory measures for biodiversity loss in exceptional cases where adverse impact cannot be avoided.	County & District Councils & Exmoor National Park Authority	Natural England, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency	All planning decisions comply with the principles of Planning Policy Statement 9 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.	2008
2.11	Work with planners, developers and local communities to promote habitat creation and enhancement opportunities within development.	County & District Councils & Exmoor National Park Authority	Natural England, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency	An increase in number of substantive new developments that make a positive contribution to biodiversity is achieved	2010
2.12	Support for in-house ecologists by providing expert planning advice for major planning cases, and guidance on environmental training for planners.	Somerset Wildlife Trust	Natural England, Somerset County Council	Expert advice made available on major planning cases. Training courses also made available for all planners within the county.	2009
Objective 3: Increase in wildlife-friendly farming, forestry and sustainable rural enterprises.					
3.1	Encourage all landowners and managers to take biodiversity into account when managing their land.	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	Somerset Wildlife Trust, Exmoor National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, Natural England, District Councils/ Exmoor National Park Authority, Environment Agency	Advice available to all farmers and guidance produced and circulated.	2009
3.2	Support and encourage the best use of agri-environment schemes that enhance biodiversity.	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group & Exmoor National Park Authority	Somerset Wildlife Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Natural England, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships, Environment Agency	Provide advice to all interested landowners about agri-environment schemes	2009
3.3	Press for sufficient funding to be made available to enable agri-environment schemes to have maximum benefit.	Natural England	Somerset Wildlife Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Exmoor National Park Authority, Environment Agency	Encourage Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to increase the total amount of money available for agri-environment schemes within Somerset.	2009

	Action	Lead Organisation	Other Key Partners	Target	Completion Date
3.4	Encourage and help farmers to use the environment and the wildlife on their land as a marketing tool.	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	Somerset Wildlife Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, National Farmers Union, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships	Increase in number of farmers realising the added economic value of biodiversity and the natural environment.	2018
3.5	Encourage more farmers to undergo organic conversion.	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	Somerset Wildlife Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, National Farmers Union, Soil Association	Increase in number of organic farm holdings.	2018
Objective 4: Secure the future of all statutory and non statutory wildlife sites					
4.1	Achieve favourable or recovering condition in 95% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Natural England, Environment Agency	All partners	95% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest favourable or recovering	2010
4.2	Support the work of the Somerset Environmental Records Centre in identifying sites that fit the criteria for Local Wildlife Sites.	District Councils & Exmoor National Park Authority	All partners	A comprehensive surveying effort to identify all Local Wildlife Sites is developed by Somerset Environmental Records Centre and funding contributions made by all partners.	2008
4.3	Support the work of the Local Wildlife Sites Partnership in securing funding for the management of existing Local Wildlife Sites.	Somerset Wildlife Trust	All partners	95% of Local Sites in active conservation management.	2018
4.4	Ensure all owners of Local Wildlife Sites receive support & advice, with a view to achieving beneficial outcomes for biodiversity.	Somerset Wildlife Trust	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Exmoor National Park Authority	Advisory activity to ensure active conservation management continued or commenced at 200 Local Wildlife Sites per annum.	2018
4.5	Undertake a programme to raise awareness of the significance of Local Wildlife Sites amongst Local Authorities and land owners and managers.	Somerset Wildlife Trust	Local Sites Partnership	Measurable increase in awareness of Local Wildlife Sites.	2012

	Action	Lead Organisation	Other Key Partners	Target	Completion Date
Objective 5: Implement landscape-scale biodiversity conservation.					
5.1	All Local Authorities to use Nature Map to help map local opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in Local Development Frameworks, in accordance with the recommendations set out in 'South West Nature Map - A Planners Guide'.	District Councils	Somerset County Council Somerset Wildlife Trust	All Local Development Frameworks incorporate Strategic Nature Area's	2010
5.2	Develop and support large-scale conservation projects, for example, through habitat restoration projects, advice to landowners, community engagement and success monitoring.	Somerset Wildlife Trust	All partners	A minimum of five landscape-scale conservation projects - at least one in each district - are substantially complete	2012
5.3	Ensure that the links between climate change strategies and biodiversity are created or maintained.	Somerset County Council	District Councils, Exmoor National Park Authority, Environment Agency	All newly created climate change strategies are fully aligned with biodiversity strategies and make use of natural ecological processes to achieve sustainable adaptation solutions wherever possible.	2009
5.4	Planning Authorities to look at habitat connectivity and providing high quality 'green infrastructure' within their Local Development Frameworks.	District Councils	Somerset Wildlife Trust, Natural England	All Local Development Frameworks include a green infrastructure component, with green infrastructure strategies produced for all larger urban extensions.	2010
Objective 6: To collect and maintain ecological information and ensure its effective use.					
6.1	Maintain support for the service that the Somerset Environmental Records Centre provides. Support it in co-ordinating a continuous programme to determine how biodiversity, including priority species and habitats, is changing in Somerset.	County & District Councils & Exmoor National Park Authority	All partners	All relevant public agencies to agree an Service Level Agreement with the Somerset Environmental Records Centre to provide a targeted biodiversity monitoring programme.	2008
6.2	Support Somerset Environmental Records Centre's regular rolling programme of habitat mapping across Somerset.	Somerset County Council	All partners	Aerial Photograph Interpretation habitat mapping framework in place for all Strategic Nature Areas and all urban areas, as a basis for future fieldwork.	2011

	Action	Lead Organisation	Other Key Partners	Target	Completion Date
6.3	Support the important voluntary recording and monitoring efforts of groups and individuals, including the network of specialists and specialist groups.	Somerset Wildlife Trust & Somerset Environmental Records Centre	All partners	Voluntary recording groups adequately resourced and steadily growing in membership.	2018
Objective 7: To develop the links between business and the environment.					
7.1	Develop conservation projects that bring 'added value' to local communities. For example, marketing the link between local food products and an area managed for the benefit of wildlife, or developing wood fuel and other traditional crafts and industries around woodland project. Local branding or labelling should be explored.	Somerset Wildlife Trust	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, District Councils, Exmoor National Park Authority, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Regional Development Agency, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships	A minimum of two landscape-scale projects underway that contain a strong focus on local produce.	2010
7.2	Make the most of the opportunities for links between Somerset's top natural attractions and existing local business e.g. Local craft shops or pubs and restaurants selling local food.	Somerset Wildlife Trust	All partners Regional Development Agency, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships	Strong linkages made between a minimum of two important local wildlife attractions and surrounding businesses.	2010
7.3	Encourage local business to help deliver Local Biodiversity Action Plan targets through work on their land and by assisting funding of local biodiversity projects.	Somerset County Council	All partners	A marketing model produced to promote business sponsorship of Biodiversity Action Plan action.	2009
7.4	Work with the Tourist Board and others to raise the profile of our major natural attractions.	Somerset County Council	Somerset Wildlife Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, District Councils, Exmoor National Park Authority, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships	A Somerset Green Tourism guide, focussed on visiting wildlife sites, produced and publicised.	2010

	Action	Lead Organisation	Other Key Partners	Target	Completion Date
7.5	Undertake a programme designed to raise business awareness of the natural environment and prompt further action. From talks and seminars, through the use of nature reserves for team building sessions, to participation in accreditation schemes.	Somerset Wildlife Trust	-	Increase in number of businesses making a positive contribution to the natural environment	2014
Objective 8: To promote an understanding and support for biodiversity by local communities.					
8.1	Encourage all land owners to take biodiversity into account when managing their land.	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group & Exmoor National Park Authority	Somerset County Council, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, County & District Councils, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships, Environment Agency	200 site visits to land owners per annum, and the availability of a Wildlife Information Service for the public to easily access.	2009
8.2	Encourage landowners to take up access and educational visits option under HLS scheme.	Natural England	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Somerset Wildlife Trust	Significant increase in area of land with access and educational visits.	2018
8.3	Declare suitable sites as Local Nature Reserves. Create and implement management plans that focus on improving biodiversity value and sustainability, wildlife interpretation and accessibility for all.	Somerset County Council	District Councils	Ensure that there is 1ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 people in Somerset.	2012
8.4	Explore the opportunities for disseminating local wildlife information. For example, through: Setting up a dedicated Wildlife Information Service to provide expert responses to biodiversity enquiries; organising road shows and practical activities in which people can participate and creating a popular guide to exploring Somerset's wildlife.	Somerset Wildlife Trust	Somerset Environmental Records Centre	Wildlife Information Service available - reactively providing expert responses to biodiversity enquiries from all comers and pro actively disseminating biodiversity information through all available channels.	2009

	Action	Lead Organisation	Other Key Partners	Target	Completion Date
8.5	Facilitate and enable voluntary community biodiversity conservation projects and provide support for local biodiversity champions. Develop the role of volunteers in the protection and managements of local sites.	Somerset Wildlife Trust	Somerset County Council Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships	Increase in number of community conservation projects and number of volunteers involved in them.	2010
8.6	Adopt Natural England's Accessible Natural Green Space Standards - and ideally also the Woodland Trust's Access standards - as the minimum standard of accessible natural green space to be achieved.	County and District Councils	Natural England Woodland Trust Environment Agency	Achieve Natural England's Accessible Natural Green Space Standards, including ensuring at least one accessible 20ha natural green space site within 2km of home, one accessible 100ha site within 5km of home and one accessible 500ha site within 10km of home.	2018
8.7	Include Local Biodiversity Action Plans within Sustainable Community Strategies.	District Councils Local Strategic Partnerships	Somerset County Council Natural England Somerset Wildlife Trust	Local Biodiversity Action Plans included within Sustainable Community Strategy of each Local Strategic Partnership.	End of 2009
8.8	Promote the role of gardens and wildlife friendly gardening	Somerset Wildlife Trust	Somerset Environmental Records Centre	Wildlife Information Service available to answer queries about wildlife gardening.	2009
8.9	Increase the value of school grounds by undertaking a wildlife survey and implementing a management plan that benefits wildlife and provides an easily accessible resource for students to explore and study.	Somerset County Council	Somerset Wildlife Trust	5 School grounds a year have implemented a biodiversity management plan on their grounds.	2010
8.10	Enable each Primary School child to have at least one meaningful experience in the natural world during his or her school career. This could be through visits to environmental education centres or local natural green spaces within walking distance of school.	Somerset County Council	Somerset and Exmoor Environmental Education Network	Each Primary School child to have at least one meaningful experience in the natural world during his or her school career.	2013

	Action	Lead Organisation	Other Key Partners	Target	Completion Date
8.11	Investigate means of increasing the extent to which local biodiversity is used as a tool to deliver the national curriculum. Including improving the links between Somerset's Secondary Schools and education centres around the county.	Somerset County Council	Somerset and Exmoor Environmental Education Network	Local biodiversity is incorporated within science and geography teaching within all Secondary Schools in the county.	2013
8.12	Ensure that material is made available to the press to maximise media coverage about biodiversity issues.	Somerset Wildlife Trust	Somerset County Council, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	Regular press releases circulated about biodiversity issues, Local Biodiversity Action Plans progress and how the public can get involved.	2008
8.13	Develop ideas about how best to promote and publicise the Local Biodiversity Action Plans and the Somerset Biodiversity Strategy	Somerset Biodiversity Management Group & Local Strategic Partnerships	Somerset Wildlife Trust, District Councils	A marketing strategy is created to promote the newly revised Local Biodiversity Action Plans and The Biodiversity Strategy.	2008
8.14	Promote an annual 'Somerset Wildlife Day' with associated events and media coverage.	Somerset Biodiversity Management Group & Local Strategic Partnerships	All partners	An annual 'Somerset Wildlife Day' takes place, and at least one event takes place in each district.	2010
8.15	Promote Somerset as a centre of excellence for biodiversity conservation by supporting enterprising new flagship projects and foster links with organisations from other regions or countries.	Somerset Wildlife Trust	Somerset County Council, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Natural England, Exmoor National Park Authority	Two new flagship projects underway within the county - in addition to the acclaimed Exmoor National Park Authority led mire restoration project - and a successful collaboration with another region or country has been established.	2010
8.16	Publicize the health benefits of green space and foster links with organisations focussed on healthy living.	Natural England	Somerset Wildlife Trust, County and District Councils, Green space Forum South West	A project or campaign is run in partnership with an organisation promoting the health benefits of greater public use of natural green space.	2010
Objective 9: Make the most of the biodiversity value of wetlands.					
9.1	Develop and implement Water Level Management Plans for the Levels and Moors that maintain existing wildlife sites and seek opportunities for environmental enhancements over large areas.	Drainage Boards	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Environment Agency, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	Water Level Management Plans for the Levels and Moors complete and being put into practice.	2018

	Action	Lead Organisation	Other Key Partners	Target	Completion Date
9.2	Develop a landscape-scale conservation project on the Somerset Levels with the aim of working with nature rather than against it to realise the multiple benefits that a wisely used flood plain can bring - a rich biodiversity, natural flood relief and a thriving economy (Note: it will be important to ensure that the nationally important archaeology of the Somerset Levels and Moors is safeguarded and properly managed)	Somerset Wildlife Trust	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium, Environment Agency, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	A landscape scale conservation project on the Levels to be is underway.	2010
9.3	Develop an agreed vision for the wetlands of Somerset.	Environment Agency	All partners	An agreed vision for Somerset's wetlands is completed.	2010
Objective 10: Sustainable coastal and marine habitat management.					
10.1	Accurately map out the features of biological interest around the Somerset coast (undertaking such research and survey as may be necessary to achieve this).	Natural England	Somerset Wildlife Trust, Somerset Environmental Records Centre, Environment Agency	A mapping exercise of the biodiversity value of the Somerset coast is completed.	2012
10.2	Develop an agreed vision for the marine and coastal habitats and adapt existing management plans accordingly.	Natural England and Environment Agency	Somerset Wildlife Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Somerset County Council, Exmoor National Park Authority	An agreed vision for Somerset's marine and coastal habitats is completed.	2011
10.3	Ensure that biodiversity issues are taken into account with coastal or marine development projects.	Natural England	Somerset Wildlife Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Environment Agency	All significant development projects that impact on coastal or marine habitats analysed and commented upon.	2009
Objective 11: Achieve successful partnership working, increase the amount of funding available for conservation work and ensure best value.					
11.1	Ensure that funding through the Local Area Agreement is adequately directed towards biodiversity and that the links between other sectors are emphasised.	Somerset County Council Local Strategic Partnerships	Natural England, Somerset Wildlife Trust, District Councils, Exmoor National Park Authority	At least one biodiversity improvement target included in the forthcoming Local Area Agreement	2008

	Action	Lead Organisation	Other Key Partners	Target	Completion Date
11.2	Continue the Somerset Landscape Scheme - a local, non bureaucratic, grant scheme for countryside conservation work that is administered by Somerset County Council - and help to ensure that it delivers benefits for wildlife.	Somerset County Council	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	An Increase in area of priority habitat under agreement or under construction through Somerset Landscape Scheme is achieved	2009
11.3	Support and encourage native woodland creation and restoration to enhance biodiversity, including through the English Woodland Grant Scheme and Environmental Stewardship (Note: Important that archaeology and historic landscape is fully taken into account in decisions on appropriate locations for new areas of woodland).	Forestry Commission	Somerset Wildlife Trust, Somerset County Council, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Natural England, Woodland Trust, Exmoor National Park Authority	Number of applicants for English Woodland Grant Scheme increased from 2007 levels.	2009
11.4	Encourage Natural England to ensure there is adequate funding in place through Environmental Stewardship.	Somerset Wildlife Trust	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Exmoor National Park Authority	Maintain or increase funding for Higher Level Stewardship and more biodiversity friendly elements of Entry Level Stewardship.	2010
11.5	Identify funding opportunities for conservation projects (for example, through commercial sponsorship) and explore means of enabling key players to better access them.	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	Natural England, Somerset County Council, Somerset Wildlife Trust	Research project to identify barriers faced by stakeholders and recommended means by which these could be overcome completed.	2010
11.6	Support bids from environmental education providers for projects that will increase people's understanding and appreciation of the natural world.	Somerset County Council	All partners	Where required, support is given to appropriate bids from environmental education providers.	2012

Appendix 1 Relevant policy and legislative context:

Legislation

Forestry Act, 1967 (as amended)

Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds, 1979

The Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), 1979

Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981

The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations, 1994

The Hedgerow Regulations, 1997

The Local Government Act, 2000

Water Framework Directive, 2000

Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000

The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2003

Strategic Environment Assessment Regulations, 2004

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006

Policy guidance

Circular Advice 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - statutory obligations and their impact within the planning system (ODPM 2005)

Planning Policy Statement 9 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (ODPM 2005)

Local Sites - Guidance on their Identification, Selection and Management (Defra 2006).

Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - A Good Practice Guide (ODPM 2006)

Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West (South West Regional Assembly 2006)

South West Nature Map - A Planners Guide (Biodiversity South West 2007)

Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission 2007)

Planning Policy Statement - Planning and Climate Change Supplement to PPS1 (DCLG 2007)

Strategies

Working with the Grain of Nature - the UK Biodiversity Strategy (Defra 2002)

Our Environment Our Future: Regional Strategy for the South West Environment, 2004 -2014 (South West Regional Assembly 2004)

Sustainable Schools for pupils, communities and the environment (Department for Education and Skills 2006)

Regional Woodland and Forestry Framework (Forestry Commission 2006)

A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests (Defra 2007)

A Woodfuel Strategy for England (Forestry Commission 2007)

Responding to Climate Change in Somerset (Somerset County Council 2007)

Rural Development Programme for England 2007-2013 (Defra 2007)

Appendix 2 Current membership of the Somerset Biodiversity Management Group:

Exmoor National Park Authority
Forestry Commission
Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium
Mendip District Council
Natural England
Sedgemoor District Council
Somerset County Council
Somerset Environmental Records Centre
Somerset Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
Somerset Wildlife Trust
South Somerset District Council
Taunton Deane Borough Council
The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership
The Environment Agency
The Mendip Environment Forum
The Mendip Hills AONB Partnership
The National Trust
The Quantock Hills AONB Partnership
The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
West Somerset Council

© Cath Shellswell



