



## Durham Biodiversity Partnership

Action for wildlife in Gateshead, South Tyneside,  
Sunderland, Darlington & County Durham

### Planning, Regeneration and Economy

Biodiversity conservation involves taking opportunities to enhance biodiversity, as well as protect it. Biodiversity needs to be taken into account in forward planning and when assessing development proposals to ensure biodiversity is fully considered. Effective monitoring is also key to ensuring the measures put in place to conserve biodiversity are successful.

There is a range of robust International, European and National legislation on biodiversity conservation as well as back up guidance. Regional planning policies, such as the Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Environment Strategy, also include biodiversity guidance. Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9): Biodiversity and Geological Conservation is the primary reference point for those developing or appraising development plans or projects. PPS9 sets out key principles that regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should adhere to, ensuring that biodiversity is considered fully in the development of planning policy and when determining planning applications. The accompanying good practice guide contains valuable information, case studies and references. Establishing a good evidence base is highlighted in the guidance as being essential. Benefits include:

- The development of well informed spatial planning policies setting the overall framework for development proposals, ensuring policies are formulated on a robust and credible evidence base, which is a key test of soundness of a Development Plan.
- Provision of a good basis for planning applications to be appraised, maximising opportunities for enhancement and avoiding potential adverse effects.

- Allowing for comprehensive monitoring of trends in habitats and species as indicators of the quality of the local environment.

Durham Biodiversity Partnership is helping to pool local expertise, share information and develop a comprehensive evidence base through the process of producing the local biodiversity action plan. Durham Biodiversity Data Service provides Local Authorities the opportunity to obtain good quality baseline information on habitats and species to inform planning policy and development control decisions. Local Authorities have an important part to play in getting involved with the biodiversity action planning process and as a supporter and user of DBDS.

### Biodiversity Enhancement

Development can have adverse impacts on biodiversity, but it can also offer the opportunity to deliver a range of benefits, especially if biodiversity issues are taken into account at an early stage. For example a green roof can encourage urban wildlife and contributes to sustainable water management. Consideration should also be given to how biodiversity enhancement could be used to bring about more sustainable development, through integration with other policy objectives and other land uses, for example housing and economic development, health, education and social inclusion.



Green Roof on a bus shelter ©The Green Roof Centre

## **Action for Wildlife – Guidance note: Management of Land and Buildings**

Strategic planning offers opportunities to identify broad locations where priorities should be given to biodiversity conservation and enhancement, and to establish ecological networks between existing and improved habitats. The North East Regional Spatial Strategy sets out potential habitat creation and enhancement areas, which should be used as a starting point and a range of guidance is available on how to integrate biodiversity into LDFs. The creation and improvement of greenspace in urban and rural areas, and the countryside in and around towns delivers multiple benefits for biodiversity, landscape, health and recreation.

Strong and effective planning policies for biodiversity in Local Development Frameworks enable biodiversity conservation to be fully considered in development control decisions. A key element in the planning process is the screening of development proposals for potential effects on biodiversity and advising applicants before they submit a planning application. Pre-application discussions with developers can ensure all potential effects and any obligations are considered at the outset. Natural England and the Association of Local Government Ecologists are developing guidance for planners and ecologists to specify what information should be submitted with a planning application in order for it to be valid. The Guidance will include a template for a validation checklist to assist local planning authorities to meet the policy requirements expressed in the key principles of PPS9 as well as complying with the NERC duty. Supplementary planning documents/guidance also make it easier for planners and developers.

Planning conditions and obligations can be useful mechanisms for imposing mitigation and enhancement measures where it is not possible to achieve the appropriate level of mitigation or enhancement as part of the design of a development proposal.



Pond Creation as part of mitigation works ©Gateshead Council

Planning conditions can be used to prevent approved activities from adversely affecting habitats and species, for example, by placing time limitations on activities to avoid disturbance during the breeding season. Planning obligations are useful when seeking to secure enhancement or mitigation outside of the application site, for example, through financial payments to ensure improved and ongoing management of nature conservation sites.

### **Management and monitoring**

Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks, requires local planning authorities to monitor the effectiveness of Local Development Documents and Development Plans. It is important that objectives, indicators and targets for biodiversity are included in monitoring frameworks, and performance is reported upon in Annual Monitoring Reports. This enables Local Authorities to judge the success of biodiversity policies and to identify potential changes that need to be made to improve biodiversity conservation. Securing long-term sensitive management is an essential element of the process if the intended benefits for biodiversity are to be realised in future.

### **Regeneration and Economy**

Biodiversity is a core component of sustainable development, underpinning economic development and regeneration.

## Action for Wildlife – Guidance note: Management of Land and Buildings

Improving the biodiversity of an area, its green spaces and flora, helps to improve the perception of the area and the quality of life of its residents, as well as attracting businesses into an area.



Aycliffe Nature Park adjacent to the Industrial Estate ©Aycliffe Archive

This can help to foster the redevelopment of depressed urban areas. There have been a number of studies providing evidence that a high quality natural environment contributes to the economy, primarily through creating jobs and attracting visitors. In the UK, uses of biodiversity directly support over 35,000 fulltime equivalent (FTE) jobs and contribute more than £4.8 billion to GDP. In England, activities 'based on high quality natural environment' support nearly 300,000 FTE jobs and £7.6 billion gross value added.

A green environment helps an area portray a positive image and a more attractive place to live and work. Studies have shown that properties adjacent to parks carry a 5-7% price premium and tree-lined streets and an attractive green setting can increase property values up to 18%. Shelter from trees in towns and cities can reduce heating and air-conditioning costs of buildings by up to 10% and can help keep cities cooler and more shaded in summer.

In summary, high quality green spaces contribute to the economic vitality of, and confidence in, a locality.



Newly planted street Trees ©StreetTree.org

Ecosystems provide society with critical goods and services that underpin our wellbeing and the region's economy including regulating services such as flood alleviation, provisioning services such as carbon sequestration and cultural services such as recreation. These environmental assets enhance economic performance and offer new opportunities for investment and employment.

These notes were adapted from those prepared by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership and the South Yorkshire Biodiversity Forum

**Guidance notes are also available on:** Education, Advice and Awareness, Management of Land and Buildings, and Policy, Strategy and Procurement, from [www.durhambiodiversity.org.uk](http://www.durhambiodiversity.org.uk)

### References and Further Information

'Guidance for Local Authorities on implementing the Biodiversity Duty' (Defra 2007) and 'Guidance for Public Authorities on implementing the Biodiversity Duty' (Defra 2007) [www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/biodiversity/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/biodiversity/index.htm)

Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation  
[www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147408](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147408)

Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geographical Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System and Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: A Guide to Good Practice  
[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningbiodiversity](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningbiodiversity)

'An introductory guide to valuing ecosystem services' (Defra 2007) <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/natres/eco-value.htm> and 'Valuing the benefits of biodiversity' (Defra 2007) <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/pdf/biodiversity/econ-bene-biodiversity.pdf>

Durham Biodiversity Partnership [www.durhambiodiversity.org.uk](http://www.durhambiodiversity.org.uk) Durham Wildlife Trust [www.durhamwt.co.uk](http://www.durhamwt.co.uk) Association of Local Government Ecologists [www.alge.org.uk](http://www.alge.org.uk) Durham Biodiversity Data Service [www.dbds.org](http://www.dbds.org) CABE Space [www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk)