



# Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

## Topic Paper No 1 - Summary

### Introduction

Biodiversity essentially is the variety of all living things which exist in a particular area and makes our planet habitable. Closely linked to this is geological diversity (geodiversity) which is the variety of rocks, minerals, soils, landforms and natural processes which underpins biodiversity.

### Context

Biodiversity conservation and enhancement is widely acknowledged to be an essential contributor to sustainability. Many people appreciate our natural environment for several reasons e.g. pleasure, recreation, but it also provides food and materials.

Pressures on wildlife are exerted from a number of sources such as new development, destruction and fragmentation of habitats, air and water pollution and the release of greenhouse gases which can lead to climate change and cause natural systems to function less effectively.

The UK Biodiversity action plan (BAP) contains measures aimed at conserving biodiversity in Britain which in turn contributes to the conservation of global biodiversity. In Wales this is supplemented by the Natural Environment Framework 'A Living Wales' the guiding aim of which is to "ensure that Wales has increasingly resilient and diverse ecosystems that deliver environmental, economic and social benefits". The targets contained in these national documents are translated into action at the local

level by the Flintshire Biodiversity Action Plan (FBAP).

Flintshire contains international, national and local nature conservation designations. These contain sensitive habitats which provides for rare species such as Sand Lizards, Little Terns, the Great Crested Newt and thousands of wading birds on the Dee Estuary.

In addition there are many undesignated sites and habitats which have nature conservation value and are key elements in the County's biodiversity. These include streams, ponds and woodlands – particularly those of ancient semi natural origin.

### The role of the Plan

Planning has a role to play in biodiversity conservation. One of the key objectives is the conservation and enhancement of species and their habitats that are of international, national and local importance and which may be threatened by new development.

The Local Development Plan (LDP) cannot be solely responsible for protecting biodiversity. However, the statutory development plan provides the basis for making planning decisions which are capable of delivering a quality environment.

The LDP can identify sites for new development which avoid harming wildlife conservation interests and in doing so contribute to providing

sustainable development.

Positive planning which integrates features such as trees, hedgerows and water bodies can result in high quality development and provide habitats of high biodiversity value. Even individual buildings can foster biodiversity, for example, artificial nest boxes can be incorporated into barn conversions. Features such as green roofs on industrial buildings are useful roosting/breeding areas for wading birds attracted to the Dee Estuary.

## **Key Nature Conservation Plans and Strategies**

- UK Strategy for Sustainable Development (2005)
- One Wales: One Planet, The Sustainable Development Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government (2009)
- The Environment Strategy for Wales (2006)
- Planning Policy Wales (2012)
- TAN 5 Nature Conservation and Planning (2009)
- The Wales Biodiversity Framework (2010)
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan (1994)

## **Issues to be addressed by the Plan**

### **Species Protection**

- Safeguard protected species

### **Habitat Protection**

- Maintain biodiversity through the conservation of habitats
- Ensure that statutorily designated sites are properly protected
- Protect trees, groups of trees and areas of woodland which have biodiversity value
- Ensure that action in Flintshire contributes to meeting international and national responsibilities for the natural environment
- Have regard to the relative importance of international, national and local designations in considering the weight attached to nature conservation interests

- Avoid unnecessary constraints on development

## **Enhancement of Nature Conservation Interests**

- Within new development incorporate measures which improve the biodiversity value

## **Potential Land Use Policies / Proposals**

Biodiversity conservation has and continues to be enshrined in planning policy at all levels. There are 6 policies contained within the Wildlife and Biodiversity Chapter of the UDP. All of these policies are still considered to be relevant and applicable to Flintshire as it looks forward to the next plan period and the LDP. Consequently it is envisaged that the key policies and proposals will set out to:-

- Sustain and increase the range and population of protected species
- Identify all international and national designated wildlife sites
- Provide a criteria based policy for development affecting all the designated sites
- Provide for the conservation of biodiversity outside designated areas, i.e. locally important habitats and species
- Ensure all reasonable alternative sites have been considered before allocating land which may impact adversely on biodiversity
- Using planning obligations or Community Infrastructure Levy to reduce or mitigate against damaging impacts upon nature conservation
- Allow proposals which enhances biodiversity by incorporating wildlife and geological features within the design of new developments
- Reduce the effects of climate change by resisting development which does not reduce emissions