

Subject:	The Brighton & Hove Local Biodiversity Action Plan		
Date of Meeting:	6th February 2013		
Report of:	Strategic Director, Place		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report summarises the results of the recently completed consultation on a draft Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) for Brighton and Hove and seeks adoption of it as council policy. Copies of the LBAP are available for inspection in the Members Rooms.
- 1.2 The draft LBAP identifies 15 habitats and 18 species which are a priority for conservation action over the next 7 years to 2020. Many of these are nationally or internationally important and threatened, reflecting the rich natural heritage of the city.
- 1.3 Biodiversity ('the variety of life on earth') is essential for human wellbeing and is known to be in decline globally. In 1993 the international 'Convention on Biological Diversity' established Biodiversity Action Planning as a tool for halting and reversing this decline. Biodiversity Action Plans define the actions needed to conserve the most important elements of our biodiversity. The LBAP will form a key framework for delivering the Biosphere conservation objectives in Brighton & Hove.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee approves the adoption of the draft LBAP for Brighton and Hove as council policy.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The UK BAP was published within a year of the UK signing the international 'Convention on Biological Diversity'. For the first time it defined the habitats and species of national importance and the actions needed to ensure their conservation. The report was refined several times and was finally superseded by the 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework' which focuses on managing the environment as a whole on a landscape scale. Although there is no statutory requirement to produce an LBAP, it is an effective mechanism to focus available resources on the biodiversity most in need of action.
- 3.2 The draft LBAP for Brighton and Hove takes account of national biodiversity priorities. Nature conservation organisations including Natural England, the South Downs National Park Authority, the Sussex Wildlife Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds were consulted from the earliest stages to ensure the draft incorporates their priorities for the Brighton and Hove area.
- 3.3 The draft LBAP comprises two documents; the main report and a table listing 115 nationally important species for which Brighton and Hove has a particular responsibility to conserve. The main report incorporates a 'Biodiversity Framework' approach by establishing an overall 'vision for biodiversity' in Brighton and Hove to 2020 (see below), supported by 5 overarching principles:
- *'By 2020, biodiversity will be integrated into decision-making by the Brighton and Hove Strategic Partnership and its member organisations.*
 - *Local communities will be fully involved in developing and progressing biodiversity conservation*
 - *There will be a common understanding of the value of biodiversity and the action needed to maintain and enhance it.*
 - *The habitats and species of importance in Brighton and Hove will be successfully conserved.*
 - *Brighton and Hove will be richer in biodiversity, with healthy ecosystems delivering essential benefits for people.'*
- 3.4 The main LBAP report also lists 18 species and 15 habitats which are in particular need of conservation action in the city (See Appendix 1). The species have been highlighted from the longer list because they have specialist requirements which cannot be adequately addressed by only conserving the habitat on which they depend. Examples include the White Helleborine, a species of orchid which survives in Stanmer Woods and which is listed by national Government as being 'of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' and ` , a species of butterfly dependent on Elm whose distribution has halved since the 1970s but which retains a population stronghold in Brighton and Hove.
- 3.5 The LBAP will be implemented within existing resources and contributions from conservation groups and volunteers. A lot of work is already being progressed or is scheduled, examples include:
- The reintroduction by the council of traditional sheep grazing onto species-rich chalk grassland sites around the city, to restore the habitat to a favourable condition.
 - Creation of 6 hectares of new species rich chalk grassland on urban housing land in Brighton & Hove using NIA funding

- Conservation management in Stanmer Great Wood, opening up the tree canopy to encourage recolonisation by woodland butterflies and ground flora.

3.6 For those areas of work not yet resourced the LBAP provides a framework to prioritise resourcing for example through grant funding. The priorities will be fed in to the Biosphere Management Strategy.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

4.1 The consultation on the LBAP ran from the 2nd July to the 3rd September 2012. It is largely a technical document so the consultation focused on groups and individuals with interest or expertise in conservation. Details of the consultation were sent out to approximately 250 individuals and organisations and it was advertised to the wider public through the press, the council website and social media. Comments were invited through the council's consultation portal.

4.2 Increasing public awareness and involving them in nature conservation is an important element of improving biodiversity. This is being achieved and will continue to be achieved through a variety of means including the work carried out by the park rangers and the delivery of the projects funded by the Nature Improvement Area (NIA) and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) grants which focus on chalk grassland restoration. Conservation work will be reinforced on a larger scale through the Biosphere project.

4.3 Six organisations and interest groups and seven individuals responded to the consultation. The key issues coming out of the consultation were:

- *Engagement: Respondents wished to see a greater level of public engagement in the draft LBAP via a wider variety of methods.* The LBAP was communicated widely however it is largely a technical document. Wider engagement with the public is essential and will be achieved on a practical level for example through the work the park rangers do and the engagement on the Biosphere.
- *Style: Some respondents wished to see a shorter document, re-written in a simple, non-technical style with maps and more illustrations to make it easier for non-ecologists to use.* The LBAP is a technical document, however where appropriate its content will be translated to be more accessible. This is already being done, for example in consultations on restoration of chalk grassland at Whithawk Hill and interpretation signage for example that proposed on The Level to inform people about the rare White Letter Hairstreak butterfly and face to face engagement eg through nature walks carried out by the rangers.
- *Respondents requested a clear a method for monitoring and widely reporting progress; and reviewing LBAP objectives.* Monitoring for many actions is already in place, for example the Nature Improvement Area funding includes research by the University of Sussex to monitor the project. The rangers are also collecting detailed information about the number of volunteers engaged in countryside work, such as sheep 'lookering' and habitat management. . Where there are gaps in monitoring requirements these will be addressed

where possible as and when additional resources are secured, eg through volunteer work or grant funding.

- Various detailed comments regarding the scope and content of the draft which have been incorporated wherever pertinent to its aims and objectives. These include ensuring that the LBAP fully reflects landscape-scale conservation objectives and ensuring the targets accurately reflect targets set nationally and within Sussex. There were also a number of comments recommending detailed textual changes which for the most part have been incorporated.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The costs associated with producing the draft Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Brighton and Hove have been met from within existing revenue budgets. The LBAP will be implemented within existing resources, and using contributions from conservation groups and volunteers.

Finance Officer Consulted: Karen Brookshaw *Date: 09/01/13*

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no legal implications

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert *Date: 14/01/13*

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The LBAP aims to ensure everyone in Brighton and Hove has free access to a quality natural environment, rich in wildlife and that opportunities are provided for people to become actively involved in practical nature conservation activities.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Implementation of the LBAP will contribute to the delivery of the Biosphere and One Planet Living objectives.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no implications for crime and disorder.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 There are no implications.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 Access to natural green space has been scientifically proven to reduce stress and benefit mental health. Initiatives such as the Healthwalks programme, which

rely on good access to natural green space and biodiversity, have proven physical health benefits.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The LBAP, when delivered, will ensure biodiversity is conserved and enhanced for future generations throughout the city.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 There are no known alternatives.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Adoption of the LBAP is a necessary step towards achieving sustainable management of the natural environment in the city and is also important to demonstrate a commitment to biodiversity as part of the application to achieve Biosphere Reserve status.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

- 1. Executive summary of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Documents in Members Rooms

- 1. Copies of the full LBAP report will be made available to view in the Member's Rooms.

APPENDIX 1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE BRIGHTON AND HOVE
LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

1. Biodiversity ('the variety of life on earth') is an integral part of Brighton and Hove. Over half the administrative area of the city is open downland, most of it within the South Downs National Park. Most of the coast of Brighton and Hove is also of national wildlife importance. Within the urban area, natural features such as the National Elm Collection and the network of natural habitats in the urban green space are essential to the character of the city and are highly valued by residents and visitors.
2. Biodiversity is widely recognised as being in serious decline. Co-ordinated action needs to be taken to reverse this and to maintain biodiversity at sustainable levels.
3. Biodiversity action planning emerged from the 1993 Rio Earth Summit, where the 'Convention on Biological Diversity' was signed by 193 states, including the United Kingdom. Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) define the actions needed to conserve the most important elements of our biodiversity.
4. The draft Brighton and Hove Local Biodiversity Action Plan addresses the species and the habitats of particular importance which occur in the city. The majority of these are nationally or internally important, with some additional recommendations made by local naturalists. The LBAP also takes full account of the objectives and priorities of current national biodiversity policy and local interest groups.
5. Each action plan comprises:
 - A description of the ecology of the habitat or species.
 - An assessment of the threats and opportunities to it.
 - A list of conservation objectives to ensure the habitat or species is conserved.
 - A description of the actions which need to be taken, by when and by who, to achieve the conservation objectives.
6. The key habitats addressed by the LBAP and the reasons for their inclusion are summarised in Table 1 (below):

Habitat	Justification
The Coast and Sea	
Coastal Vegetated Shingle	internationally rare; protected under the EC Habitats Directive; 'habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in the UK; 1 ha of the habitat persists in Brighton & Hove
Fragile Sponge and Anthozoan Communities on Subtidal Rocky Habitats	'habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in the UK; the Outer harbour at Brighton Marina is a sub-type of this habitat, occurring some distance from its normal

	distribution along the coasts of Wales and south-west England.
Intertidal Underboulder Communities	'habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in the UK; occurs along the beach east of Brighton Marina
Intertidal chalk	'habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in the UK; occurs along the beach east of Brighton Marina
Maritime cliff and slopes	'habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in the UK; occurs along the chalk cliffs east of Brighton Marina
Sheltered Muddy Gravels – subtidal sediments	'habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in the UK; occurs within the inner and outer harbours of the Brighton Marina
Subtidal chalk	'habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in the UK; occurs beyond the low water mark, the wave cut platforms east of the Brighton Marina
Subtidal sands and gravels	'habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in the UK; occurs below the low water mark off the coast of Brighton and Hove
The Urban Area	
Parks and gardens	The space where most people living in the city interact with nature on a daily basis. Incorporates all private gardens in the city, as well as the publically managed parks, squares, public housing land, school grounds, allotments, road verges and other green space which is used by the public for recreation and food growing.
Urban Commons (incorporating Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land national HAP)	'habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in the UK; some brownfield land in Brighton, including Brighton Station Site and the northern end of Whitehawk Hill.
Downland	
Farmlands [incorporating Arable Field Margins national HAP]	habitat includes 'Arable Field Margins' which is a 'habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in the UK; Brighton & Hove owns 4,000 ha of farmland
Hedgerows	'habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in the UK. Most of the hedges in Brighton and Hove are on the urban fringe and are vulnerable to a range of urban related threats
Lowland calcareous grassland (including chalk scrub and waxcap colonies)	internationally rare; protected under the EC Habitats Directive; 'habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in the UK; the approx. 300 ha in Brighton & Hove under threat from nutrient enrichment, invasion by coarse grasses and scrub, species loss and

	inappropriate management.
Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland	'habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in the UK the approx. 300 ha of the habitat occurs in Brighton & Hove (94 ha of it classified as 'ancient'); under threat from a range of issues associated with urbanisation
Ponds	Some ponds are a 'habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in the UK; Brighton and Hove has one UK BAP Flagship Pond site.

7. The species addressed by the LBAP and the reasons for their inclusion are summarised in Table 2 (below):

Habitat	Justification
Plants	
Arable Annual Group	Pheasant's-eye, Shepherd's-needle and Spreading Hedge-parsley are 'species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. All have been recorded from Brighton and Hove
Hoary Stock (<i>Matthiola incana</i>)	Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain (disputed); distinctive and widely appreciated part of the coastal flora of east Brighton.
Red Star-thistle (<i>Centaurea calcitrapa</i>)	'Critically Endangered' in the Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain 2006; 'species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity'; recorded from several old horse paddocks across Brighton and Hove
Sea Heath (<i>Frankenia laevis</i>)	is listed as Nationally Scarce in Britain; in Brighton and Hove it grows east of Brighton Marina, along the break of slope of the sea cliff and in patches of soil in the spray zone.
White Helleborine (<i>Cephalanthera damasonium</i>)	British Vascular Plant Red list; a 'species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity'; large and apparently thriving colony in Stanmer Great Wood
Invertebrates	
Brown-banded Carder Bee (<i>Bombus humilis</i>)	a 'species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity'; 95% decline in the last 100 years; recorded within Brighton & Hove
Dingy Skipper (<i>Erynnis tages</i> subsp. <i>Tages</i>)	a 'species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. Confined to ancient chalk grassland in SE England. The majority of populations are thought to be small (less than 100 adults) and vulnerable to extinction. Known from Whitehawk Hill and other chalk grassland sites around the city.

Hornet Robberfly (<i>Asilus crabroniformis</i>)	A 'species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. Occurs in 15 'population clusters' in the UK, including one in Sussex. In Brighton it is known to occur on the complex of horse –grazed pastures at Racehill valley, between Bevendean and Bear Road.
White-letter Hairstreak (<i>Satyrium w-album</i>)	A 'species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity'; included under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (trade only); still relatively common in Brighton & Hove.
Fish	
Short-snouted Seahorse (<i>Hippocampus hippocampus</i>)	A 'species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity'; included under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981); recorded in and around Brighton Marina.
Reptiles	
Adder (<i>Vipera berus</i>)	A 'species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity'; included under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981); recorded at Waterhall and Benfield Hill.
Birds	
Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus subsp. Argenteus</i>)	A 'species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity'; UK breeding populations have declined by 69% since 1969, winter populations have declined by more than 50% in the past 25 years; a Red List species; an iconic species, still common in Brighton & Hove.
Swift, Swallow and House Martin	All occur in Brighton and Hove and are amber listed; Swift is believed to have suffered a marked decline in Brighton & Hove, due mainly to reduced nesting opportunities; good opportunities to make a difference at the community level.
Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>)	Protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Numbers have recovered well since the 1960s and the species now has green status in the national list of bird species of conservation concern; risk of illegal persecution from pigeon fanciers, egg collectors and falconers; several breeding pairs in Brighton & Hove.
Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris subsp. Vulgaris</i>)	87% decline over 25 years and the trend continues to be strongly downward; Red List of birds of high conservation concern; a 'species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity'; iconic species in Brighton and Hove (West Pier murmuration)
Mammals	

Bats Species Group	Listed under Appendix II of The Bonn Convention and Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive; fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010; the Noctule Bat and Brown Long-eared Bat are both 'species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. Several populations of bats remain in Brighton and Hove.
The Hazel Dormouse	fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2010; a 'species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity'; known to occur at Waterhall, Green Ridge and Stanmer Park
Other	
Lichen: <i>Physcia clementei</i>	Nationally Scarce. The only scarce species of lichen recently recorded in Brighton and Hove.