GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLANS

Evaluating priorities and setting targets for habitats and species

Guidance Note 4

UK Local Issues Advisory Group
Guidance for Local Biodiversity Action Plans

This is one of a series of Guidance Notes designed to assist everyone involved in the production of Local Biodiversity Action Plans throughout the UK.

The UK Action Plan on Biodiversity published by the Government in 1994, sets out the broad strategy and targets for conserving and enhancing wild species and wildlife habitats for the next 20 years. A further report by the UK Steering Group, published in December 1995 and endorsed by the Government in May 1996, makes detailed proposals for a large number of species and habitats which require urgent conservation action. The UK plan, together with its individual action plans for species and habitats, now provides the framework for effective delivery of biodiversity conservation at a national level, and defines our international responsibilities. It provides the UK commitment to the Biodiversity Convention signed at Rio in 1992.

Successful implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan requires some means of ensuring that the national strategy is translated into effective action at the local level. Local Biodiversity Action Plans are seen as the means by which this can be achieved. This Guidance is aimed at assisting in the development of these plans. It is produced by the UK Local Issues Advisory Group on behalf of the Local Agenda 21 Steering Group and the UK Biodiversity Group.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
- Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report, HMSO 1995

UK Local Issues Advisory Group
Chairman Professor David Goode

MEMBERSHIP
- Association of Local Government Ecologists
- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
- Country Landowners Association
- Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
- Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland)
- English Nature
- Environment Agency
- Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
- Local Government Association
- Local Government Management Board
- London Ecology Unit
- MAFF
- RSPB
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- National Parks Authority
- The Forestry Authority
- The Welsh Office
- The Wildlife Trusts

GUIDANCE NOTES IN THIS SERIES:
1. An introduction
2. Developing Partnerships
3. How Local Biodiversity Action Plans relate to other plans
4. Evaluating priorities and setting targets for habitats and species
5. Incentives and advice for biodiversity

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GUIDANCE NOTE 4

Identifying Priorities and Setting Targets for Habitats and Species

SUMMARY
This guidance addresses the following aspects of Local Biodiversity Action Plan preparation:

- identifying species and habitats of UK conservation concern within a local action plan area;
- identifying: additional species or habitats which are characteristic or locally distinctive and are, therefore, of local conservation concern;
- deciding which species and habitats are priorities for conservation action locally;
- determining appropriate local targets for priority habitats and species.

Included within this guidance are suggestions for general principles and information sources to aid species and habitat selection, evaluation and target setting locally. This guidance applies at any chosen boundary scale (for detailed guidance on choosing plan areas see Guidance Notes 1 and 3) and the consistent use of such guidance by local groups will help to reduce duplication of effort and provide a clearer focus for their work.

INTRODUCTION
How this guidance is set out:

This guidance describes work being undertaken at the UK level to implement the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and the various mechanisms in operation to translate this work to a regional or local level. It further sets out a general over-view of the process of selecting priority species and habitats for Local Biodiversity Action Plans and of setting local targets. The paper is aimed at all those involved in the local biodiversity plan process, and is designed to aid consistency of approach taken by local initiatives across the UK. A Technical Annex to this paper provides additional detailed information on resource evaluation, priority setting and target setting.

Links with National Biodiversity Implementation
Local Biodiversity Action Plan action is essentially a bottom-up process for implementing the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. However, this process needs to interface with the UK, or top-down, process that steers the implementation of individual habitat and species action plans.

UK steering groups
For each key habitat (listed in Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report, Volume 2), a UK steering group is being established to give strategic focus to the implementation of the relevant action plans. Each group will be formed of all relevant sectors, from government departments to land managers. Groups will undertake national evaluations of the resource, identify those areas under greatest pressure and opportunities for conservation action. Groups will also provide a national steer on where resources should be targeted by the major conservation organisations.

Most species will not require a dedicated UK steering group. Some species will be confined to a single country or a highly restricted area. Other species may be addressed through related habitat groups, or in groups of species that are related either taxonomically or by habitat type.

Since the reporting of action will be undertaken largely on a country basis (ie England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), steering groups will at an early stage agree a division of the UK targets for each key habitat across the four countries. This broad division of targets will be the first key step to guide implementation work in each country and break down targets for key habitats and the relevant species to the local level. The UK steering groups will be responsible for dissemination of this information to the local level.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION TO GUIDE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN PREPARATION

Local data sources
The preparation of Local Biodiversity Action Plans will require considerable information gathering and collation in order to identify and evaluate the local resource and set appropriate local level targets for habitats and species. The identification and use of existing information sources (Phase I surveys, local authority habitat audits, specific surveys, reports, raw data and contextual information) can provide opportunities to save time and resources and should be examined in the first instance. However, it is quite likely that further information requirements will be identified and some of this information may be specifically gathered as part of the

3
Local Biodiversity Action Plan process.

Local Record Centres (where these exist) will be one source of data on current and historic distributions of habitats and species in the local area, which may prove valuable for locally important species in particular. Other local and reasonably accessible information may be available from the Wildlife Trusts, RSPB and the statutory nature conservation organisations. However, availability and quality of local species and habitat data will vary. Good data will aid local evaluation and target setting; in the absence of such local data, this guidance should help local experts and authors of local plans to exercise their judgement.

Contextual information sources

Local data should wherever possible be considered alongside national contextual information to provide a clear picture of the local significance of any habitat or species. Contextual information sources that will prove valuable to local groups include:

a) As the national action plan process progresses, information will become available from the UK habitat and species steering groups referred to in 1 above. Relevant information will be disseminated through participating organisations to the local level and will usually be available to Local Biodiversity Action Plan groups through the local offices of the partnership organisations involved (for example the statutory conservation organisations, RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts).

b) Biogeographic zoning systems are being developed by each of the statutory nature conservation organisations across the UK. Such systems draw together a great deal of information about appropriate or characteristic distributions of key habitats and species and their local significance based on a national evaluation of the resource. This information will aid the identification and selection processes described below. For example, English Nature are developing Natural Area level targets for all UK priority habitats and species to aid Local Biodiversity Action Plan target setting. This framework will provide a consistent information source and assessment of significance for developing targets in local plans at any given boundary scale.

c) Regional audits and strategic guidance act as an intermediate step between the UK and the local, but are not designed to replace local plans. By looking at a wider picture, however, they provide context for local plans, enabling actions and targets for a range of habitats and species (especially those confined to the region) to be divided between local plans as most befits opportunity and local character. These audits and strategic guidance will also provide regional information on species that are non-national priority. Regional documents may draw from biogeographic zones for context with the national picture.

d) Species Recovery Programmes (such as those run by RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage and English Nature) will provide information on the national or country recovery initiatives being undertaken for individual species. In many cases these initiatives will be underway already.

e) Where available, local groups should consider plans for neighbouring areas to ensure that their selection of species and targets set are consistent/compatible with those bordering their areas.

BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLANS: A DUAL APPROACH

Local Biodiversity Action Plans should address initially all those species and habitats identified in the UK Steering Group report as national priorities which are known to occur locally (or have occurred recently). Local plans should address additional species and habitats where these are of local importance.

A three step process is suggested.

STEP 1. Review of Species and Habitats

STEP 2. Evaluate and Prioritise

STEP 3. Set Local Targets

Below we set out the three step approach in general terms. Technical information on these steps is available in the Annex.

STEP 1 – REVIEW OF SPECIES AND HABITATS

This review needs to be based on the best information available which would usually include the most recent and accurate data. Professional advice may need to be sought where the information base is of variable quality but the lack of complete data should never deter the review process from being undertaken. The review is likely to identify gaps in the information base and this in itself can be a useful part of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process.

Species audit

Draw up a list, based on the best data and local information available, of species of conservation concern found in the plan area. The list should include:

- Any species of UK priority, as identified in the UK Biodiversity Steering Group Report, for which action plans have been produced or are in the process of production. There are currently 116 national species plans. A further 290 plus species plans are to be prepared by the end of 1998 (details of these will be finalised later in 1997).

- Species on the UK Long List (Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report Vol 2). If species found locally are not on the Long List but meet the criteria (Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report Vol 1, Chap. 2) then they should be added to your list of species.
Other species which are of local conservation concern, locally threatened, locally rare, locally distinctive/characteristic or locally popular.

**Habitat audit**

Draw up a list of habitats of conservation concern in your plan area and identify the distribution and extent of these habitats. This list may cover all the broad and key habitats listed in *The UK Steering Group Report (Vol 2)*. The broad habitat list is considered to be comprehensive and so all parts of the local area should be attributable to one habitat or another. The list should include:

- Any key habitats of UK priority for which action plans have been produced or are in the process of production. There are currently 14 UK habitat plans. The remaining 24 habitat plans are to be prepared by the end of 1998.
- Other habitats which are of local conservation concern, locally threatened, locally rare, locally distinctive/characteristic or locally popular.

**Potential for reintroduction or re-creation**

It is important to consider the possibility of reversing past losses, where this is practical to do so, whether these are changes in distribution, extent or local extinction. Species and habitats that have disappeared from the local area may also be listed to allow for consideration to be given to reintroduction of species or re-establishment of habitat. As a rough guide reference should be made to species extinctions within the last 25 years, and where extinction dates are not known to the most recent record. For habitats an historical assessment of habitat loss and locations of lost habitats will be valuable.

**Further information or data requirements**

Once the initial audits are complete, further information may need to be collated, for example information on distribution and range within the local plan area and this will aid the evaluation and prioritisation stage (Step 2). For both habitats and species, data or expert opinion on *extent, quality and national significance* within the local area should also be collated. For habitats this could be based broadly, for example, on the type of species present and appropriate habitat structures compared to other areas of that habitat.

**STEP 2 – EVALUATE AND PRIORITISE**

This next step involves evaluating those species and habitats on the list compiled under step 1, to decide which are priorities for action in the local area. Local criteria for species and habitat evaluation should start from criteria used to select national priorities in *The UK Steering Group Report*. The evaluation will therefore identify habitats and species for which urgent conservation actions are required, which could appropriately be undertaken in the plan area. Evaluation should also address the potential or scale of opportunity available in the plan area to deliver significant conservation gains for key habitats and species. Lastly, consideration should be given to opportunities for marketing, education and monitoring of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process, in some cases through other habitats and species that may be of local importance.

Suggested criteria for **species** based on the UK Plan criteria and produced for the purposes of this guidance are:

- UK priority species (short or middle lists), in particular those most characteristic of the area
- significance of local resource in national context – e.g. is a species unique to the area or does the area have a high proportion of the national population of the species?
- local opportunity available to contribute towards national targets
- local decline rates – declines and increases assessed where possible over the last 25 years
- local rarity – species occurrence in the Biodiversity Action Plan area
- local threat – e.g. lack of management, recreation, pollution, development
- local distinctiveness – high profile or popular species or species particularly associated with an area.

**Suggested habitat evaluation criteria:**

- UK priority habitats, in particular those most characteristic of the area
- significance of local resource in national context - e.g. is a habitat confined to the area or does the area have a high proportion of the national resource?
- opportunity available to enhance the local resource
- local decline rates
- local rarity
- local threats to the habitat
- degree of habitat fragmentation/fragment viability
- importance of habitat for key species
- local distinctiveness – habitats used to raise the profile of Local Biodiversity Action Plan work within the plan area.

Selection of local priority species or habitats in a given area may involve a choice between UK priority habitats and species, not simply identifying all those that occur in the area. Some UK priority habitats and species may be more characteristic of some Local Biodiversity Action Plan areas than others. In this case, it may be most appropriate for local effort to be focused on the more characteristic habitats and species.
Other priority habitats and species will then be addressed by Local Biodiversity Action Plans in those areas where they are most characteristic. The relative opportunity available in an area should also guide selection. Selection should remain sufficiently flexible to accommodate the best opportunities for conservation gain on a cost-benefit basis.

**STEP 3 – SET LOCAL TARGETS**

Step 2 will have identified a shortlist of species and habitats for which conservation action is a priority in the local area. It should be noted that actions identified to meet targets for a species can be specific to that species, generic to a group of species, or aimed at a habitat with which the species is associated. Every effort should be made to ensure that an integrated approach is taken to determining implementation actions.

The Local Biodiversity Action Plan should set targets for these habitats and species using the following guidance:

a) Realistic but ambitious; setting targets that are appropriate to maintain or restore the natural character of an area, and contribute an appropriate proportion of the national target for each given feature;

b) Set to the same measurable parameters used in the national targets for key habitats and species. Targets should be measurable to enable progress to be evaluated subsequently and success or failure recorded;

c) Set against clear timescales, which should mirror timescales set in national action plans where possible. Milestones should be included towards long-term objectives.

However, Local Biodiversity Action Plans need not set targets limited by the apparent lack of financial resources. Targets should be set that are appropriate to the area and its features, not solely on the basis of current resource availability.

A balance needs to be achieved between priority habitats and species identified for local action. It is essential to realise that habitat and species action cannot be treated in isolation from each other and that targets set for a certain species or habitat may have implications for other habitats and species. For example, the management of heathland for one taxonomic group may have adverse consequences for other species. Integrated and, therefore, non-conflicting targets should be set wherever possible. It may be helpful in achieving this objective to be aware of, and liaise with, the national habitat steering groups when necessary by making contact with the relevant lead agency Contact Points, and for national species action plans to make contact with the relevant Contact Point or Lead Partners.

It may be useful to relate targets for key habitats with their component species. Targets for national priority habitats and species can often address the beneficial needs of a wide range of other species. Local characterisation can be a means of prioritising nationally important habitats and species in a Local Biodiversity Action Plan area and will, in all likelihood, achieve simultaneous benefit for other non-national priority habitats and species that are nonetheless of local importance.

**CONCLUSION**

This Guidance Note forms part of a cohesive series of such notes on the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process. The current titles are listed on the inside page of this Guidance Note and more titles are planned for the near future. It is recommended that, wherever possible, the present series of Notes is treated as an integral package of guidance to aid all organisations or individuals involved in the production of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

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1 Targets should not be confused with actions. Targets are measurable variables which relate expressly to species and habitat status. For example, developing a management plan is an activity, not a target.
ANNEX

Technical Notes on Identifying Priorities and Setting Targets for Habitats and Species

1. INTRODUCTION
This technical guidance is considered to be the best practice at the time of writing, but may be revised in the light of further experience. The evaluation of existing information, the identification of information gaps, the gathering of new data and the need for new assessments of these data are complementary processes essential to those who are writing and developing Local Biodiversity Action Plans across the UK. The broad process set out in the main guidance note provides:

- A system that can be applied consistently by different people, to ensure that all Local Biodiversity Action Plans follow a similar prioritisation and target setting process
- An objective approach (where data allows) to the selection of priorities
- A system which can be applied to different taxa and habitats

This annex is a technical, detailed supplement to the three step process outlined in the main paper and suggests an approach to using these three steps.

2. STEP 1 – REVIEW OF SPECIES AND HABITATS

2.1 Information for the species and habitats review
This review needs to be based on the best information available which would usually include the most recent and accurate data. This could include information on total population numbers, sample estimates, or range, or be inferred from expert opinion or local knowledge. Habitat data could include information on total area and number of sites, or also be inferred from expert and/or local opinion/knowledge. Professional advice may need to be sought where the information base is of variable quality but the lack of complete data should never deter the review process from being undertaken.

2.2 Species review
This should cover all the listed species identified in Biodiversity: the UK Steering Group Report (Volume 2) as well as other species of local concern or interest.

2.3 Habitat review
This should cover all the broad and key habitats listed in Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report (Volume 2). The broad habitat list is considered to be comprehensive and so all parts of the local area should be attributable to one habitat or another. However, the key habitats for which UK targets have been set should receive priority focus. Local Biodiversity Action Plans can also cover habitats not included in the above lists which are thought to be of local conservation concern.

2.4 Historical Species and Habitat Distribution
It is important to consider the possibility of reversing past losses, where this is practical to do so, whether these are changes in distribution, extent or local extinctions. The species audit could include analysis of historical distribution to determine local extinctions, i.e. species which have become recently extirpated in the local area (within the last 25 years). Where extinction is not certain, or where the most recent data is more than 10 years old, the date of the most recent record should be given. Current species distribution maps will provide a valuable reference for the review and allow changes in distribution to be observed over time.

An assessment of historical loss of habitat will be relevant to the habitat review, as will the actual locations of lost habitats. Habitat distribution maps would provide a valuable reference for the audit and allow changes in distribution to be observed over time.

3. STEP 2 – EVALUATE AND PRIORITISE

3.1 Species evaluation criteria
The primary criteria are: decline, rarity, threat, and position in geographical range. These criteria are supported by a new criterion not accounted for in the UK lists, but which is particularly pertinent to the local area. This is termed “local distinctiveness”. This will lend weight to those species already identified under other criteria, or identify species which may have important local value in the Biodiversity Action Plan process. For suggested species evaluation criteria see Table 1 on page 8.

3.2 Evaluation results
Once species have been evaluated, the result can be presented in a table showing which criteria a species meets. Such a process will be valuable in monitoring the future status for all species and so enabling an assessment of the effectiveness of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. A fictitious example is given in Table 2 on page 9. (N.B. Some boxes may be left blank in the table where species do not meet the criteria).

3.3 Priorities for action
These can then be set using information from the table, together with UK and local knowledge and advice. In many cases an extensive list of species will have been evaluated, so it will be necessary to rank the list according to the level of conservation concern. Therefore, in the above table, the species might be ranked in order of priority: Wart-biter Grasshopper, Stone Curlew, Gomphus spinulosus, Common Seal and Scarce Chaser. Ladybird Spider would be considered a priority if recolonisation was judged feasible and was consistent with the UK strategy for the species.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>UK Priority</strong> (in descending order)</th>
<th><strong>Species evaluation criteria</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short and middle list</td>
<td>Species present on the UK short and middle lists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long list</td>
<td>Species present on the UK long list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional long list</td>
<td>Additional species which meet the UK long list criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local decline rate</strong>&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapidly declining</td>
<td>50–100% decline in numbers/range in BAP area in previous 25 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declining</td>
<td>25–49% decline in numbers/range in BAP area in previous 25 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>24% increase – 24% decline in numbers/range in BAP area in previous 25 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing</td>
<td>25–49% increase in numbers/range in BAP area in previous 25 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapidly increasing</td>
<td>50% or greater increase in numbers/range in BAP area in previous 25 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local rarity</strong>&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Currently occurs in 0.6% or fewer tetrads in the BAP area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarcie</td>
<td>Currently occurs in 0.6–4.0% of tetrads in the BAP area&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Currently occurs in more than 4.0%+ of tetrads in the BAP area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extinct</td>
<td>Extinct in BAP area (plus date).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local threat</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directly threatened</td>
<td>Species with specific habitat requirements which are directly threatened by lack of or inappropriate management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirectly threatened</td>
<td>Species threatened indirectly by human activities – e.g. recreation, pollution. This has to be determined at a local level as there will be different threats in different parts of the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position in geographical range</strong>&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historically ‘endemic’</td>
<td>Species believed to have always been ‘endemic’ to the Local Biodiversity Action Plan area, i.e. it has never occurred elsewhere in the UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently ‘endemic’</td>
<td>Local population currently forms 100% of the species’ UK population, but it previously occurred elsewhere&lt;sup&gt;5&lt;/sup&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly localised</td>
<td>Local population forms at least 20%, or 10 or more times the proportion of the UK covered by the plan area, of the species’ UK population&lt;sup&gt;7&lt;/sup&gt;, whichever is lower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localised</td>
<td>Local population forms 10–19%, or 5–9.9 times the proportion of the UK covered by the plan area, of the species’ UK population, whichever is lower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolated</td>
<td>Local population is isolated from other populations and is likely to contribute to genetic diversity of the species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlying</td>
<td>Species is at the edge of its range in the plan area. This may not affect the priority allocated to a species, but may affect the targets which are set and action which is undertaken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local distinctiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flagship</td>
<td>Flagship species – high profile species which can be used to illustrate wider issues in the environment (i.e. where a species action plan can be used to promote habitats or generic issues).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keystone</td>
<td>Keystone species – ecologically important species which can be used as direct indicators of habitat health/quality, i.e. those species for which fluctuations in numbers represents a direct change in the habitat. Keystone species may also be those which can be used to identify generic issues in the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Typical species – those species not necessarily identified as being of conservation concern, but which are particularly associated with, or characteristic of, the locality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. This includes those species found only on the long list and excludes species already scored on the short and middle lists.
2. These criteria are directly taken from the decline criteria used in the Species Group Report.
3. The criteria here are based on the Species Group Report whereby criteria on criteria form on numbers of 10km squares in GB (not the UK) in which the species occurs (of a total of approximately 2,900). However, the criterion equivalent to the national level for the more rare species (presence in 1.5 10km square) is in 0.2% or fewer tetrads locally, which produces no small a number to be useful at all but the largest local levels. For the criterion to be workable, a minimum of 167 tetrads is needed for the BAP area. This equates to an area between 576km<sup>2</sup> and 657km<sup>2</sup>, depending on the position of the boundary in relation to tetrads.
4. This identifies species which are scarce locally rather than rare. The criteria may become more important in smaller areas (with fewer tetrads); it may be less significant for larger areas.
5. This criterion can be measured using population data, or where this is not available, by information on presence or absence in a range.
6. This value will be affected by conservation action outside the area, where species can make some areas where they formerly occurred.
7. This calculation means that the level set is flexible for areas below 2% of the UK land surface. However, the level is not flexible for higher areas, as supporting 20% of the UK population of a species is an important consideration whether the area covers 3% or 30% of the UK.
TABLE 2 – Species Evaluation Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPECIES</th>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>UK Priority</th>
<th>Local Decline</th>
<th>Local Rarity</th>
<th>Local Threat</th>
<th>Pos.in Geog. Range</th>
<th>Local Distinctiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barbinus naticatus</td>
<td>Stone Curlew</td>
<td>Short list</td>
<td>Declining</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Localised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denticus verrucivorus</td>
<td>Wart-biter</td>
<td>Middle list</td>
<td>Rapidly declining</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Directly threatened</td>
<td>Highly localised, isolated</td>
<td>Keyzone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vipera berus</td>
<td>Adder</td>
<td>Middle list</td>
<td>Declining</td>
<td>Scarce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coeloperus zonatus</td>
<td>A water beetle</td>
<td>Short list</td>
<td>Declining</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Indirectly threatened</td>
<td>Highly localised</td>
<td>Flagship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoca vitulina</td>
<td>Common Seal</td>
<td>Middle list</td>
<td>Increasing</td>
<td>Scarce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libellula fulva</td>
<td>Scarce Chaser</td>
<td>Middle list</td>
<td>Rapidly declining</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Indirectly threatened</td>
<td>Outlying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populus nigra</td>
<td>Native Black Poplar</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Highly localised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eresus niger</td>
<td>Ladybird Spider</td>
<td>Middle list</td>
<td>Rapidly declining</td>
<td>Extinct (1973)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For locally extinct species, an assessment should be made of the likelihood of successful recolonisation or reintroduction. Within those species for which success is possible, the prioritisation should be the same as for extant species.

The evaluation procedure should inform the decision making process in an objective manner. It is not a strict decision making process in itself.

3.4 Habitats evaluation – all habitats should undergo a similar evaluation process to species, according to criteria relating to extent and quality. The extent of a habitat is likely to be more important in selecting priorities than quality, which should be used more to determine the most suitable course of action.

**Extent:** the information needed will be:
- a) extent held locally
- b) local decline rate
- c) proportion of UK habitat
- d) local rarity
- e) local threat

**Quality:** the information needed will be:
- a) degree of fragmentation
- b) importance for key species
- c) viability
- d) local distinctiveness

Assessment of habitat quality can be done by comparing the appropriate species complement and habitat structure with either past records, with other areas of habitat nearby or using professional judgement based on species and structures expected in each habitat. For suggested habitat evaluation criteria: see Table 3 on page 10.

Conservation status described in the table should be used as a means of informing the prioritisation process, in that those habitats deemed to be of greatest conservation concern should be given the highest priority for conservation action. In Table 2, habitats might be ranked in order of priority: chalk rivers, heath grassland, unimproved neutral grassland and disturbed urban sites.

4 STEP 3 – SET LOCAL TARGETS

4.1 Targets for habitats and species

Having set local priorities, targets should be set for each priority habitat and species within the local context as a contribution to any existing national targets. Targets should be:
### TABLE 3 – Habitat evaluation criteria

#### Habitat Extent:
- **UK priority**
  - **Key habitat**: Key habitat as identified in UK Steering Group report
  - **Local decline rate**
    - Rapidly declining: 50 – 100% decline in habitat extent in BAP area in previous 25 years
    - Declining: 25 – 49% decline in habitat extent in BAP area in previous 25 years
    - Stable: 24% increase – 24% decrease in habitat extent in BAP area in previous 25 years
    - Increasing: 25 – 49% increase in habitat extent in BAP area in previous 25 years
    - Rapidly increasing: 50% or greater increase in habitat extent in BAP area in previous 25 years

- **Proportion of UK habitat in local area**
  - Endemic: Local habitat forms 100% of total UK resource
  - Highly significant: Local habitat forms 20 – 99% of total UK resource
  - Significant: Local habitat forms 10 – 19% of total UK resource
  - Isolated: Local habitat is isolated from other areas of the same habitat

- **Local rarity**
  - Rare: Habitat currently covers less than 0.6% of the total BAP area
  - Scarce: Habitat currently covers 0.6 – 4.0% of the total BAP area
  - Common: Habitat currently covers more than 4.0% of the total BAP area

- **Local threat**
  - Directly threatened: Habitats directly threatened by lack of or inappropriate management
  - Indirectly threatened: Habitats indirectly threatened by generic factors (e.g., recreation and pollution)

#### Habitat Quality:
- **Degree of fragmentation/Restoration potential**
  - Continuous (extendable): Habitat continuous with potential for increase in area
  - Continuous (fixed area): Habitat continuous with no potential for increase in area
  - Fragmented (extendable): Habitat fragmented with potential for increase in area
  - Fragmented (fixed area): Habitat fragmented with no potential for increase in area

- **Habitat important for key species**
  - Key species: Habitat important for local BAP priority species

- **Minimum viable size**
  - Viable: Habitat above minimum viable size
  - Potentially viable: Habitat currently below minimum viable size but with potential for increase in area
  - Non-viable: Habitat below minimum viable size with no potential for increase in area

- **Local distinctiveness**
  - Distinctive: Habitat which is particularly associated with the local area (this may be a characteristic habitat, or one of special historical/cultural importance)

Evaluation of any habitat is also best presented in a table, from which priorities can be assessed. An example is set out in Table 4. (N.B. Some boxes may be left blank in the table where habitats do not meet the criteria.)

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- **Realistic but ambitious:** Targets will need to take into account historical information, but should not seek to reinstate a habitat or species to its previous status without taking into account the wide range of factors which will impact on this, such as changes in land use and climate change. Targets for a given habitat or species should be appropriate to maintain or restore the natural character of an area.

- **Measurable:** Measurable targets enable progress towards achieving the target to be monitored. This is most easily done for quantitative features, such as the area of habitat or population size/ranges (here the target could be, for example, the number of tetrads where the species is found). Setting a measurable target is much more difficult for qualitative features, such as the diversity of habitat structure or degree of isolation of populations. In these instances it may be necessary to use other measurable factors such as indicator species or distance between key habitat blocks.

- **Set against clear timescales:** Target timescales should be consistent with the timescales used for UK targets in the Steering Group report. Setting milestone targets for the medium term, which are steps towards the longer term objective, will also aid monitoring of progress. They should include a timescale to which both individuals and organisations can relate. With this in mind it may be most helpful to set targets for 5 and 10 years.

- **Based on best available data:** Targets should be set using the best available data. Data to establish targets may not be always fully comprehensive but the lack of comprehensive data should not be a barrier to setting targets. Local
Table 4 – Habitat Evaluation Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HABITAT</th>
<th>UK priority</th>
<th>Local decline</th>
<th>Proportion in local area</th>
<th>Local rarity</th>
<th>Local threat</th>
<th>Fragmentation/restoration</th>
<th>Important for key species</th>
<th>Viability</th>
<th>Local distinctiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chalk rivers</td>
<td>Key</td>
<td>Declining</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Indirectly threatened</td>
<td>Continuous (fixed)</td>
<td>Key species</td>
<td>Viable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disturbed urban sites</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Directly threatened</td>
<td>Fragmented (extendable)</td>
<td>Key species</td>
<td>Potentially viable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unimproved neutral grassland</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Indirectly threatened</td>
<td>Continuous (extendable)</td>
<td>Viable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heath grassland</td>
<td>Declining</td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Indirectly threatened</td>
<td>Fragmented (extendable)</td>
<td>Key species</td>
<td>Distinctive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biodiversity Action Plans should address further data needs, where necessary, but not at the expense of conservation work on the ground. Targets should be reviewed in the light of further information collected.

- **Set in the context of the whole biodiversity of an area**: Targets for individual species or habitats in an area must not be set in isolation from each other. This can result in conflicts. There should be a clear relationship between habitat and species targets. Potential conflicts and overlaps should be identified and addressed before targets are set. This is particularly important when identifying the links between habitats and species management regimes and also when looking at potential changes in land use or habitat creation schemes. The concept of natural character is a useful guide to maintain this balance.

4.2 When setting targets for habitats the following issues or factors should be considered:
- Targets set at UK and national or regional level – what part of this can the local area deliver?
- Recent (last century) changes in extent – is this habitat currently under threat, is there an opportunity to recover recently lost areas or is the habitat increasing?
- Size and contiguity of remaining areas – are there any large continuous areas of habitat which will have most to contribute, or are all the areas small and fragmented and if so, what are the opportunities for linking up isolated areas?
- Historic importance (this might be based on historic landscape data) – how widespread and significant was the habitat historically?
- Habitat quality – is the habitat a pristine example or is there significant recovery potential?
- Needs – will resources be most effectively used on management or creation works? This should consider both opportunity and cost benefit.

4.3 Targets for habitats may include both quantitative and qualitative measures and might include:
- Maintaining existing habitat
- Restoration of degraded habitat
- Creating new areas of habitat.

4.4 Practical considerations should also be taken into account; these might include:
- Availability of suitable areas for habitat creation or restoration – who owns the relevant land, are there significant opportunities for potential sites to be made available (for example land coming out of agriculture or changes to coastal defences)?
- Evaluation of continued threats – what, if any, are the on-going threats to the habitat and how will these affect your ability to deliver?

4.5 When setting targets for species the following issues should be considered:
- Targets set at UK and national or regional level – what contribution to this target should be made within the area?
• proportion of UK, European and global population – how significant is the local population in the wider context?
• the position of the local area within the range of the species – is the species on the edge of its range, is this a stronghold or an area of recent decline?
• previous distribution – did the species previously occur more widely and, if so, what are the reasons for decline?
• distribution of relevant habitat, food sources etc. within the area – has the species declined because of loss of appropriate habitats etc or is there a good recovery potential?

4.6 Targets for species should include population sizes and distribution and might include:
• maintaining existing populations
• linking isolated populations
• expanding range and increasing viability of populations
• expanding area of suitable habitat.

4.7 Practical considerations should also be taken into account, these might include:
• is the cause of any decline still on-going and if so how will this be addressed?
• what is the viability of the existing and potential population in the long term?