Scottish Borders

STANDING OPEN WATER HABITAT ACTION PLAN

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STANDING OPEN WATER in Scottish Borders

Extent

The Scottish Borders contains a wide variety of standing open waters from the large natural lochs and water supply reservoirs characteristic of the west and south of the area to the networks of small ponds and fishing pools scattered throughout the Borders region. These bodies of water have many uses ranging from fire ponds, cattle drinking, potable water, sailing, angling, and aesthetic. Standing open water is a relatively rare habitat in the Scottish Borders however, particularly in the eastern part of the region. Only 75 bodies of water of 1ha or more in size are present, and the total area is likely to be less than 1,500ha. Many of the larger bodies of water are either completely artificial or have been modified to allow control of water levels.

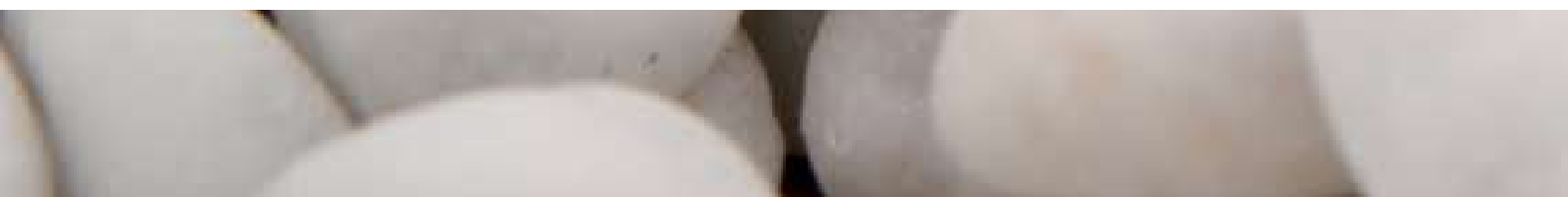
Definition

This habitat type includes natural systems such as lakes, meres and pools, as well as man-made waters such as reservoirs, canals, ponds and gravel pits. It includes the open water zone which may contain submerged, free floating or floating-leaved vegetation, and water fringe vegetation. It also includes adjacent wetland habitats with contiguous water levels that are less than 0.25ha. Ditches with open water for at least the majority of the year should also be included in this type. Small areas of open water in a predominantly terrestrial habitat such as bog pools or temporary pools on heaths should be included in the appropriate terrestrial broad habitat type.

Current Status

The LBAP area is characterised by a large diversity of morphological and trophic types of standing open water, examples of which are shown in box 1 below.

Water body type	Description	Examples in Borders Region
Eutrophic open water	High levels of plant nutrient, turbid water caused by high plankton levels. Coarse fish generally dominant. In natural state support high levels of biodiversity. Often important wildfowl sites	Yetholm Loch SSSI, Hoselaw Loch SSSI/RAMSAR, Coldingham Loch
Mesotrophic open water	Intermediate nutrient status, high biodiversity with a characteristic ecology. Where geology provides a source of basic chemicals (e.g. lime), can become marl lochs which are important in a local/ national context.	Faldonside Loch, Megget and Talla reservoirs, Branxholme Easter and Wester Lochs, St Mary's Loch/ Loch of the Lowes
Oligotrophic open water	Low levels of plant nutrients, clear water, sparse plankton. Salmonid fish generally dominant.	Cauldshiels Loch, Portmore Loch, Stantling Craig reservoir
Dystrophic open water	Highly acidic, brown stained water caused by peat drainage, low productivity.	Gameshope Loch



Ponds: an important habitat

Ponds are defined as standing open water bodies of <2ha size. They are important habitats for the following reasons:

- These sites remain exceptionally important for biodiversity, – supporting a very high proportion of freshwater species,including some more rare species.

- Where pond catchments are predominantly semi-natural (e.g. non-intensively managed grassland, heathland,woodland, moorland), one in four supports Red Data Book species.

- Support rich and diverse freshwater communities, significantly enhancing catchment aquatic biodiversity.

- Sustain populations of rare and protected freshwater species, including the 65 Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species that occur in ponds.

- Because ponds have small catchment areas it is possible to create clean ponds with semi-natural surrounding catchments in all parts of Britain, even intensively managed agricultural landscapes.

Adapted from: The Million Ponds Project: Phase 1 - 2008 - 2012. Ponds Conservation

Examples of probable high quality ponds in the Borders area

Dowlaw loch
Selkirk skating pond
Lindean Moor pond network

Annex (1) from the “Priority lake list” **http://www.lakeshap.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=23&Itemid=29** shows the condition and status of standing open waters over 1ha in Scottish Borders. Table 1 summarises the number of lochs in each status category.

Table (1) STANDING OPEN WATER Condition in the Borders

Lake Type	Tier 1 No.*	Tier 2 No.*	Tier 3 No.*
Oligotrophic	0	0	21
Mesotrophic	1	3	27
Eutrophic	7	0	16

Tier 1 - conservation of best sites
Tier 2 - restoration of damaged sites which have biodiversity interest and the capacity to respond to measures
Tier 3 - prevention of deterioration

Tier 1 sites are lochs of known conservation importance known to be close to their natural state, based on their macrophyte communities and water chemistry. They are contained within SSSIs or SACs with aquatic interest and with at least one record for a BAP priority species.

Tier 2 sites are also of known conservation importance but there is evidence that they are degraded and lost biodiversity. However, these sites have the capacity to be restored through appropriate measures.

Tier 3 sites are not necessarily damaged sites, but there is insufficient data to assess them. Further data is required to establish their baseline condition and biodiversity value.

Further data collection is needed at the 64 Tier 3 lochs to establish biodiversity interest and condition. Of the remaining eleven, three are degraded (Tier 2) and would benefit from restoration measures, while eight have been recently monitored and are not degraded. Little is known about the status, number and condition of smaller water bodies in Scottish Borders. (Source: SEPA)

Notable in the Borders are marl lochs which are base rich through the gradual accumulation of minerals over a long period of time. These include a rare example of a deep, glacially excavated loch in the south of Scotland, and several glacially relict networks of ponds and small pools. Mesotrophic water bodies are especially well represented in the Borders and generally contain the highest biodiversity.

Biodiversity of Standing Open Water

UKBAP Broad habitat type: Standing Open Water

Associated UKBAP Habitat Priority types:

- Mesotrophic Standing Open water
- Eutrophic Standing Open Water

Plants: Aquatic plants are well represented in the habitats present in the area. Several nationally scarce stoneworts (a complex form of aquatic algae) are found in meso-oligotrophic standing open waters of all sizes throughout the Borders. Pondweeds (Potamogeton spp) are also present including nationally scarce species. Fen, carr and fringing plant communities are supported at the margins of both upland and lowland lochs, with one or two outstanding examples of nationally scarce species such as narrow small reed and Scottish small reed present.

Invertebrates: This habitat type supports a rich invertebrate fauna in Scottish Borders. Especially interesting are the glacially relict aquatic beetles and a rare snail, together with many other insect, mollusc and crustacean species that are probably under recorded. Dragonflies and damsel flies are poorly represented but further species seem to be colonising.

Fish: Typically, many waters contain a salmonid dominated fish fauna – in most cases brown trout. Pike, perch, eels and minnows are also widespread. Arctic charr were once present in St Mary's loch but were driven to extinction by over fishing. Populations were introduced to Megget and Talla as refuges for a threatened population. It is not known whether they have re-colonised St Mary's Loch from Megget reservoir.

Amphibians: All three newt species are present in the Borders, together with common toad and common frog. The status and distribution of these species are uncertain. However, it is thought that the loss of ponds and habitat connectivity have adversely impacted numbers.

Birds: Several of the waterbodies in the region are important fishing sites for Ospreys.while a number of lochs provide roosting sites for wintering wildfowl, notably pink footed geese and whooper swans. A small population of black-necked grebes, a nationally rare breeding species, occurs at one waterbody. Black-headed gulls formerly bred in large numbers, with a particularly large, regionally important colony at one site, but their numbers have declined significantly in recent years for unknown reasons.

Mammals: This water body type is used by both otter and water vole.

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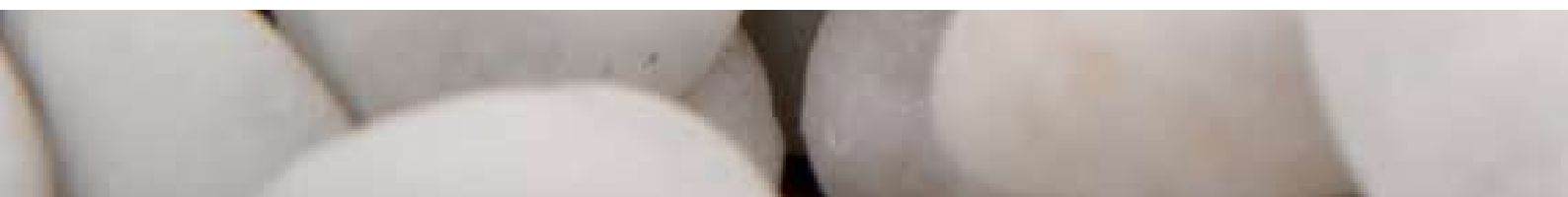
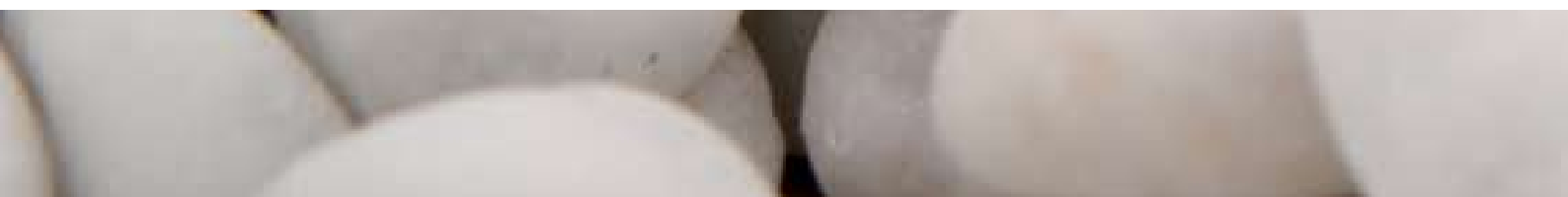


Species of Conservation Concern associated with Standing Open Water

Preferred Name	Common Name	Group
Chara aspera	Rough Stonewort	Stoneworts
Chara curta	Lesser Bearded Stonewort	Stoneworts
Chara pedunculata	Hedgehog Stonewort	Stoneworts
Chara rudis	Rugged Stonewort	Stoneworts
Nitella flexilis	Smooth Stonewort	Stoneworts
Nitella translucens	Translucent Stonewort	Stoneworts
Tolypella glomerata	Clustered Stonewort	Stoneworts
Nitella opaca	Dark Stonewort	Stoneworts
Cephalozia pleniceps	Blunt Pincerwort	Liverworts
Cephalozia loitlesbergeri	Scissors Pincerwort	Liverworts
Fossombronia fimbriata	Fragile Frillwort	Liverworts
Atrichum tenellum	Slender Smoothcap	Mosses
Ephemerum serratum serratum	Serrated Earth-moss	Mosses
Cinclidium stygium	Lurid Cupola-moss	Mosses
Pseudobryum cinclidioides	River Thyme-moss	Mosses
Drepanocladus vernicosus	Varnished Hook-moss	Mosses
Rorippa islandica sens.str.	Northern Yellow-Cress	Vascular Plants
Cicuta virosa	Cowbane	Vascular Plants
Potamogeton coloratus	Fen Pondweed	Vascular Plants
Potamogeton praelongus	Long-Stalked Pondweed	Vascular Plants
Potamogeton friesii	Flat-Stalked Pondweed	Vascular Plants
Rana temporaria	Common Frog	Amphibians
Gyrinus natator	whirligig beetles	Beetles
Gyrinus opacus	whirligig beetles	Beetles
Helophorus flavipes	a mud beetle	Beetles
Anacaena limbata	a mud beetle	Beetles
Laccobius minutus	a mud beetle	Beetles
Enochrus quadripunctatus	a mud beetle	Beetles
Chaetarthria seminulum	a mud beetle	Beetles
Limnebius nitidus	a beetle	Beetles
Stenus niveus	a rove beetle	Beetles
Preferred Name	Common Name	Group
Dryops anglicanus	a beetle	Beetles
Hydronomus alismatis	a weevil	Beetles
Eubrychius velutus	a weevil	Beetles
Limonia ventralis	a cranefly	True Flies
Anasimyia transfuga	a hoverfly	True Flies
Salvelinus alpinus	Charr	Fish
Anguilla anguilla	Eel	Fish
Triturus	a newt	Amphibians
Triturus cristatus	Warty Newt	Amphibians
Triturus vulgaris	Smooth Newt	Amphibians
Triturus helveticus	Palmate Newt	Amphibians
Bufo bufo	Common Toad	Amphibians
Podiceps auritus	Slavonian Grebe	Birds
Podiceps nigricollis	Black-Necked necked Grebe	Birds

Preferred Name	Common Name	Group
Botaurus stellaris	Bittern	Birds
Cygnus olor	Mute Swan	Birds
Cygnus columbianus	Bewick's Swan	Birds
Cygnus cygnus	Whooper Swan	Birds
Anser fabalis	Bean Goose	Birds
Anser brachyrhyncus	Pink-Footed footed Goose	Birds
Anser albifrons	White-Fronted fronted Goose	Birds
Anser anser	Greylag Goose	Birds
Branta leucopsis	Barnacle Goose	Birds
Tadorna tadorna	Shelduck	Birds
Anas penelope	Wigeon	Birds
Anas strepera	Gadwall	Birds
Anas crecca	Teal	Birds
Anas acuta	Pintail	Birds
Anas querquedula	Garganey	Birds
Anas clypeata	Shoveler	Birds
Aythya ferina	Pochard	Birds
Aythya marila	Scaup	Birds
Bucephala clangula	Goldeneye	Birds
Pandion haliaetus	Osprey	Birds

A full list of the specoes associated with Standing Open Waters in Scottish Borders can be found at:
http://www.scottishborders.gov.uk/life/environment/naturalheritage/2715.html



Pressures Affecting the Habitat

Hydrological Alteration is one of the biggest issues facing standing open waters in Scottish Borders. Larger water bodies are often created and managed for drinking-water supply and rivers may experience sudden, rapid and unpredictable changes in water levels, while smaller bodies can be easily damaged by in-filling, draining and loss of connectivity to the hydrological cycle through land use changes. However, habitat is also created as a result of drainage abandonment (Folly Loch), amenity and sporting uses (e.g flight ponds, St Boswells boat club pond), pollution control (Cardrona golf course SUDs, FC silt control at Craik), and conservation initiatives (Ponds for Biodiversity, Tweed Forum Great Crested Newt initiative). Sympathetic management is possible, especially where organisations such as Scottish Water or Forestry Commission Scotland are responsible for land and water management or where it is a condition of a grant to a landowner.

Pollution from point sources to standing waters is largely under control via regulation whereas diffuse pollution from run off, groundwater and supplying burns is still a major concern. Standing waters are especially vulnerable because of their long retention times which concentrate and amplify pollutants such as nutrients (which can change species composition and cause algal blooms), silt (which smothers plants and animals, fills in small bodies and excludes light) or toxic pollutants (such as pesticides or herbicides). Ponds created specifically to ameliorate pollution (such as SUDs), while adding to biodiversity, may not be as biologically rich as unpolluted ponds, but can still have conservation value.

Introduction of non-native species can have devastating effects on natural ecosystems and fisheries interest. Introduced fish (native and non-native) can impact upon native species and cause ecosystem change. Accidental introductions of signal crayfish have taken place and accidental releases of other organisms can cause damage via competition and parasitism.

Threats

Climate change While the precise effects of climate change are uncertain it is likely that major changes in the hydrological cycle and temperature will occur through alterations to the balance of precipitation and evaporation. Species ranges are likely to change, with some gaining and others losing habitat.

Connectivity of habitat is vitally important for most standing water species, many of which disperse and form meta-populations via networks of suitable water bodies. Connectivity is especially important in light of climate change which may force important species to move as their ranges change.

Information availability and quality is vitally important in any attempt to conserve, enhance and restore communities and habitats. Table 1 shows that information, even on the larger water bodies in the area is lacking. Much of the data collection thus far has been biased towards the interests of the recorders such as acquatic beetles whilst knowledge of other groups is limited by the need for more people with the specialist identification skills.

Current Action/Initiatives

Ponds for biodiversity: Over 60 ponds were created under this Leader+ funded project led by Tweed Forum and Borders FWAG.

Constructed wetlands project for diffuse pollution control: 11 constructed wetlands have been created under this Tweed Forum/ Borders FWAG project. These wetlands, mainly ponds, are a low cost, low maintenance means of treating lightly contaminated water from farm steading run off from beef and dairy units and are now helping to protect the River Tweed system. The project has been funded by SNH, SEPA and Leader+funding. The ponds are being used as demonstration sites to encourage uptake elsewhere.

Great Crested Newt pond project: Tweed Forum has created 13 ponds specifically designed for great crested newt and sited within the Central Borders core area for great crested newts to provide connectivity between known occupied ponds. Linked to this, the Borders Amphibian and Reptile Group has been set up to monitor in the region. A new site for great crested newt was discovered in 2007 in east Berwickshire, distant from other known sites.

River Tweed Commissioners: Under article 47 of The Scotland Act 1998 (River Tweed) Order 2006, which came into force in November 2006, it is now an offence for any person to introduce fish, or the eggs or spawn of fish, into the inland waters of the Tweed District without the prior, written consent of the Commission. The River Tweed Commission is anxious to make the process of consent on the Tweed as transparent and straightforward as possible and has adopted a policy for the regulation of stocking which it will implement in considering applications for consents. The essence of the policy is that that there should be no further stocking of "open" waters i.e. the River and tributaries and that any stocking to ponds should only be to those which are properly screened, so that fish cannot escape to the River, and that they should only be of fish that cannot breed.

Solway-Tweed River Basin Management Plan: The Solway-Tweed River Basin Management plan is being produced by SEPA in consultation with a broad range of statutory and non-statutory partners. The River basin Management Plan will guide the implementation of the Water Framework Directive in the region. Safeguards for ground water dependent and surface water dependent waterbodies will be a component of this plan.

Tweed Catchment Management Plan: Tweed Forum co-ordinate the Tweed Catchment Management Plan. The Wetlands & Riparian Habitat working group incorporates the LBAP Wetland Group and oversees projects that deliver wetland biodiversity objectives including those for standing open waters.

Forestry Commission Scotland: Craik Lochs - field survey carried out and management recommendations produced for a series of linked wetland sites. An overview vegetation survey to map the extent of priority Habitats and NVC communites present at Crooked Goose, Windy law and Black Lochs. This will guide restoration and management of mesotrophic lochs and surrounding upland flush, fen swamp and 6 blanket bog priority habitats. Occurence of rare plants such as *Calmogrostis Stricta* will be recorded.

Bird Monitoring: Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) are carried out at a number of sites in Scottish Borders counts, goose roost counts and ringing and monitoring of mute swans is also being carried out. Most of this work is carried out by volunteer ornithologists, many linked to the Scottish Ornithologist Club.

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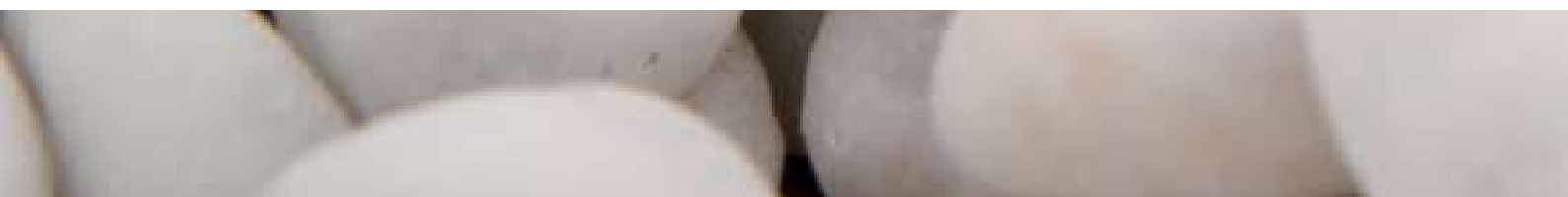


Aim: 'To conserve, restore, expand and, where appropriate, enhance the full range of standing open waters found in the Scottish Borders'

Objective 1: Maintain the condition of Scottish Borders standing open water priority sites judged to be in favourable condition.

Target O1T1: Ensure all Tier (1) Standing open waters, and those where Habitat quality indicator species, Flagship Species and Borders Species of Conservation Concern are present but not threatened are maintained in their present condition.

Target O1T2: Identify all Tier (3) Standing open waters in favourable condition, and carry out further surveys to identify waters where Habitat quality indicator species, Flagship Species and Borders Species of Conservation Concern are present and are in favourable condition.

Objective 2: Initiate action to restore to favourable condition (typical plant and animal communities) of other important Scottish Borders standing open water sites that have been damaged by human activity.

Target O2T1: Develop a targeted programme to ensure all Tier (2) Standing open waters, and those where Habitat quality indicator species, Flagship Species and Borders Species of Conservation Concern are known to be present and populations/ habitats known to be damaged are restored to favourable condition.

Target O2T2: Identify all Tier (3) Standing open waters which have been damaged but have restoration potential and carry out further surveys to identify waters where Habitat quality indicator species, Flagship Species and Borders Species of conservation concern are present but populations are under threat.

Objective 3: Ensure that further high quality habitat is created at a sufficient rate to counteract historic and current rate of loss and to maintain, restore and enhance connectivity between habitats.

Target O3T1: Complete a comprehensive open water inventory and catalogue known information about each water body

Target O3T2: Identify suitable areas for habitat creation using Borders Wetland Vision software, and predict priority areas for creation based on connectivity.

Target O3T3: Create high quality habitat at a rate sufficient to meet 'Million Pond Project' targets.

Objective 4: Increase education and awareness of standing open waters and their importance as an asset to the communities of the Borders.

Target 04T1: in combination with other wetland habitats, establish a public awareness programme focussing on the priority species, and sustainable use of standing open waters by 2009.

Target 04T2: Ensure a sufficient reserve of knowledge both within environmental organisations and communities to allow identification and survey of standing water species of all groups.

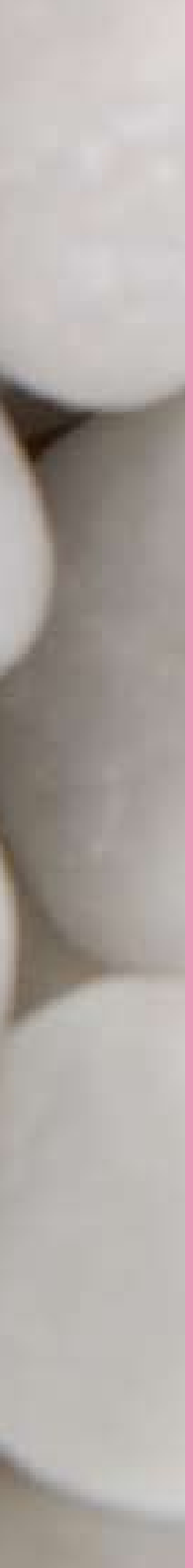
Target 04T3: Involve local communities in the monitoring, restoration and creation of standing water in their environs.

General targets:

05T1: Work towards WFD quality standards and ensure that qualifying standing open water sites in Scottish Borders meet these standards by 2015

05T2: Ensure that there are sufficient data on standing open water species and habitats to inform sustainable management practices.

1. Policy & Legislation:	Lead and Partners	2008	2009	2010	2010	2011	2017	Meets Objectives
1.1 Support, promote and implement the Water Framework Directive with regard to standing open waters in the Scottish Borders	SEPA, SBC, SNH, SW, TForum TFound SGRPID	*	*	*	*	*	*	1, 2, 3
1.2 Promote the adoption of SUDS where possible	SEPA, SBC SGRPID SW	*	*	*	*	*	*	1, 2, 3
1.3 Adopt and implement policies in the Local Plan to protect important areas of standing open waters habitat	SBC SEPA SNH	*	*	*	*	*		1, 2, 3
1.4 Promote, publicise and enforce the Conservation of Native Freshwater Fish Stocks: Prohibition of keeping or release of live fish (Specified species) (Scotland) Order 2003	SGRPID RTC	*	*	*	*	*	*	1, 2, 3, 4
1.5 Promote and implement the River Tweed Stocking Controls under the The Scotland Act 1998 (River Tweed) Order 2006	RTC	*	*	*	*	*	*	1, 2, 3



2. Site and Species Safeguard & Management	Lead and Partners	2008	2009	2010	2010	2011	2017	Meets Objectives
2.1 Promote and enforce nutrient control measures, targeting priority standing water sites	SEPA	*	*	*	*	*		1, 2, 3
2.2 Maintain or introduce appropriate fisheries management	TFound SEPA SNA	*	*	*	*	*		1, 2, 3
2.3 Contribute to the implementation of actions for priority species associated with standing open water	SNH TFound LBAP Wetland HWG	*	*	*	*	*		1, 2, 3
2.4 Identify a list of standing waters where there are biodiversity issues that might be affected by stocking e.g. fishless lochs or ponds that have interesting invertebrate communities	SEPA TFound			*				1, 2, 3
2.5 Develop a programme to ensure that all Tier1, Tier2 and Tier 3 lochs are maintained in favourable condition or restored to favourable condition.	SEPA LBAP Wetland HWG			*				1, 2, 3

3. Advisory	Lead and Partners	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2017	Meets Objectives
3.1 Provide advice to managers and users of standing open waters to promote the conservation of biodiversity in this habitat	SEPA SNH	*	*	*	*	*	*	1, 2, 3, 4
3.2 Promote best practice in farming and encourage farmers to prepare Farm Waste Management Plans	SGRPID	*	*	*	*	*	*	1, 2, 3, 4
4. Research & Monitoring	Lead and Partners	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2017	Meets Objectives
4.1 Review data on priority species and assess need to commission further survey and monitoring work	TForum TFound SBBRC			*				1, 2, 3, 4
4.2 Identify, survey and map the extent of non-native species that pose a threat to standing open waters	TForum TFound SBBRC			*				1, 2, 3, 4
4.3 Coordinate the collation of species and habitat data of standing open waters and encourage the local recorder network to feed into this	SBBRC	*	*	*	*	*	*	1, 2, 3, 4

4.4. Develop and implement a proposal to survey and assess condition of SEPA Tier 3 lochs.	SEPA LBAP Wetland HWG			*				1, 2
5. Communications & Publicity	Lead and Partners	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2017	Meets Objectives
5.1 Develop a register of standing open water sites identifying designation, potential threats and biodiversity importance	SEPA SBBRC			*				3
5.2 Host and event promoting the natural heritage interest of standing open waters	LBAP Wetland HWG				*			4
5.3 Raise awareness of important standing open water sites with appropriate interpretation and guided walks for public and schools	LBAP Wetland HWG		*	*	*	*		4
6. Plan Monitoring	Lead and Partners	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2017	Meets Objectives
6.1 Review Standing Open water HAP annually and revise every five years	LBAP Wetland HWG	*	*	*	*	*	*	

Abbreviations

LBAP Wetland HWG	-	Local Biodivesity Action Plan Wetland Habitat Wetland Group
RTC	-	River Tweed Commisioners
SEPA	-	Scottish Enviroment Protection Agnecy
SGRPID	-	Scottish Government Rural Payment and Inspections Directorate
SBC	-	Scottish Borders Council
SBBRC	-	Scottish Borders Biological Records Centre
SNH	-	Scottish Natural Heritage
T FORUM	-	Tweed Forum
T FOUND	-	Tweed Foundation

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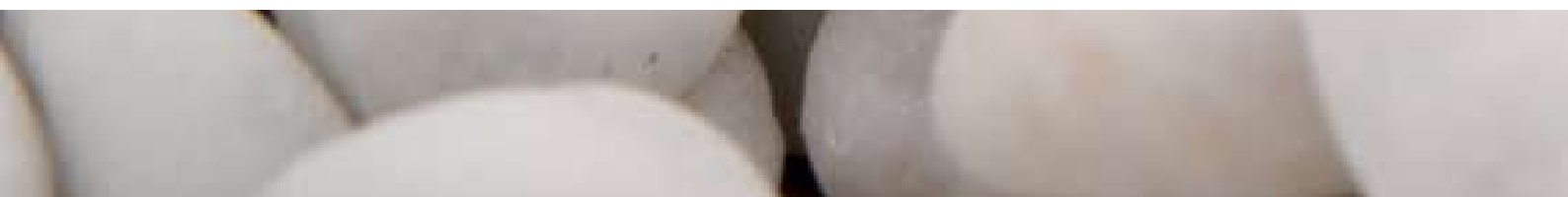

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