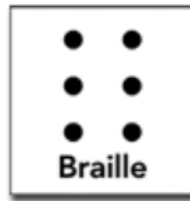
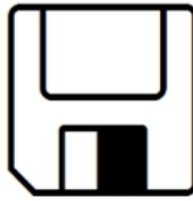
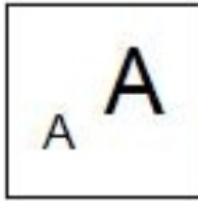


Draft Biodiversity Action Plan 2009 - 2010



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Contents	Page
1 Introduction	
1.1 – What is Biodiversity?.....	3
1.2 – Why Biodiversity is important.....	3
1.3 – Benefits of conserving Biodiversity.....	4
2 Policy background to Biodiversity	
2.1 – International framework.....	5
2.2 – UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).....	5
2.3 – Local Authority role.....	5
2.4 – Conserving Biodiversity in the UK.....	6
2.5 – UK BAP review 2007.....	6
2.6 – Biodiversity across Lancashire.....	6
2.7 – Types of habitat plans.....	7
3 Biodiversity Policy Statement	
3.1 – Impact of the Biodiversity duty on Rossendale.....	7
3.2 – Rossendale Borough Council’s Biodiversity Policy Statement.....	7
4 How the BAP fits in with the Planning system	
4.1 – PPS9.....	8
5 Protected sites	
5.1 – Internationally recognised sites.....	9
5.2 – Local sites.....	9
6 Issues to consider in development of BAP.	
6.1 – Rossendale.....	9
6.2 – Threats to species and habitats.....	9
6.3 – Adaptation to Climate Change.....	10
6.4 – Biodiversity, Local Authority land and buildings,.....	10
7 Rossendale’s Biodiversity Action Plan 2009-2010	
7.1 – The Aim of this Biodiversity Action Plan.....	11
7.2 – Biodiversity Action Plan 2009-2010.....	11
8 National Indicators.....	12
9 Things to do now.....	13

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth. This includes all species of plants and animals and all the natural systems that support them. Biodiversity is a core component of sustainable development, underpinning economic development and prosperity, and has an important role to play in developing locally distinctive and sustainable communities.

Biodiversity includes all species of plants and animals, as well as their genetic variation and the complex ecosystem of which they are part. It covers the whole natural world, everything from the smallest most common specie to the most critically endangered.

Biodiversity forms the living landscape around us. It sustains living systems and enhances our quality of life and is an important component of the view from our window, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the materials and medicines we use, along with the other natural systems and processes on which our lives depend and largely take for granted.

1.2 – Why Biodiversity is important

Biodiversity is essential to our survival. This is due to the basic necessities which we use all the time, such as food, fuel, clean air and water, as well as benefits such as medicine, the natural breakdown of waste and crop pollination.

However despite the positive aspects it brings, there are also negatives. Biodiversity gives us 'super-bugs' that can survive conventional antibiotics, invasive plants and animals and new 'killer' bugs such as bird flu.

Through extensive research it has been found that small seemingly unimportant species of both plants and animals play a huge role in the health of natural and managed habitats, as well as providing cures to certain diseases. Examples of this can be seen in North America, where a plant called *feverfew* is successfully destroying stem cell leukemia.

This huge variety of life is vital in enabling the environment to recover from disasters. The larger the volume of species in a system, whether managed or natural, the smaller the chance of them being destroyed or killed, so these processes are vital to sustain life and continue to flourish.

Microorganisms, which include fungi and bacteria, turn the nitrogen in the air into nutrients for plants and also recycle nutrients by breaking down wastes and toxins, turning them into nutrients for plants.

Everything on Earth is interdependent on other species. If a certain species, including people, tips or interferes too greatly with natural process, the process will be affected and may not be able to function properly and may fail to adjust. Consequently, it is

important to maintain biodiversity - everything from the smallest organisms to people have a huge role to play in biodiversity.

1.3 Benefits of Conserving Biodiversity

There are many and varied reasons for conserving biodiversity as it: -

- **Plays An Important Role in Tackling Climate Change**

Wildlife habitats such as woodlands and peat bogs act as carbon sinks, helping to reduce the severity of Climate Change. Other habitats such as natural floodplains can help reduce flooding. Natural habitats are also important in allowing mobile species to move in response to changes in the climate

- **Is An Indicator Of The Wider Health of Our Environment**

An environment rich in biodiversity is also likely to perform well in respect to other measures of environmental quality such as air and water qualities, and provide healthily and attractive living environment for people. Therefore biodiversity is a key indicator of sustainable development.

- **Supports other Vital Services That Sustain Life on Earth**

Human life and economic activity depend on vital services provided by ecosystems. These can include clear air and water. Studies have shown that economic value of these ecosystems services is immense, and that a large proportion of this value depends on the biological diversity of these systems.

- **Contributes to Our Health and Wellbeing**

Studies show that nature helps enhance our physical and mental health. By encouraging people to outdoor exercise for recreation and relaxation, people's wellbeing may be improved. Biodiversity also plays an important role in educating us about the world around us.

- **Is an Important Part of Our Cultural Heritage and Identity**

Biodiversity is important in defining local character and distinctiveness; it helps shape the environment in which Rossendale operates, affecting the quality of life of local residents.

- **Offers Opportunities For Community Engagement and Volunteering**

Local biodiversity projects offer opportunities to engage local communities and promote social inclusion

- **Provides us With Essential Products and Materials**

Biodiversity is a source of many vital products such as food, medicines and building materials. Biodiversity conservation is important to ensure that these products continue to be available to us and to future generations.

- **We Have a Responsibility to Conserve Biodiversity**

Apart from the benefits that it provides, there are strong ethical reasons why mankind should conserve biodiversity. We **share** the planet with many other species, and many would argue that we have no right to preside over the extinction of other animals and plants. As well as the intrinsic values of biodiversity, we have a responsibility to pass on healthy stock of natural capital to future generations.

2.0 Policy Background to Biodiversity

2.1 International Framework

When 153 countries from around the world signed the United Nations Convention of Biological Diversity at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the countries agreed to take action to tackle the loss of biodiversity on a worldwide scale. In 2001, the European Union backed by the UK government, released *Halt the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010*. Later in 2002 the UN endorsed this approach.

2.2 UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

Following the Rio Summit, the UK Government pledged to take action. As a result, in 1994, the Government published the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Through this the Government committed itself to conserve and enhance:

- The number of wildlife species and the quality and extent of wildlife habitats
- Species and habitats that are internally important or characteristic of local areas
- Species and habitats that have declined significantly over recent times/decades

'Working with Grain of Nature: A Biodiversity Strategy for England' was published in 2002 and this set out a programme which ensured that biodiversity became a natural consideration of policies and decisions in government. This included management of agriculture, water, woodland and urban areas.

2.3 Local Authority Role

Local Authorities have a significant impact on biodiversity, and their activities have an important role to play in its conservation. Examples of the way a Local Authority can fulfil that role include by:

- Leading local policies and strategies
- Administering the planning system
- Development of new infrastructure
- Ownership and management of land and buildings
- Promoting the local area
- Generating environmental impacts
- Influencing the awareness and attitudes
- Collecting, storing and disseminating information
- Incorporating biodiversity into development strategies
- Making decisions about procurement

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, places duties on public bodies to maintain biodiversity in sections 40 and 41.

Section 40 –

Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity

Section 41 –

Section 41 includes all the UK BAP habitats and species as part of this duty. This is the first specific statutory duty placed upon local authorities with regard to maintenance of specific habitats and species.

2.4 Conserving Biodiversity in the UK

In October 2007, the UK Government set out its strategic framework for the conservation of biodiversity. *Conserving Biodiversity in the UK*.

In this strategy, a number of principles were identified to be adopted for the delivery of biodiversity objectives by working towards the six priorities:

- Protection of the best sites for wildlife
- Targeting action on priority species and habitats
- Embedding proper consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems in relevant sectors of policy and decision making
- Engaging people, and encouraging behavioral change
- Developing and interpreting the evidence base
- Ensuring the UK plays a proactive role in biodiversity

2.5 UK BAP Review 2007

In 2007 a review was carried out into the UK BAP. Some priority species were no longer considered to be under threat. These were removed and several priority habitats were added.

New priority habitats included:

- Ponds
- Calminaria Grasslands
- Upland Flushes
- Fens & Swamps
- Open Mosaic Habitats

New priority species included:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| • Hedgehog | Curlew |
| • Brown long-eared bat | Lapwing |
| • Grass snake | Red Grouse |
| • Adder | House Sparrow |
| • Toad | Starling |
| • Lampreys | Small Heath Moth |

2.6 Biodiversity Across Lancashire

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The Lancashire BAP was introduced in 2001; this sets out the conservation priorities and actions needed to protect the biodiversity of the county and outlines who is responsible for delivering species actions. Rossendale will be working with Lancashire County Council, as well as others, to develop a BAP for Rossendale.

2.7 Types of Habitat Action Plans

There are three types of action plans for habitats in the UK, these are:

- National
- Regional
- Local

National – Describes the status of the habitat on UK level

Regional – Describes the status of the habitat on a regional level, Lancashire

Local – Describes the status of the habitat at a Rossendale level

The UK government is committed to conserving and maintaining biodiversity. Through the government, local BAP's provide a major contribution to the delivery of the national targets.

3.0 Biodiversity Policy

3.1 Impact of the Biodiversity Duty on Rossendale

Rossendale's duty for the conservation of biodiversity impacts many of the Council's roles including:

- As a regulator in terms of considering the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity when developing the spatial planning framework and also in considering individual planning application. However, less obviously, the way in which the Council carries out its contaminated land responsibilities may be affected by biodiversity considerations.
- As an owner and manager of land and property in terms of, for example, designing maintenance regimes that encourage a variety of species to flourish.
- As a community leader, for example working within the Local Strategic Partnership to ensure that all partners fully consider the impact of their actions on the biodiversity of the Borough
- As a purchaser of goods and services, for example, decisions to purchase particular types of wood products or plants could have a negative effect on biodiversity.

Many of the decisions that the Council takes in the routine course of running its business have the potential, either positively or negatively, to affect biodiversity both locally, and particularly in the case of procurement, on a wider stage.

3.2 Rossendale Borough Council's Biodiversity Policy Statement

The Biodiversity Duty does not require specific action of the Council, simply that the impact of any decision on biodiversity should be taken into account and weight in the decision making process. However in doing this, it is important for the decision makers to understand the weight that should be attached to these considerations. Therefore, the council policy response can be summarized as followed:

*"In taking any key decisions the Council will consider the impact of that decision on biodiversity and will only take a decision that has a negative impact where the other economic, social and environment impacts on the wellbeing of the Borough outweigh the negative impacts of biodiversity.
There will be a positive presumption subject to available resources, in favour of promotion of biodiversity in the way in which the council manages its retain land holdings.*

This can provide guidance linked to existing statute and the Council's power to promote the economic, social and environment wellbeing of the area, which councilors and officers can use to make decisions.

4.0 How the BAP fits in with the Planning System

4.1 PPS9 – Planning Policy Statement 9

The planning process is a statutory process, which regulates land use and land use change. The Local Planning Authority (Rossendale Development Control Department) plays a major role in conserving biodiversity, highlighted by central government guidance, PPS9. One key principle included in the guidance states,
"Plan policies and planning decisions should aim to maintain, enhance, restore, or add to biodiversity and geological conservation interests"

PPS9 clearly sets out the systematic approach that should be taken to biodiversity, through the application of the principle of the avoidance of harm, mitigation and compensation where harm is unavoidable, and provision of restoration and creation of habitats and species through planning gain.

PPS9 has a strong emphasis on replacing assets which have been previously lost, which is relevant to the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) target setting process for restoration of key habitats and species. The guidance goes further, requiring Local Authorities and developers alike to maximise habitat creation opportunities for biodiversity through the planning process.

A Government circular on biodiversity and geological conservation, statutory obligations and their impacts within the planning system, accompanies PPS9. This relates planning to wider legislation that affects biodiversity including the:

- Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981
- Habitats Direction
- Countryside and Right of Way Act 2000

- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

These all offer important safeguards to wildlife.

5.0 Protected Sites

5.1 – Internationally Important Sites (SPAs & SACs & SSSIs)

The best wildlife sites, internationally important special protection areas (SPAs) and special areas of conservation (SACs) and nationally important sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) are notified by Natural England, the government wildlife advisor with powers and duties to protect and enhance the natural heritage in England.

SPAs are designated for their European level importance to birds, while SACs are designated for their internationally important habitats for non-bird species.

5.2 – Local Sites

The following SSSIs are located within Rossendale:

- Lee Quarry (geological)
- Healey Dell
- Hodge Clough SSSI (geological)
- Lower Red Lees Pasture (biological)

6.0 Issues to consider for a Rossendale Biodiversity Action Plan

6.1 - Rossendale

88% of Rossendale Borough Council is green space and a quarter of this is designated Green Belt land. Consequently Rossendale may be home to a large variety of species, some of which we know and others which we may not.

Rossendale will be working with Lancashire County Council and other partners including Natural England, United Utilities, the Lancashire Wildlife Trust and the local community to identify the species that live or pass through Rossendale.

Lancashire County Council has a BAP for the entire county. However by preparing a local BAP a greater understanding can be achieved of the wildlife and habitats that are located in and around Rossendale and thereby help to implement Rossendale Borough Council's biodiversity policy.

6.2 Threats to species and habitats

There are threats to species everywhere, whether natural or man-made. A selection is described below:

- Introduction of predators to habitats, which may kill large numbers of the animals in that habitat
- Introduction and spread of species such as Japanese Knotweed

- Loss or potential damage to long time established habitats
- Long/short term neglect or inappropriate use or management of habitats
- Natural succession e.g. scrub invasion of wetlands and bogs
- Building development on key habitat land which leads to loss of habitats
- The inappropriate use of areas for amenity use
- Areas which suffer from over-intensive management
- Disturbance from people, bonfires, dirt bike tracks
- Pollution, noise, air and possibly light
- Fly-tippers, littering, vandalism
- Planting trees in inappropriate areas and inappropriate trees
- Intensive agriculture practice e.g. drainage, overgrazing
- The pollution of freshwater
- Surface run-off into rivers from agriculture land
- Excessive nutrients in water bodies, eutrophication
- Climate change problems such as extreme weather patterns and temperatures
- Lack of appropriate information or small level of knowledge of certain habitats

6.3 Adaptation to Climate Change

The climate is changing. In the future it is expected that temperatures will continue to rise, winter rainfall will continue to increase whilst summer rainfall will decrease and heat waves, droughts, storms and flood events will become more frequent and severe. Examples of this were seen in the summers of 2007 and 2008 with major flooding in Southern England and Yorkshire.

The Government acknowledges that there isn't any major debate over whether Climate Change is happening or not, and it is mainly due to human activity releasing emissions of CO₂. On a worldwide scale, there are a million different species on the path towards extinction by 2050 unless something is done to protect them.

The major effects that Climate Change will bring on wildlife and biodiversity include:

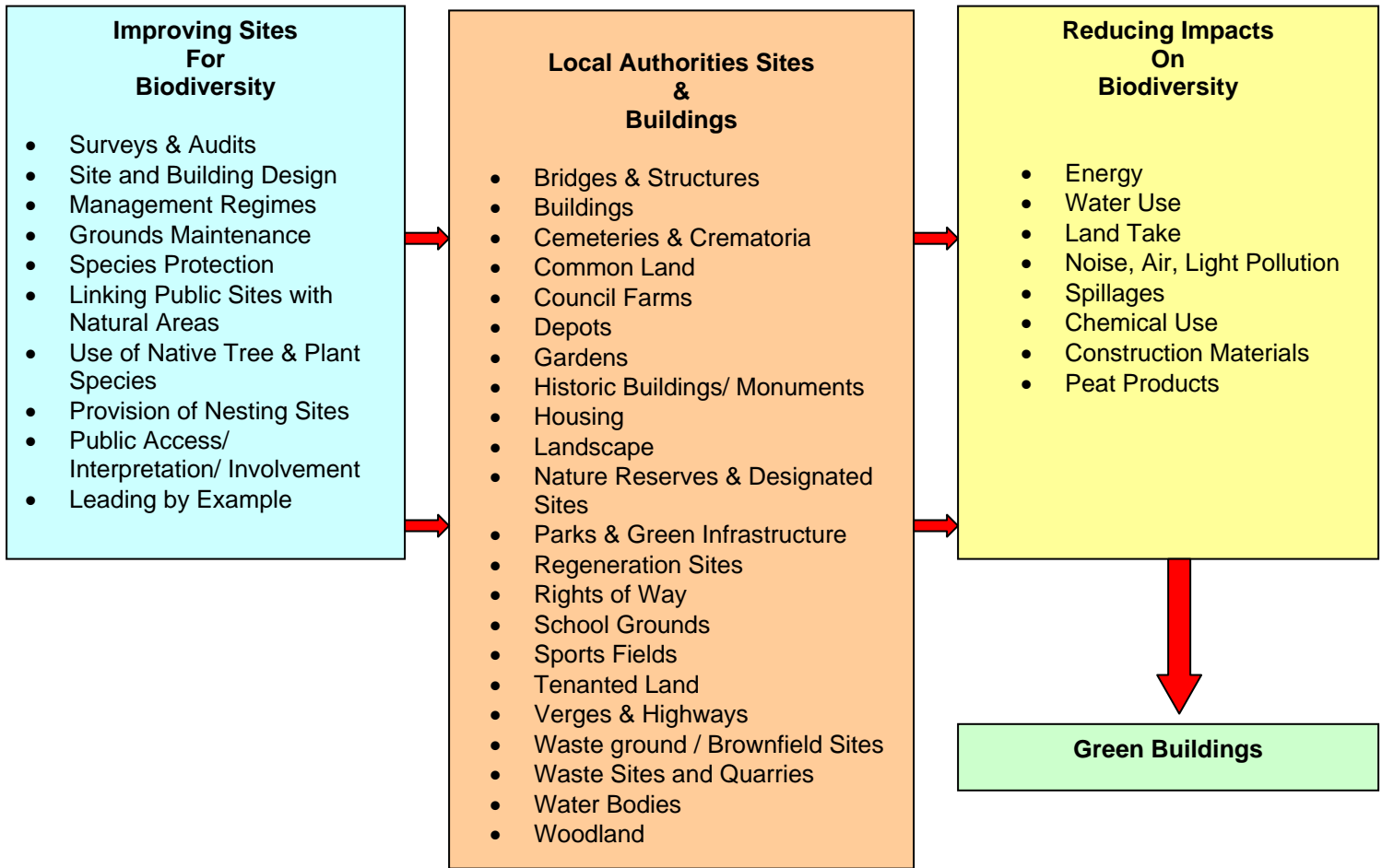
- Changes in timings of seasonal event –
Leads to a range of ecological mismatches such as the availability of food for young birds leading to starvation and loss of species also early or later hibernation.
- Impacts of extreme weather events –
Extreme weather events such as storms and droughts can kill individuals or mass numbers through cold, wetness, starvation or destruction of habitats
- Changes in land use management –
As the climate changes the land uses are likely to change with it, depending on how species adapt to possibly new land types may offer advantages or disadvantages to biodiversity.

Rossendale as well as the rest of the UK and world must take Climate Change seriously and introduce methods that can reduce its likely impact. Rossendale biggest threat

would be during the winter and summer storms where heavy rainfall will threaten parts with flooding. Climate Change must be understood and the threat reduced.

6.4 Biodiversity, Local Authority Land and Buildings

The figure overleaf shows the main ways that Local Authorities can achieve, maintain and restore Biodiversity.



7.0 Rossendale's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 2009-2010

7.1 The Aim of this BAP

- is to provide the necessary information on which to base actions in the future that will implement the Biodiversity Policy Statement.

7.2 Biodiversity Action Plan 2009-2010

7.2.1 Contact and organise local interest in biodiversity

- a) Identify partners including companies, individuals, educational establishments, conservationists and groups who have an interest in biodiversity, and develop a local steering group to take the plan forward.
- b) Encourage involvement in conserving and developing biodiversity in the district.
- c) Undertake an audit of available skills and experience.

7.2.2 – Carry out research into location of habitats in and around Rossendale

- a) Undertake an audit of biodiversity resources.
- b) Monitor condition of habitats and ensure that all have a management plan or statement of intent and progress is made on their management.
- c) Monitor the condition of other important local sites, maintaining a database of sites for future reference.

7.2.3 – Ensure protection of sites through local and regional policies/strategies

- a) Ensure policies protecting biodiversity are included in the Local Development Framework
- b) Ensure important sites are included on the LDF proposal map, take biodiversity into account in development control decisions.

7.2.4 – Investigate possibilities for creating new habitats, plant or wildlife

- a) Investigate extent of existing activities
- b) Investigate possibilities of introducing ponds to attract birds and introduce fish and other aquatic wildlife and plants
- c) Review neglected sites to establish their potential for improvement.
- d) Investigate the need for reintroduction of native plant species.

7.2.5 – Develop interpretation and public awareness

- a) Undertake an audit of available information and means of access.
- b) Encourage opportunities for promoting biodiversity within Rossendale, looking at groups with related interests, local and natural history.
- c) Ensure comprehensive information is available on Rossendale Borough Council's website (www.rossendale.gov.uk) promoting interest and access

7.2.6 – Promotion of education and training

- a) Encourage education opportunities.
- b) Share information with local schools and promote this where possible.

7.2.7 – Bid for funding

- a) Investigate the possibility for obtaining further funds to pursue and progress the above actions.

8.0 National Indicators

8.1 National Indicator 197

NI197 – Improved Local Biodiversity is the responsibility of Lancashire County Council's Environment Directorate.

The implementation of positive conservation management serves as widely accepted and cost effective proxy for assessing improvements in biodiversity. The indicator will assess the performance of local authorities with regard to local sites and consequently their wider performance for biodiversity.

This indicator may also have the effect of providing secondary benefits such as encouraging wider public access to local sites and promoting them for education purposes.

9.0 Things to do now

To improve or restore biodiversity, there are small 'quick wins' that can be carried out to achieve greater biodiversity.

- Reduce disturbance –

Wildlife requires freedom from disturbance, so that they can concentrate resources on breeding, feeding or resting. Care should be taken to minimize disturbances, e.g. when exercising dogs close to a concentration of birds e.g. a roost or where ground nesting birds may be present

- Resist picking fungi and flowers –

Leave flowers for others to enjoy and so that they can set seeds and function as part of the food web. Picking and collecting can damage the population and for some species it is an offence.

- Careful siting of habit creation schemes –

The creation of habitats, such as a pond or wood, should not be undertaken until the site has been checked for existing wildlife interest. This ensures that a better habitat is not unintentionally lost.