

Scottish Borders **URBAN** HABITAT ACTION PLAN



Our Scottish Borders
Your environment



URBAN in Scottish Borders

Status

The Scottish Borders has a long history of human settlement, throughout which the urban environment has been developed in response to the needs and well being of the inhabitants. Today, the value of these settlements to people is widely recognised, in the form of our homes, schools, roads, shops, factories and leisure facilities. However, the wildlife value of these areas has in many cases been overlooked by both those who live there and those who are responsible for changes to it. It is within the urban environment that the majority of people interact with nature, be it through private gardens, parks or other forms of open space. Over 80% of the Borders population live and work in Borders towns and villages and the need for a healthy and green built environment is therefore particularly important.

Urban wildlife habitats can be defined as greenspaces and the associated ecological niches found within built up areas. Types of greenspace include public parks and gardens, private gardens and grounds, amenity greenspace, play areas, sports areas, green corridors, natural and semi natural greenspaces (including Common Good Land, Community Woodlands and Designed Landscapes), cemeteries, allotments and public utility land, derelict land and civic space. The built environment can provide a valuable resource for the well being of wildlife while at the same time maintaining and indeed enhancing the quality of life for people. Many plants and animals have successfully adapted to urban areas and now happily coexist with man. For example, swifts and some bats are now largely dependent on the built environment. A resultant feature



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of these processes of gradual change and adaptation is the diverse, mosaic-like nature of wildlife in the urban environment. It is this intimate mosaic of habitats within the urban environment that gives wildlife the mixture of breeding sites, foraging areas and shelter it needs within relatively small areas.

The Urban Environment creates opportunities for species such as the fox, badger, kestrel, sparrowhawk and grey squirrel and in some cases, higher population densities of these species can occur in the urban areas than in the surrounding countryside. The Urban Environment ecosystem also includes large numbers of domestic pets, particularly cats and dogs, all of which are active predators and will affect the populations of prey species. Pet dogs, although not normally foraging on wild species, will have an effect through disturbance.

The Borders region contains many diverse examples of the built environment. Tree lined avenues between settlements, weirs and river corridors and walkways are often recognised as having aesthetic and wildlife value. But what is often missed is the wildlife value of other sites within the built environment, such as existing buildings, derelict buildings, old farmsteads and

former industrial sites, all of which can have a high biodiversity value.

The character of the built environment is dynamic, continually changing through the landscaping and management of public and private space, changes or additions to the building stock and the changing demands on land. If we are to retain, encourage and enhance wildlife within the urban environment, it must be identified, and actions prioritised, to protect and manage this habitat as a vital component of our towns and villages.

This Action Plan is intended not only to benefit biodiversity, but also to increase interest and enjoyment to the majority of the population who live and work in these areas.

Essentially a sparsely populated rural area, with a substantial proportion of the population living in small settlements outside urban areas (see Fig. 1), the Borders has a population density of 22/ per km² - only the Highlands have a lower population density in mainland Britain.

Figure 1: The Importance of Small Settlements in the Scottish Borders

Settlement Size	Population	Percentage
<100	20,708	19.4%
>100 <1,000	12,801	12%
>1,000 <10,000	46,087	43.2%
10,000+	27,168	25.4%

Source: 2001 Census, GRO(S)

Only two settlements within the Borders can officially be classed as urban namely Hawick and Galashiels; and they only account for approximately 0.2% of the land area. Despite this, the Urban Environment Habitat Action Plan will concentrate on all built-up areas, regardless of size, as all have a role to play in improving the biodiversity within

each area. The total area of the built environment in the Borders amounts to approximately only 1% of the total land area.

Where are Urban Habitats found in Scottish Borders?

Figure 2: Settlements of Scottish Borders

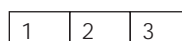


Figure 2 shows the main settlements in the Borders, along with the network of roads that link them. The dispersed nature of settlements in the Scottish Borders is clearly evident, as is their relatively small size.

There are estimated to be in excess of 46,000 households within the Borders, the majority of which will have access to a garden (72% of households live in detached, semi-detached or terraced housing). Added to this are numerous parks, playing fields and golf courses which all have the potential to improve their biodiversity value. One of the valued attributes of the Borders is the many hedge and tree-lined roads. With 3,060km of road present in the region there is

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huge potential to manage the roadside verges for biodiversity. Claimed rights of way amount to a significant 2400km within the region, including 131km of the Southern Upland Way, 16km of the Pennine Way and 54km of the St. Cuthbert's Way. Scottish Borders Council Ranger Service manage another 150km of routes. To add to this, many new routes are being developed in the Borders, for example, Borders Abbeys Way, Coastal Path and a Hawick to Keilder route. Cycleways located throughout the built environment also have the potential to be managed for biodiversity. The Borders region contains 14 active mineral workings and 14 with planning consent outstanding.

Important sites for Urban Habitats

Gala Policies, Galashiels
Black path, Galashiels
Wilton Park , Hawick
Galalaw, Hawick
Selkirk Hill
Hay Lodge Park, Peebles
Riverside landscaping/ playing fields/
cliffs, Jedburgh
River Tweed/ Landscaped riverside/
Parks, Kelso
Woodlands, Abbotseat-Inchmyre-
Broomlands in Kelso
Cobi Park, Kelso
Seashore/ Cliffs, Eyemouth
Tweedbank and Gunknowe Loch
Leithen Water/ Pirn Hill, Innerleithen
The Glen, Newtown St. Boswells
Ettrick Riverside path, Selkirk

Many Border settlements have part of the River Tweed system within their boundaries. The industrial history and development of many of the urban areas, as part of the textile mill trade, has resulted in settlements being built with their backs to the river. The river and river corridor is consequently not easily accessible nor a focal point within the settlement. Instead it is has sometimes

been viewed as a dumping ground or waste area. River corridors and disused railways within settlements provide ideal conduits for diverse natural habitats.

Some towns such as Hawick, Selkirk and Lauder have extensive areas of Common Land adjacent to the settlement. Although these sites generally lie outwith the urban boundary, there is potential for these sites to be managed for and by the population living in these settlements.

Borders Species of Conservation Concern found in Urban Habitats

Atlantic salmon
Otter
Pipistrelle bat (45khz, 55khz)
Brown long eared bat
Whiskered bat (scarce)
Natterer's bat
Swift
House martin
Linnet
Spotted flycatcher
Song thrush
Peregrine falcon

Full list can be found at:

www.scottishborders.gov.uk/life/environment/naturalheritage/17545.html



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Characteristic species for the Urban Environment

Species commonly found on waterways and ponds within settlements

Black-headed gull
Mallard
Coot
Moorhen
Tufted duck
Mute swan

Species of common garden birds which all benefit from feeding

Blackbird
Robin
Wren
Dunnock
Blue tit
Great tit
Chaffinch
House Sparrow
Long-tailed tit
Great Spotted Woodpecker

Butterflies regularly seen in urban habitats

Large white
Small Tortoiseshell
Red admiral
Peacock

Other species commonly seen in Urban Habitats are as follows:

Hedgehog
Mole
Fox
Wood pigeon
Feral pigeon
Collared dove
Swallow
House sparrow
Jackdaw
Rook
Common Frog
Common Toad
Smooth Newts
Ladybird

Impacts and threats to Urban Habitats

There are a number of issues that have an impact on the biodiversity value of urban habitats in the Borders, which the urban Habitat Action Plan will need to address.

New Housing

A major challenge for Scottish Borders over the next decade will be to provide 6,300 new houses under the Local Plan by 2011. In the longer term the population of Scottish Borders is forecast to increase by 10% and the number of households is forecast to grow by 30%. Due to the characteristics of the Borders, the location for the new housing is likely to occur predominantly on greenfield sites. While this is the case, there remains the fact that not all 'greenfield sites' are of equal environmental value. Decisions about allocations will need to integrate environmental considerations and other issues of sustainable development. The location of housing allocations and the conditions attached to planning consents can be influenced by biodiversity considerations if these are integrated into the Local Plans.

The Management of Open Space

Management simplification, designed to make ground maintenance less costly, has resulted in parks, gardens, golf-courses, road verges, open-spaces within housing estates and the grounds of schools, colleges and hospitals being turned into 'green deserts' which are of little or no wildlife interest. Current maintenance regimes and techniques tend to include a high frequency of grass cutting, and the continuous and liberal application of herbicides and pesticides. The removal of trees, shrubs, and tall herb vegetation has resulted in significant biodiversity loss in these areas.

Refuse

Human anti-social behaviour in terms of tipping, littering and dog fouling are everyday occurrences in the built environment. These activities have direct effects on biodiversity by smothering wildlife and increasing the soil toxicity, as well as reducing the visual attraction and image of places to the resident and visiting population.

Contaminated land is any land within jurisdiction of a Local Authority whom designates it as being in such condition, by reason of substances in, on or under the land, that –

- (i) significant harm is being caused or there is a significant possibility of such harm being caused; or
- (ii) pollution of controlled waters is being, or is likely to be, caused.

Scottish Borders Council is in the process of identifying areas of contaminated land. Some of the areas identified will be designated as special sites following consultation with SEPA. Scottish Borders Council and SEPA will require the remediation of contaminated land and special sites respectively.

Industrial Sites

There is over 38ha of industrial land currently allocated in the Local Plan that is readily available and serviced or due to be serviced. There is a further 41ha that is allocated but is restricted in terms of availability or requires servicing. However, if the recent uptake of industrial land continues at current levels, then there has been a considerable over provision of industrial land within the Borders. This will allow SBC to assess the potential of allocating surplus sites for alternative uses. With regards to biodiversity, it is essential that brown field sites are the favoured areas for allowing development. Industrial sites should also be encouraged to



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landscape their land and improve biodiversity.

Vacant and derelict land is land which has been so damaged by development or use, that it is incapable of being developed for beneficial use without rehabilitation, and which is not being used for either the purpose for which it is held, or for use acceptable in the Local Plan. Within the Built Environment 5% of the land area is vacant or derelict land, some of which may be of high importance for biodiversity.

Non-native Species

Not all non-native species should be regarded as having limited biodiversity value. Built environment habitats generally incorporate a significant percentage of non-native species within their flora, either as a result of transfer from gardens, transportation nodes and formal collections or as a result of deliberate propagation and planting. However, a number of species, particularly those with invasive characteristics (for example, giant hogweed and japanese knotweed) have impacted on the built environment and caused a consequent reduction in native biodiversity.

Current Action

New Ways Community Plan

The Community Plan brings together in partnership the public sector agencies in Scottish Borders with a view to responding to the needs of communities in Scottish Borders. In doing so the plan aims to give a real voice to individuals, businesses and organisations throughout the region when it comes to shaping Council services, health services and services to business. There are six theme teams, two of which have a focus for biodiversity delivery. The 'A Working Countryside' and the 'Vibrant Communities' theme teams provide a focus for projects to deliver urban biodiversity for the communities of the Borders.

Structure Plan

Structure Plans are strategic planning documents that the planning authority is required to produce. The Scottish Borders Structure Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers in 2002 and sets out the Council's strategic planning policy for Scottish Borders until 2011. The Structure Plan represented the first major opportunity for the principles of sustainable development to be incorporated into a major policy document for Scottish Borders. The Plan includes policies for the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (N1), Local Biodiversity Action (N5) and Protection of Nature Conservation Interest (N7). The Plan also includes policies to protect International Nature Conservation sites (N2) and National Nature Conservation sites (N3); and specific policies to protect the River Tweed System (N8) and Designed Gardens and Landscapes (N13).

Local Plan

Local Plans provide site-specific planning policy and proposals for the area they cover and are a detailed application of the Structure Plan policies, taking into account Central Government Policy. Development will be guided to

the most appropriate locations whilst protecting the environmental qualities of the Borders. The new plan is a single plan to cover the whole of the Borders, replacing the previous four district plans. The revised Local Plan will have policies to protect and enhance biodiversity including international, national, regional and local designated sites and Borders Species and Habitats of Conservation Concern. The Local Plan makes provision for Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites. Supplementary Planning Guidance for biodiversity has been produced under the Local Plan: www.scotborders.gov.uk/life/environment/naturalheritage/18498.html. Local Plans therefore offer an important tool in the pursuit of biodiversity goals at the local level, including the built environment. The Local Plan is to be adopted by 2008.

Environmental Strategy

The Environmental Strategy, launched by Scottish Borders Council in 2003, concerns action in Scottish Borders to protect and enhance the local and global environment. The strategy proposes that the actions carried out by signal organisations meet the challenge of balancing the current need for development with the needs of future generations. The Environmental Strategy aims to achieve sustainable development through encouraging economic activity and land uses that achieve social and economic aims whilst protecting and enhancing the local and global environment.

Countryside Ranger Service

Scottish Borders Council Ranger Service organise and promote a wide range of events, including guided walks, illustrated talks, and exhibitions; to promote awareness and understanding of the countryside and work on a number of council owned sites to maintain and enhance the natural heritage.

Green Grounds project

This Borders Forest Trust project aims to increase the awareness of the importance of school grounds and their educational value. Through this project, schools are encouraged and supported to actively improve their grounds for use across the curriculum with benefits for creating more enriched areas for play and for wildlife. More than 46 schools across the Borders have been involved in this project. Green Grounds also supports community groups to develop and enhance the wildlife value of community spaces.

The Borders Tree Warden Scheme

This Borders Forest Trust scheme aims to encourage people to become actively involved in the conservation of local trees and woodlands. The work includes surveying, monitoring and caring for existing trees and woodlands, community tree planting and environmental education.

Community Woodlands

Borders Forest Trust aims to connect people with woodlands through increasing the number of community owned and managed woodlands in the Borders. Community Woodlands and associated groups have been established throughout the Borders, many of which are in the vicinity of the larger Borders settlements. Community Woodlands have been established in Gordon, Wooplaw, Drygrange, Peebles, Kelso, Gala, Eyemouth and Hawick.

Borders Environmental Challenge

The Challenge initiated in 2005, was to get communities to look at their environment, analyse its strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities and to produce an action plan to maintain or enhance their environment. Six communities have taken the challenge to date: Gordon, Darnick, Walkerburn, Bowden, Lauder and Whitsome.

Woodlands in and around Towns

Forestry Commission Scotland funding is supporting local communities at Galashiels (Gala Policies and Langlee Woodlands) and Selkirk (Haining). The Council and BFT are helping delivery of the projects involving replanting, landscaping, path clearance and improvement and litter removal.

Objectives:

1. to maintain and improve the biodiversity value of urban habitats
2. maintain the extent of the existing urban habitats and enhance the connectivity of habitat networks within the urban environment
3. increase the management for biodiversity within greenspace and other open space
4. to promote biological recording in urban habitats
5. to promote the use of sites of biodiversity interest as an educational and recreational resource.
6. protect Sites of importance for Nature Conservation
7. ensure that there is widespread accessibility to greenspace adopting national guidelines.

Targets:

1. digitally map the urban habitat networks by 2008
2. enhance urban habitat networks in the main settlements (>2000 popn.) by 2015
3. establish one local nature reserve by 2009 and a second by 2011
4. Scottish Borders Council to implement management for biodiversity at 50% of open spaces by 2010
5. increase participation in Borders Backyard Biodiversity to 30% by 2010
6. increase use of urban habitats for curriculum and community projects by 2010.

1.6 Ensure that veteran trees and important components of the urban native woodland network are protected by Tree Preservation Orders and the adoption of Local Plan policy NE3 and NE4	SBC (PED)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	1,2
2. Site and Operational Management	Lead Partners	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2016	Meets Objective	
2.1 Establish a regime for biodiversity management on Council-owned and managed open space	SBC (TS, PED)	*	*	*	*	*	*	3	
2.2 Encourage the development and implementation of community wetland and woodland projects to enhance the urban habitat networks (e.g. through SEPA HE scheme and FCS WIAT scheme and implementation of the Woodland Strategy)	The Bridge, BFT, SNH, SBC	*	*	*	*	*	*	2	
2.3 Continue the development of the Urban Wildflower project	LBAP Urban HWG	*	*	*	*	*	*	3	
2.4 Develop new initiatives to encourage the management of allotments, churchyards and cemeteries for biodiversity	LBAP Urban HWG						*	3	

2.5 Develop new initiatives to encourage the management of civic space for biodiversity including within regeneration areas	LBAP Urban HWG				*	*	*	*	*	*	3
2.6 Encourage the uptake of biodiversity management of private grounds including local businesses	LBAP Urban HWG				*	*	*	*	*	*	3
2.7 Work with the Scottish Golf Environment Group to encourage uptake of management for biodiversity on golf courses in Scottish Borders	LBAP Urban HWG	*			*	*	*	*	*	*	3
2.8 Adopt measures to protect bats swifts and house martins through Supplementary Planning Guidance for biodiversity and guidance for maintenance works.	SBC				*	*	*	*	*	*	2,3
3. Advisory:	Lead Partners	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2016	Meets Objective			
3.1 Raise awareness of wildlife friendly gardening through promotion of Gardens for Life leaflets and other advisory guides.	SNH, The Bridge, BFT	*			*	*	*	*	*	*	3
3.2 Advise building contractors of practical mitigation for bats and swifts.	SBC, LBAP Urban HWG		*		*	*	*	*	*	*	2,3

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2016	Meets Objective
4. Research and Monitoring:							
4.1 Continue the implementation and development of the Borders Backyard Biodiversity project and increase uptake	*	*	*	*	*	*	4,5
4.2 Develop a digital database of urban habitat networks	*	*					2
5. Awareness Raising:							
5.1 As part of the Council's biodiversity duty, seek additional opportunities for raising awareness of biodiversity through the Curriculum including school grounds projects							Meets Objective 5
6. Plan Monitoring:							
6.1 Review progress of HAP on an annual basis. Revise HAP every 5 years.	*	*	*	*	*	*	Meets Objective 1,2,3,4,5,6,7

Abbreviations

BFT	Borders Forest Trust
ELL	Education and Lifelong Learning (Scottish Borders Council)
LBAP Urban HWG	LBAP Urban Habitat Working Group
PED	Planning and Economic Development (Scottish Borders Council)
SBC	Scottish Borders Council
SBBRC	Scottish Borders Biological Records Centre (Scottish Borders Council)
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
TS	Technical Services (Scottish Borders Council)

Linkage to other key plans and programmes:

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy
Scottish Borders New Ways Community Plan
Scottish Borders Structure Plan 2001-2011
Scottish Borders Local Plan
Scottish Borders Open Space Strategy
Scottish Borders Woodland Strategy
Scottish Borders LBAP
Scottish Borders LBAP Information Action Plan

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This document and other Habitat Action Plans can be viewed at
<http://www.scottishborders.gov.uk/life/environment/naturalheritage/2715.html>





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It is also available on our website:

www.scottishborders.gov.uk/life/environment/naturalheritage/2715.html

