



*Black Fly
Beauverie
Cowslip
Glass Vase
Great Crested Newt
Green Parrotfish
Ground Nesting Solitary Bees and Wasps
Lupinus
Meadowhawk
Nightjar
Orchid
Otter
Pipit
Redstart
Small Pearl-bordered Frillfly
Snake
Water Vole
White Stained Crayfish
White Tailed Natter*

A Biodiversity Strategy for Stafford Borough

Foreword



Biodiversity is a new word to the English language, but we shouldn't worry about that, it simply signifies the variety of life on the planet in all its shapes and sizes. This biodiversity can be found everywhere, in our gardens, in the countryside and in the towns and cities. It is all encompassing and includes everything from flower pollinating insects to the mightiest oak tree that has stood for many centuries.

There are many reasons why we should conserve biodiversity, but most obvious is the simple fact that it is important for our quality of life and our very existence as a species. Biodiversity is also a key measure of sustainable development and is integral to the Local Agenda 21 process, which aims to achieve social and economic progress and protect and enhance the environment. This means that future development is only considered to be sustainable if there is no damage to biodiversity.

Human beings are in a position of great power on the planet, and it is our custodial duty to ensure damage is not caused to its natural systems. We must hand on to the next generation an environment no less rich than the one we ourselves inherited. Without care, species that have taken thousands of years to evolve can quickly become extinct.

This document enables the residents of the Borough of Stafford to contribute to encouraging wildlife wherever possible. The processes outlined in this document will

help to ensure that the biodiversity of this rich area will not only survive to be passed on to future generations, but will actually be enhanced.

David Bellamy

'This document demonstrates genuine commitment to conservation in Stafford Borough. I now look forward to a new Century in which our wildlife and habitats are protected and enhanced and the harmful trends of the previous Century are turned around'.

Councillor Elaine Kidney

Deputy Leader, Environment
Stafford Borough Council
July, 2000

'Biodiversity is a key measure of sustainable development and there is now a great opportunity for the planning process to influence the future biodiversity of Stafford Borough. This document illustrates how we can all contribute to the variety of life in our environment and I look forward to new developments which protect and enhance the rich heritage of Stafford Borough'.

Councillor Roy Osborne

Deputy Leader, Planning and Regeneration
Stafford Borough Council
July, 2000

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Executive Summary

Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity has been identified by Government as a key indicator of sustainable development, which is in turn a key policy theme of the Stafford Borough Council Policy Framework 1999-2003. The Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan, published in 1998, assessed the biodiversity resource of Staffordshire, identified targets and priorities and promoted a partnership approach to nature conservation.

The Biodiversity Strategy for Stafford Borough provides the framework to help to reverse the trend of wildlife decline which has occurred over the past few decades and demonstrates the commitment of the Council to biodiversity.

The Aim of the Strategy is

"To conserve and enhance the characteristic biodiversity of Stafford Borough for present and future generations."

This will be achieved by

- Assessing the biodiversity resource of Stafford Borough.
- Identifying biodiversity targets for Stafford Borough.
- Identifying the resources and mechanisms needed to achieve these targets.
- Raising awareness and appreciation of biodiversity throughout all sectors of the community.
- Promoting a partnership working approach to co-ordinate and maximise resources and effort.

The Strategy intends to

- Establish a high priority for biodiversity in Stafford Borough.
- Promote the importance of biodiversity throughout the community.
- Engage all stakeholders in the conservation and management of biodiversity resources.
- Provide practical and accessible guidance to those engaged in the development and construction process.
- Offer and promote examples of good practice.
- Establish a framework to enable the maintenance and management of biodiversity to be promoted and monitored.
- Provide a practical link between the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and nature conservation and enhancement at community level in Stafford Borough.

The Biodiversity Strategy Steering Group which has produced this document will continue to meet regularly to monitor progress. The continued involvement of the partnership organisations will ensure that biodiversity objectives will retain a high priority within the continuing changing social and economic life of the Borough. The Strategy will play an essential role in highlighting the importance of biodiversity to decision makers and will inform the biodiversity elements of the forthcoming review of the Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 and of Stafford Borough Council's Local Agenda 21 Strategy.

The Biodiversity Strategy identifies a vision for the wild places, plants and animals of Stafford Borough and sets out the mechanisms by which this Vision can be achieved. It is up to each and every individual and organisation to make this Vision a reality and make Stafford Borough in the 21st Century a place rich in wildlife and natural habitats.

Kindly sponsored by the following organisations



This document has been put together by the Biodiversity Strategy Steering Group, a partnership of organisations committed to conserving Stafford Borough's biodiversity heritage.

Glossary

AONB

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, designated due to its outstanding landscape value.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity simply refers to the variety of life on our planet. This includes the whole range of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, invertebrates, plants, fungi and micro-organisms. Biodiversity also includes the habitats that support these species.

Biodiversity Convention

In June 1992, the 'Earth Summit' was held in Rio de Janeiro. Over 150 countries, including the United Kingdom, signed the Convention on Biological Diversity. The main aim of the Convention was to commit governments to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Coppicing

The traditional form of management of much of the broadleaved woodland in the UK. It involves cutting down trees and shrubs near to ground level, allowing the tree to re-grow from the stump, and re-cutting at intervals of one or more decades to provide long straight poles.

Earth Summit

Officially the 'United Nations Conference on Environment and Development', this was a milestone event at which world leaders met in response to growing concerns about our degrading environment and the increasing poverty gap.

Habitat

A place in which a particular plant or animal lives. Often used in a wider sense, referring to major assemblages of plants and animals found together e.g. heathland.

Lowland Heathland

Characterised by the presence of plants such as heather, gorse and acidic grasses and generally found below 300 metres in altitude. The UK, and in particular Staffordshire, has an important proportion of the international total of this habitat.

Invertebrates

Animals without backbones.

LBAP

Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Local Agenda 21

The Local Agenda 21 Treaty was signed by over one hundred and fifty world leaders at the 'Earth Summit' in Rio in 1992. The term 'Agenda 21' refers to the need to plan for and achieve sustainable development in the Twenty First Century i.e. development which achieves social and economic progress at the same time as protecting and enhancing the environment.

NNR

National Nature Reserve. A reserve declared under law and managed either by one of the statutory nature conservation agencies or by an approved body.

Ramsar Site

Wetland area of international importance for conservation, designated under the terms of the 1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

RIG

Regionally Important Geological Site.

SBI

Site of Biological Importance that is of county importance for its wildlife interest. SBIs receive no legal protection but are taken into account in the planning process.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

These are sites designated under the terms of the European Union Habitats and Species Directive (1992).

Special Protection Area

These are sites designated under the terms of the European Wild Birds Directive (1979).

SSSI

Site of Special Scientific Interest. An area of land notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as being of special nature conservation interest. The SSSI designation applies throughout the UK. Sites are notified by the appropriate country conservation agency e.g. English Nature.

The Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (1998)

The Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (a Local BAP) identifies priority habitats and species in the County, setting targets for their conservation and enhancement and outlining the mechanisms for achieving these targets.

"Local Biodiversity Action Plans are a key delivery mechanism for achieving national objectives and targets on the ground. As part of their Local Agenda 21 Initiatives, and in partnership with other organisations, local authorities are expected to prepare (or at least contribute towards) Local Biodiversity Action Plans."

(Rt Hon Michael Meacher, Minister of the Environment, Feb 1998).

UK Biodiversity Action Plan

As part of its response to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the government launched the UK Biodiversity Action Plan in 1994. This report set out long-term objectives for 400 species and 40 habitats which are at greatest risk within the UK. The UK BAP also recommended the production of Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) to ensure that initiatives were implemented at a local level.

Unimproved Meadow

A meadow that has not been treated by fertilizers, herbicides or re-seeded and still retains a high diversity of plant and animal species.

1 Our Vision for the Future

Over the last fifty years a great deal of damage has been caused to the whole of the UK's biodiversity. There is now a strong tide of public opinion calling for this trend to be reversed. Biodiversity Strategies and Biodiversity Action Plans can provide the framework to help bring this damage to a halt and enhance our wildlife heritage for us, and future generations.

We could see huge wildlife gains in just a decade. Imagine taking a stroll along one of our rivers in ten years time, the grassland ablaze with cuckoo flower and ragged robin as lapwings and snipe nest and call from the high grass; grass snakes bask along the river edge and otters hunt for fish in the cool water.

Picture the farmland surrounding the river, an intimate mix of arable and livestock fields set within a framework of healthy hedgerows, the sound of songbirds singing from prominent perches; grey partridge exploring the field edges, their chicks busily feeding on beetles and bugs; brown hares boxing in early spring, the field margins in summer providing cover for their young leverets.

Heathland covers the low hills near the farm. Within ten years extensive tracts have developed in the south of the Borough and are of major importance for a whole host of species. In the summer the heath turns purple as the heather comes into flower and the buzzing sound of bees fills the air. Rare birds, such as the nightjar and woodlark, are now seen regularly over this expanse of heathland.

The churches and gardens in our towns and villages provide an important haven for our wildlife too. Birds, such as the song thrush, nest and rear their young in our garden trees; village ponds and pools in towns are abundant with newts, frogs and toads; bats roost in the eaves, and churchyards are full of the colour of wildflowers in the summer.

Achieving this vision is the main aim of the Biodiversity Strategy for Stafford Borough.



2 Wildlife and Habitats in Decline

Over the last few decades we have seen a terrible decline in the amount and quality of the wildlife asset we have in the Borough. Some of these losses are outlined in this section.

*Below
Hedgerow destruction*

*Bottom left
Pratie landscape*

*Right
Habitat destruction*



Between 1979 and 1999 we have lost over 50% of our marshy grassland, which is important for wading birds and other wetland species.

In the last sixty years almost all of our flower rich meadows have been destroyed.

Since 1950, our woodlands have been suffering from lack of management because of the cessation of ancient practices such as coppicing.

A large quantity of our heathland has now become degraded, due to lack of grazing which helps to keep the heather young and vigorous. The heather has now become old and is unable to compete with invading scrubland and bracken, which is a much poorer habitat for wildlife.

If the current rate of decline persists, the water vole will be extinct in both the Borough and the UK by 2003.

Some of our most 'common' birds are also declining rapidly. These include the skylark, which was once widespread all over Staffordshire, and wetland birds such as snipe and lapwing. Loss of grassland habitat is the primary cause, along with the decline of winter stubbles and other changes in cereal cropping cycles.

Several species have already become extinct in Stafford Borough in the last ten years. These include the red squirrel, which was last reported on Cannock Chase in the early 1990s, the marsh helleborine, a rare and beautiful plant of wet grasslands, and *Cryptocephalus decemmaculatus*, a very rare and distinctive leaf beetle of wetlands.

For more information on the decline of wildlife in Stafford Borough, please see the 'Audit of Wildlife Sites within Stafford Borough' in Appendix (vi).



3 The Legacy

Wildlife and Habitats in Stafford Borough in the New Millennium

It is not all bad news, and the Borough still has many places that have a high wildlife interest. The habitats that are particularly important for wildlife within the Borough include woodland, wetland, flower-rich meadows and heathland. They often occur in isolated patches between larger areas of intensively farmed land and this makes them very susceptible to degradation or loss.



Woodland

Ancient woods, when compared to other types of woodland, contain the highest biodiversity. Hundreds of years old, they have often been managed and utilised by people over the centuries. They are rich in woodland flowers, including bluebell, yellow archangel and wood sorrel that create carpets of blue, yellow and white in the springtime. Ancient woodlands are also very rich in animal life. These include large numbers of birds, such as nuthatch and tree-creeper which nest amongst the trees, and insects like the brimstone butterfly and the speckled woodpecker, both of which can be seen flying in glades amongst the trees. The elusive and uncommon yellow-necked mouse is also a resident of some of the woodlands in the Borough of Stafford.



Wetland

This broad definition includes rivers, streams, canals and ponds as well as another very important habitat, wet grassland. The latter is found along the banks of rivers and Stafford Borough contains some very important sites including Doxey and Tillington Marshes, Baswich Meadows and Rawbones Meadows, all of which are Sites of Special Scientific Interest. These meadows are important for breeding wading birds such as snipe and lapwing, both of which are declining throughout the UK.

Our rivers are also very important for two mammals, the otter and the water vole. Whilst the otter is on the increase in the Midlands the water vole is suffering a drastic decline in numbers, due primarily to loss of suitable habitat and predation by mink. If action is not taken fast, the water vole will become extinct.



Heathland

Heathland is an internationally important habitat, still well represented in Stafford Borough. In the 17th century significant areas of the Borough were covered in heathland, although at this time this land was referred to as 'waste'. Now only fragments remain, the largest of which can be found within Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Heathland is an important habitat for a large number of species, including nightjar and woodlark, and is significant for insect life including some striking solitary bees and wasps which nest along sandy paths. Many of the insect species found on heathlands are very rare.

Meadows

The biodiversity of our meadows has unfortunately suffered a serious decline over the last fifty years, as agricultural intensification has increased. Characteristic meadow plants cannot tolerate the application of herbicides and fertilizers and consequently have disappeared. But all is not lost, the remaining meadows of Stafford Borough are still a very important resource, particularly for plants. Species such as cowslips, orchids and yellow rattle can be found on this 'unimproved' grassland and as a strange consequence of the agricultural practices of the second half of the twentieth century, some of the most diverse areas of grassland can now be found along road verges, where herbicide application and fertilizers have not occurred at such a high level.



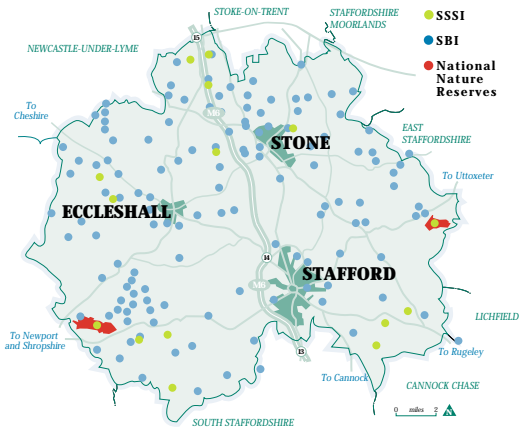
The Best Sites

Some areas containing woodland, wetland, heathlands and meadows are of great importance for wildlife within the Borough.

Stafford Borough contains several internationally important sites, of which two are National Nature Reserves (NNRs), managed by English Nature. These are Chartley Moss, which is a floating bog and Aqualate Mere, the largest of the natural meres that can be found throughout Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire.

English Nature also designates those sites that are considered to be of national importance as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). This is a statutory notification, which gives considerable protection to the site. There are currently sixteen SSSIs notified within Stafford Borough.

There are also sites that are classified as County Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs). These are considered to be of county importance to wildlife although they do not have any statutory protection. The best of these are termed Grade One SBIs, of which there are 135 within Stafford Borough, ranging from ponds to large woodlands.



Other Success Stories

Some animal species in the Borough are now on the increase. These include the buzzard and the polecat, both of which used to be persecuted but have now re-colonised this area, moving eastwards from Wales. One of the most beautiful creatures to have returned to the Borough is the otter. The species was driven to near extinction in the UK, mainly due to polluted watercourses that affected the otters' breeding success. Fortunately our rivers and streams are now much cleaner than they were and this magnificent mammal is now returning to the Stafford area from its stronghold in Wales.

Left
Polecat (The Vincent Wildlife Trust)

4 Why Do We Need a Biodiversity Strategy?

To achieve our vision of a Borough richer in wildlife, we need to reverse the trend of wildlife decline that has occurred over the past few decades. This is best carried out in a strategic manner, which takes account of all the aspects that have a direct effect on biodiversity.



The Strategy has strong links to the Borough Council Policy Framework 1999-2003, in which sustainable development is identified as a key policy theme. Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity has been identified by Government as a key indicator of sustainable development. To enable measurement, biodiversity indicators for the Borough will be developed, which will also inform the Borough's Local Agenda 21 Strategy and the Local Plan Review. It is important to stress that biodiversity should not be seen as an issue separate from the activities of society as a whole, whether in schools, business, planning or our leisure time; rather it should work in tandem with these. Development and change continues, but biodiversity must always be taken into account.

Biodiversity Strategy Aim

"To conserve and enhance the characteristic biodiversity of Stafford Borough for present and future generations."

It will accomplish this aim by:

- Assessing the biodiversity resource of Stafford Borough.
- Identifying biodiversity targets for Stafford Borough.
- Identifying the resources and mechanisms needed to achieve these targets, including the planning system, land management and public participation.
- Raising awareness and appreciation of biodiversity throughout all sectors of the community including schools, business, the farming sector and the general public.
- Promoting a partnership approach, allowing resources and effort to be combined for maximum effect.

This strategy links the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan to action for Stafford Borough. It is fundamental to the Local Agenda 21 process and all the principles guiding sustainable development and work towards sustainable communities (for more information on these links please see the Glossary and Appendix(i), 'Themes of a Sustainable Community').



5 Assessing the Biodiversity Resource



To assess the progress of a Biodiversity Strategy, it is first important to determine what wildlife resources are still present within the Borough and which of these are key species for assessing the status of biodiversity within the Borough.

Research on this has already been carried out as part of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) and the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (SBAP) and a similar process has been carried out for Stafford Borough.



Above
Black poplar
Top right
Stream and wetland meadow
Right
Grey partridge (RSPB)

Species Which are Key to Assessing Biodiversity Within Stafford Borough

*SBAP Species

**UK BAP Priority Species and SBAP species

Black poplar*
Brown hare**
Cowslip*
Grass snake*
Great crested newt**
Grey partridge**
Ground nesting solitary bees and wasps*
Lapwing*
Natterjack toad**
Nightjar**

Noctule bat*
Otter**
Pipistrelle bat**
Skylark**
Small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly*
Snipe*
Water vole**
White-clawed crayfish**
White-faced darter*
Woodlark**

It must be noted that there are many more species within the Borough that are either very rare or are in serious decline. The list above is a representative sample of those species which will be monitored to indicate wildlife trends within the Borough.

Habitats Which are Key to Assessing Biodiversity Within Stafford Borough

Ancient and semi-natural broadleaved woodland*
Ancient/diverse hedgerows**
Arable field margins**
Canals, lakes and ponds*
Lowland acid grassland**
Lowland heathland**
Lowland wet grassland**
Peat bogs**
Rivers and streams*

Saltmarsh**
Unimproved neutral grassland**
Wet woodland**
Wood-pasture and parkland**

More information is given in the 'Audit of Wildlife Sites within Stafford Borough' in Appendix (vi)



6 Biodiversity Targets for Stafford Borough

The following biodiversity targets for Stafford Borough are taken from the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan. The vast majority of targets are set over a ten year time scale with an end date of 2010.



Species

Black Poplar

Increase current populations by 50 trees in suitable locations by 2005.

Brown Hare

Establish a monitoring programme by 2001.

Double spring hare population by 2010.

Cowslip

Secure appropriate management for all existing sites by 2010.

Grass Snake

Ensure grass snakes have returned to their 1970s range by 2010.

Undertake active management for grass snakes on all reserves and statutory sites by 2010.

Great Crested Newt

Establish 3 new populations by 2010.

Grey Partridge

Increase population by 20% by 2015.

Maintain current range.

Ground Nesting Solitary Bees and Wasps

Identify 3 key sites and carry out management by 2005.

Lapwing

Increase breeding population by 50% by 2015.

Increase breeding population on all potential/current statutory sites by 2010.

Restore population to 1982 level on the River Penk and Sow by 2010.

Top left
Snipe (RSPB)

Left
Marsh Orchid

Natterjack Toad

Increase the current population to a sustainable level at the one existing site by 2010.

Nightjar

Increase population on Cannock Chase to 70 pairs by 2015.

Establish a breeding population at one more heathland site in the Cannock Chase area.

Noctule Bat

Establish monitoring programme by 2000.

Otter

Restore otters to all Stafford Borough River catchments.

Provide otter havens along every 5km of river by 2010.

Pipistrelle Bat

Establish monitoring programme by 2000.

Restore population to 1970s levels by 2010.

Skylark

Increase population by 20% by 2015.

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary Butterfly

Increase current populations by 10% by 2010.

Re-introduce two more colonies, if feasible, by 2010.

Snipe

Double breeding population by 2015.

Increase breeding population on all potential/current statutory sites by 2010.

Restore population to 1982 level on the River Penk and Sow by 2010.

Water Vole

Ensure water voles have returned to their 1970s range by 2010.

Target 13 key sites for management by 2005.

White-clawed Crayfish

Ensure white-clawed crayfish has returned to their 1970s range by 2010.

Maintain all current sites.

Set up and monitor 5 key sites by 2001.

White-faced Darter Dragonfly

Maintain current population.

Woodlark

Increase population to 20 pairs by 2005 and 40 pairs by 2015.

Establish a breeding population at one more heathland site in the Cannock Chase area.



Top right
Cowslip

Above
Woodlark (RSPB)

Habitats

Ancient and Semi-natural Woodland

Maintain all good examples (SBIs/SSSIs).

Restore 10% of replanted ancient woodland by 2010.

Ancient and Species Rich Hedgerows

No net loss by 2000.

Create a further 10% by new planting by 2010.

Arable Field Margins

Reinstate 30% of 1 metre field margins by 2010.

Create 2-6 metre strips on 30% of farms by 2010.

Canals, Lakes and Ponds

Create an inventory of all ponds by 2005.

Maintain all SBIs/SSSIs by 2010.

Create 10 new wildlife ponds by 2010.

Lowland Acid Grassland

Maintain all good examples (SBIs/SSSIs).

Create 30 hectares of acid grassland by 2010.

Lowland Heathland

Manage all heathlands.

Re-create and restore 50 hectares of heathland by 2010.

Lowland Wet Grassland

Manage all good examples (SBIs/SSSIs).

Re-create/create 80 hectares of wet grassland by 2010.

Peat Bogs

Maintain all SSSIs.

Rivers and Streams

Restore 2km of rivers and streams by 2010.

Reinstate 30% of former backwater features by 2010.

Saltmarsh

Maintain all SBIs/SSSIs.

Unimproved Neutral Grassland

Manage all good examples (SBIs/SSSIs).

Create 20 hectares of neutral grassland by 2010.

Wet Woodland

Maintain all good examples (SBIs/SSSIs).

Create 10 hectares of wet woodland by 2010.

Wood-pasture and Parkland

Maintain all good examples (SBIs/SSSIs).

Restore 80 hectares of wood-pasture and parkland by 2010.

*Below
Allimore Green Common*

*Bottom
Burnt Wood SSSI*

Monitoring Success: Are We Doing It Right?

Monitoring success is one of the main duties of the County Biodiversity Officer who is currently based at Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. The Biodiversity Officer's duties include keeping a database on all biodiversity actions, targets and achievements in the County. This is part of an ongoing programme of information gathering to ensure that progress continues. Targets may be altered in the future as situations change and as we become more informed about the species and habitats in the Borough. The information gathered is open to all.

The Stafford Borough Biodiversity Strategy Steering Group, which prepared this document, will continue to meet on a regular basis to monitor the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy on the ground, in planning, as part of education for biodiversity and as a key element of the Local Agenda 21 Strategy.



7 How Will it Happen?

The Mechanisms for Biodiversity Enhancement

To carry forward all the biodiversity targets for the species and habitats referred to in section 6, a number of actions need to be followed through. It must be stressed that these actions are not just for conservation bodies or the Borough Council, but for all sectors of the community including land owners, businesses, schools, statutory agencies, local groups, individuals, planners and developers.

A number of these sectors are critical:

Public support and appreciation is important to keep up momentum; a greater understanding of biodiversity ensures this.

Proactive work on the ground helps to manage habitats specifically for biodiversity.

The principles of sustainable development within the planning sector allow for the incorporation of biodiversity into all developments.

It is therefore of paramount importance to discuss how each of these principal mechanisms will operate to ensure that the Biodiversity Strategy is successful. Outlined in the following three sections are the mechanisms to deliver biodiversity through the community, work on the ground and the planning systems respectively.



8 Biodiversity and the Community

It is clear that biodiversity is essential to every member of the community and not just an issue for conservation bodies. This means that every citizen has a role to play in biodiversity conservation. In this section a number of suggestions are given to show what you can do to help look after and improve Stafford Borough's important biodiversity resource.

A section entitled 'Where to Go for Information and Help' can be found in Appendix (vii).



What You Can Do for the Biodiversity of Stafford Borough

As individuals you can support wildlife in many ways:

Perhaps you're a budding gardener...or already have green fingers...

Why not make your garden more wildlife friendly? Gardens can be very important for wildlife. Some lucky householders have bats in their eaves, great crested newts in their ponds and grass snakes in the compost heap! See Appendix (ii) for advice on the many ways you can contribute to the wildlife value of your garden. You might even wish to enter the Stafford and Stone in Bloom Awards 'Conservation Awareness' category.

...or keen to join a practical conservation group?

By volunteering to do practical conservation work you can help look after some of the Borough's most important habitats and learn lots of new skills too. Why not make a real difference for wildlife at the same time as making some great friends and having fun! See Appendix (vii) for a list of local groups. You might even want to start your own conservation group. You could draw up a Parish Wildlife Map, or plan a Churchyard Conservation Project. The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) gives small grants to new groups to help with initial start up costs and provides low cost insurance for volunteer work and tools.

How about taking out membership for one (or more) of our wildlife organisations?

You will be helping to conserve wildlife and habitat and will be kept informed of wildlife issues by the experts. See the appendix for a list of various groups, such as the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and the RSPB. You might like to join a specialist group and help conserve your favourite species. From bats to badgers, from wasps to wading birds, there's an interest group for you!

...and you could also join 'Action at Home'

This programme helps householders 'go green' and makes the link between day-to-day behaviour and its consequent effect on the environment. It helps you save money too.





In school you can play a really important role in looking after Biodiversity:

Become an Eco-School..

The Eco-School programme will help guide your school towards sustainability - and may lead to the achievement of a prized Green Flag Award.

....or Green the Grounds!

There are many ways school grounds can become havens for wildlife. The section at the back of this document offers some suggestions and puts you in touch with some of the experts that can help. You can also help wildlife by becoming a wildlife recorder, or even enter the new 'Schools in Bloom' 'Wildlife in School Grounds' competition (details at rear).

At church you might:

Become an Eco-Church or an Eco-Congregation!

There are guidelines available to help your religious group and/or church become more sustainable. You could join the Eco-Church programme and work towards an Eco-Church Award (advice available from Stafford Borough Council and CARIS).

Biodiversity Abounds...in churchyards

A conservation management plan can maintain and enhance the nature conservation value of churchyards without detriment to their usual functions. Get hold of the Churchyards Conservation Pack from the Church and Conservation Project, details of which can be found in Appendix (vii).



In local government:

Councils can develop policies which emphasise the importance of biodiversity and encourage partnerships with the community which support biodiversity conservation and enhancement. Some of Stafford Borough Council's initiatives include: the wide-reaching Local Agenda 21 programme, the Tree Strategy, the Greening Industrial Estates Programme, the Open Spaces Strategy and the Barlaston and Rough Close Common Management Plan.

In farming and on the land:

Farming communities and land managers play a crucial role in biodiversity maintenance and have potential to act as driving forces in the restoration of wildlife and natural habitats in Stafford Borough. The local Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA) can offer expert advice on farm conservation management and some ideas are given at the rear of this document in Appendix (iv).

In business:

Biodiversity and business are often seen as a 'don't mix' combination. Yet business and industry at all scales can contribute to biodiversity. From 'adopting a species' to writing an environmental policy, from joining the Staffordshire Business Environment Network to participating in the 'Greening Industrial Estates' initiative, businesses can be proactive in supporting wildlife and habitats.

Good practice may be rewarded through the Borough's Green Awards, and don't forget - good environmental practice is usually good for business too.

Britain's Tiny Diggers get Boost from Digger Giant!!

An unusual partnership has developed recently between Britain's biggest and smallest 'diggers'. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and locally based JCB are working together to save the rare digger wasp from extinction. JCB's classic diggers are a distinctive yellow and black and weigh-in at 8 tonnes. The insects share the yellow and black colouring - but weigh a mere 8 milligrams and, at just two centimetres long, are thumbnail size. Once common, the digger wasp is now threatened, as its natural heathland vegetation has declined. JCB is stepping in to support conservation efforts by loaning massive diggers to create suitable habitats for the wasps and by funding vital survey work. The partnership is an excellent example of business and biodiversity working together!



We all know that biodiversity is ultimately lost or conserved at the local level.

This means that continued progress is dependent on the support and involvement of all of us.

Your participation in biodiversity conservation is therefore both welcome and essential.

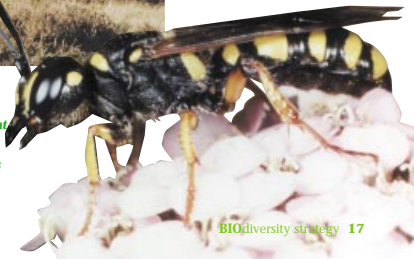


Top
Farming with field margins (FRCA)

Above
Stafford Borough Council's Green Awards 2000

Below left
JCB at work (JCB)

Below right
Digger wasp (Roger Key)



9 Biodiversity on the Ground

Much good work is already being done in the Borough for our biodiversity. In this section we describe a number of examples of good practice which offer ideas about how to support and enhance biodiversity.

Case Studies of Good Practice

River Habitat Improvements: River Penk, Radford Bridge

As part of its remit the Environment Agency and its predecessor organisations have sought to carry out work to enhance the biodiversity of rivers.

During the 1970s, sections of the River Penk were widened and straightened to facilitate the acceptance of large volumes of sewage effluent from a planned new major treatment works. The treatment works were never built, but the river system and stream habitat had been detrimentally altered, and as a result supported only sparse fish populations. This was evident in the reach downstream of Radford Bridge in Stafford.

In the mid 1990s it was decided to encourage the recovering growth of reed beds by protecting them with flow deflectors. As well as protecting the reed beds, the deflectors also narrowed the river channel, increasing local stream velocity and altering the flow characteristics. Over a 400m length seven deflectors were installed at intervals to create a sinusoidal flow pattern. The reed beds were found to develop very quickly. The sinusoidal flow pattern has since become established and the beds are permanent features, re-creating essential habitat for fish and invertebrates.

Fish population surveys carried out before the scheme was implemented and in each subsequent year show that recolonisation has been extremely rapid. Fish biomass doubled within 12 months and then continued to increase at a lower rate. Most species expected to be present are now represented.

The scheme is regarded as a success in accelerating the recovery of the river to a more natural state, by encouraging and stimulating the normal processes of vegetation growth.



Great Crested Newt Translocation: A 'Moving' Story!

Local residents and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust alerted Stafford Borough Council in April 1992 that a pond on a proposed housing site was home to a population of Great Crested Newts, a protected species. English Nature, who were at that time the body with responsibility for licensing any works affecting Great Crested Newts, gave advice on the appropriate measures to be taken. Since the implementation of the Habitats Regulations 1994, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions is now the appropriate licensing authority. Should a similar situation arise today, it is possible that, in accordance with the regulations, the outcome would be different. This story is, however, an example of the use of the development control process to minimise the impact of a development on a threatened species.

English Nature's preference was for the development proposals to be amended to take account of the newt habitat. However, if amendment proved impracticable, English Nature was prepared to consider a translocation under license, subject to certain very stringent requirements. Adequate assurances would have to be made, supported by a legal agreement, that a suitable site could be found nearby, with a specified area around it which would remain free from development. The developers engaged specialist consultants who undertook a count of the newts in the affected pond and carried out a survey of other ponds in the vicinity to establish their suitability as an alternative home for the newts. Agreement was reached with English Nature that, if the existing breeding marl pit located within the planned new housing development was to be filled in, then a new pond must be constructed in an adjacent field with an appropriate area of terrestrial habitat to which the newts could be translocated under license.

The newts were successfully moved to a newly constructed pond, but it was realised that any further housing development would not be possible, without not only retaining and protecting the new habitat, but also providing additional ponds and a terrestrial habitat. The solution involved providing a habitat corridor along the boundaries of the proposed housing site, over which the public would have no access, and which would provide the newts with a safe access onto the surrounding undeveloped land. This habitat provision and protection, together with the long term management of the habitat was safeguarded by a legal agreement and by conditions attached to the planning permission for the development of the site.

The Great Crested Newt now has a new protected home in the form of an L-shaped reserve, sloping gently from north to south towards some new houses, and more steeply eastwards down a wooded slope to a stream. There are three ponds, custom built areas for hibernation and a rough grassland area. A variety of floating, submerged and emergent vegetation has been transferred from the original habitat (now part of the housing site) and as well as the Great Crested Newt the ponds provide breeding habitats for other amphibians such as frogs, toads and common newts.



Millennium Shades

One of several ongoing Local Agenda 21 initiatives, the Millennium Shades Project was originally set up to promote sun-awareness amongst children. The key element of this project involves the creation of live willow structures which provide excellent shaded areas within school grounds. These willow structures can be used as an educational and environmental resource; once mature they create the perfect outdoor classroom and play area, at the same time as enhancing the school grounds.

BTCV and Stafford Borough Council have worked in partnership to plant willow structures in grounds at several schools within Stafford Borough. The whole school community is involved in the design, planting and maintenance of the willow structures; for the project to succeed, participation by school children is vital.

By encouraging environmental awareness amongst children, the Millennium Shades project enhances understanding of the issues that surround biodiversity. Through our work in schools, we are helping to promote the significance of biodiversity to the next generation of adults.



To Spray or Not to Spray...

From 1st April 2000 treatment of weeds by chemical spraying, in the Borough's Open Spaces ceased. Whilst the results of this new strategy will not be known for at least three years, the following impacts are likely:

Advantages

- More wild flowers will appear in grassed areas and especially field margins.
- Insects and birdlife will begin to increase.
- There will be a reduction of chemicals in the environment with associated health benefits for all of us.
- Saving money.

Disadvantages

- Ceasing spraying may result in complaints regarding weed seeds blowing onto private property.
- Weed seeds may blow into road way channels, germinate and block the water flow.
- Weed seeds may germinate and damage footpaths and tarmac areas.
- Grassed areas may deteriorate because of the infestation of weeds.

Managing Bogs in the Borough

Although in private ownership, Chartley Moss, sited some 11km (7 miles) to the north east of Stafford, is managed by English Nature as a National Nature Reserve. It is a national and internationally important site for its peat bog communities, particularly the western basin which supports a raft of nutrient-poor sphagnum peat floating above a deep water body. It is the largest quaking bog, or *schwingmoor*, in Britain and is thought to have been formed as a result of the partial solution and collapse of underlying salt-bearing rocks. This is an exceptionally uncommon phenomenon, observed only at this site and at Wybunbury Moss in Cheshire.

The habitats range from open water to wet/bog woodland. Where the peat raft is at its wettest and unstable there is a 'lawn' of bog mosses (Sphagnum species) with open bog pools. A number of rare, highly specialised plants grow here, including the round-leaved sundew. The nationally rare white-faced darter dragonfly breeds in pools here in some numbers. This is the most important habitat at Chartley, a priority Biodiversity Action Plan habitat, and the one which takes most of the management effort.

Past attempts at draining the moss resulted in some drying of the peat surface, allowing colonisation by pine and birch scrub. This is undesirable because it increases the drying process and shades out the rare bog plants. English Nature's management has, therefore, been targeted at this problem. The drains have been blocked and some four hectares of trees and scrub removed. Although this is an ongoing process, the site is certainly wetter now, tree and scrub invasion is much reduced and recolonisation by bog species, the biodiversity of the site, is very successful.

Western Downs Community Tree Planting

Running along the top of the motorway embankment, acting as a buffer between the M6 and a large housing development, lies a wide strip of open space. Owned and maintained by Stafford Borough Council, the land is used predominantly for informal recreation. The area has a typical playing field mowing regime, with mature trees running along the motorway edge of the site.

In the planting seasons of 1996 and 1997, two phases of tree planting were carried out by the Borough Council and the local community, increasing the planted buffer between the open space and the motorway.

The tree planting consisted of species native to Stafford Borough such as oak, alder, field maple, silver birch and dog wood.

In addition to absorbing carbon dioxide and acting as dust filters, the trees have significantly expanded the available habitat, providing a much broader and more diverse wildlife base.

Western Downs community tree planting proves that, rather than posing a threat to biodiversity, recreational areas can provide both rich and variable wildlife edges.



Responsible Pest Control

There is no such thing as a pest - in nature. Pest status is simply a human definition describing a naturally occurring organism which impinges in some adverse way upon human beings and/or their property.

Killing 'pests' must always be considered the last resort.

How can we control pests without killing them? The first step in the process is to accurately identify the species of organisms in question. Having done so, a knowledge of the species' biology will help a Pest Control Officer know where to look to establish the location and extent of any population to be found. Then an appropriate course of action can be planned.

When a pest is found to be causing a problem, the first option to consider should be appropriate proofing. For example, proofing the exterior of a building to prevent its use by pigeons for roosting/nesting.

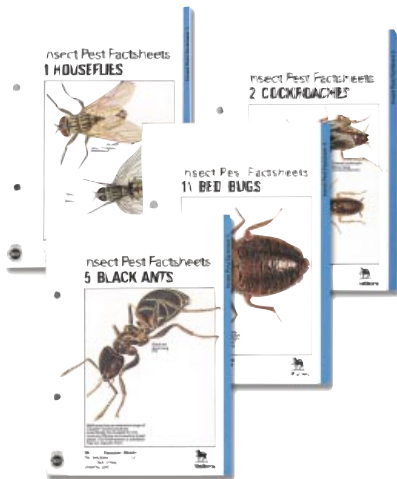
At times, more extreme action is required. When a Pest Control Officer takes any action he or she must ensure that there is the very minimum of impact on any "non-target" species. For example, when investigating a pest problem in a roof void, great care must be taken to establish if bats are present and that they are not disturbed, or their safety threatened in any way.

Once a pest species has been identified, and is seen to pose a threat that demands action, then the most appropriate pesticide must be chosen. Any pesticide used in this country has to pass through a rigorous approval regime to ensure that it is both effective and humane, that it presents the minimum risk to "non-target" species (particularly human beings) and that it is biodegradable and thus will pose the minimum risk to the environment. It is also a legal requirement that any pesticide must be used in accordance with its manufacturers instructions.

When rodenticides must be used, it is now increasingly the case that bait is located in secure bait stations that are attractive to rodents but prevent access to the baits by wildlife, cats, dogs and children, etc.

It is well known that the majority of aquatic life is particularly susceptible to exposure to insecticides. For this reason extreme care is taken in the use of insecticides in and around water bodies. This duty extends also to the safe disposal of pesticides. Waste pesticide must never be tipped down drains or discarded on land. Instead, it is important only to make the appropriate amount of pesticide required for the job - thereby avoiding waste too. Pesticide containers or any other articles contaminated with pesticide are returned directly to pesticide suppliers, who ensure that all such waste is safely disposed of, as required by the law.

Human beings do not have exclusive right to occupy this planet and any means to control other species must be exercised with the greatest of care to ensure the very minimum of damage is done to the natural world and its biodiversity. At Stafford Borough Council our Pest Control Service does its best to abide by this guiding principle.



Stafford Borough Tree Strategy: 'A Growing Success'

Trees are the largest and oldest of living things. They are largely taken for granted and often it is not until they are lost that their real value is appreciated. Trees and woodlands bring positive benefits to our environment not least in providing a habitat for thousands of plant and animal species.

The Government has stated that it would like to see a substantial increase in woodland cover in England over the next fifty years and Stafford Borough Council in 1998 adopted a Tree Strategy to provide a fundamental framework for achieving this Government objective in the Borough.

The Council has been working in partnership with BTCV to implement the Tree Strategy and since 1998 more than 3000 trees have been planted, with community involvement, at a variety of locations throughout the Borough.

The Tree Strategy is already, after less than two years, helping to achieve the primary aim of the Biodiversity Strategy for Stafford Borough which is

'To conserve and enhance the characteristic biodiversity of the Borough for present and future generations.'

It is doing this through partnership working in planting the trees, raising awareness of nature and nature conservation issues through the involvement of schools and community groups and through the identification of suitable sites for tree and woodland planting and targeting the resources and mechanisms for getting the trees into the ground.

More Than Marginal Benefit

Fifty to sixty years ago, arable field margins carried a diverse cover of perennial grasses and herbs. These in turn supported a wide variety of wildlife. As agriculture has intensified, field margins at the base of hedgerows and on other field boundaries have become rare, at great loss to our indigenous wildlife resource. Yet by leaving as little as one metre alongside a hedge, wall or field edge, wildflowers, grasses and many other species of wildlife will benefit. Field margins provide important nesting cover for partridges, corn buntings and other birds, and a hunting ground for kestrels and barn owls. Margins also provide over-wintering habitat for invertebrates that prey on crop pests such as aphids.

The presence of a ditchline can also increase the value of a hedgerow for wildlife. Some of the birds that often nest in hedges, such as song thrushes, blackbirds and robins find good feeding conditions along damp ditch sides. Some insects that pass their larval stages in the ditch will feed as adults on the hedgerow flowers.

The Countryside Stewardship Scheme encourages farmers to develop farming practices which include the creation of field margins and beetle banks. Contact the Countryside Stewardship Project Officer or the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency for further details.





Cannock Chase: Managing for Biodiversity

The heather and bracken clad slopes of Cannock Chase constitute the largest area of lowland heath now remaining in central England. Both the heathland habitat itself, and some of the specialised species which it supports, such as nightjar and woodlark, are recognised as BAP priorities at both national and county level.

In common with other similar areas, the Chase heaths are suffering from a variety of problems which affect the vegetation. Staffordshire County Council, which manages over 1,000 hectares of the Chase heaths, has been tackling these since 1974. The work has centred around heather burning and cutting to stimulate natural regeneration, bracken control through spraying, rolling and latterly, frond harvesting, and removal of invading pine and birch scrub. Great impetus to these efforts was provided in 1999, when the County Council, working with English Nature, secured over half a million pounds from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This enabled a greatly expanded five year work programme, costing £725,000, to be drawn up.

Under the dramatic title "Saving Cannock Chase", this increased funding should greatly enhance the valued Chase vegetation, including the rare hybrid bilberry. Associated fauna which should benefit includes grasshoppers, bush-crickets, reptiles and, in the wetlands, several species of dragonfly and the small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly, another Staffordshire BAP species.

Barlaston and Rough Close Common

Barlaston and Rough Close Common are two fragments of lowland heath, readily accessible to large numbers of people and subject to relatively heavy recreational pressure.

In 1992 a Management Plan was prepared which identified three main objectives; the maintenance and enhancement of the heathland, open water and seasonally wet flush habitats for their wildlife value; the improvement of recreational and interpretative facilities; the resolution of conflicts of interest between conservation and recreation. A variety of management techniques were adopted. These ranged from cutting and burning the heathland vegetation, re-introducing grazing and cutting and spraying invasive scrub, bracken and rank weeds, to defining and improving parking facilities and identifying and sign posting rights of way.

Annual pond clearance involving local schoolchildren, local residents and volunteers from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) has been successful in maintaining the open water habitat of the pond.

BTCV have an annual programme of scrub, bramble and bracken cutting and pulling which has succeeded in allowing a certain amount of heathland regeneration to take place.

A review of the Management Plan, undertaken in 1999, recognises the successes to date and identifies continuing and new measures to build on that success. Burning of the heathland has not proved practicable and will not be pursued as a management option. The re-introduction of grazing on Barlaston Common is planned, along with turf stripping to encourage ericaceous plants. Experimentally, selected areas such as woodland and scattered scrub will be retained without further management for a trial period and the effects monitored. Various techniques will be pursued elsewhere, such as checking encroachment and tipping at the site margins; removal of non-native species; scraping off nutrient rich tipped soils and tall herbs from the central quarry area of Rough Close Common. Populations of notable species will be monitored along with the effects of all management practices toward fulfilling the objectives of the management plan.



10 Biodiversity and Planning

Biodiversity is a key measure of sustainable development and Stafford Borough Council is committed to working towards sustainable communities. Sustainability is a key principle governing new development in the Borough and is one of the overarching policy themes of the Council's Policy Framework. This section demonstrates the opportunities and implications of the Biodiversity Strategy and its objectives for Stafford Borough.

While developers and their professional advisers will find particular relevance in this section, it is also of value to private individuals, local authority planning officers and elected representatives.

'Planning Policy Guidance Number 9-Nature Conservation', sets out the principles and policies that apply to the integration of nature conservation and biodiversity priorities with land use planning. No new planning powers will be needed to implement the guidance in this Strategy. All the issues can be addressed and achieved through existing planning legislation and regulations within the framework of current Government planning guidance and advice.

Planning for biodiversity can achieve mutual benefits and can work hand in hand with new developments, enabling them to be brought forward in ways that conserve, protect and enhance nature conservation and contribute to the meeting of biodiversity and sustainability targets.

Central Government also recognises and encourages the important role of the land use planning system in the delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan objectives and targets.

Biodiversity Principles for the Planning Sector

Stafford Borough provides a home for many important habitats and species and the following principles will guide and inform all aspects of the planning process.

- Important habitats should be protected from inappropriate and harmful development.
- Many habitats and species are highly fragmented and isolated in a modern agricultural landscape.
- Opportunities should be taken where appropriate and possible to reverse habitat fragmentation.
- New development offers an opportunity to contribute towards a net gain for biodiversity. It can make a significant contribution to the achievement of national, regional and local habitat and species protection and enhancement restoration targets.
- Adequate information should be provided with planning applications to enable an assessment to be made of the effects, if any, the proposed development will have on biodiversity.
- New development should not normally lead to a loss of biodiversity. Adverse effects should be avoided, minimized or compensated for.
- The land use planning system should assist in monitoring the effects of new development on biodiversity.
- Local people should be given the opportunity in the land use planning process to become involved in maintaining, enhancing and enjoying biodiversity in their local area.
- Biodiversity objectives should be achieved through consensus and through negotiation and co-operation between planners, developers, land owners and the local community.
- Biodiversity is a measure of sustainable development and protecting biodiversity should be seen as an important tool to help achieve the goals of sustainable development.



Mechanisms for Achieving Biodiversity Objectives Through the Planning Process

The legislative mechanisms are already in place to achieve the biodiversity objectives stated. Appendix (v) sets these out in a hierarchy of Government guidance, European and UK Nature Conservation legislation, UK planning legislation and Structure and Local Plan policies relating to nature conservation and biodiversity.

Protection and enhancement of existing sites of nature conservation can be achieved through:

- Implementation of policies contained in the Development Plan (deposit draft Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan and the adopted Stafford Borough Local Plan) which protect and enhance AONBs, SSSIs, RAMSARs, RIGS, NNRS, LNRs etc.
- Protection of SBI sites through the development control process.
- Use of Article 4 Directions and planning conditions to remove potentially harmful permitted development rights.
- Use of Section 106 Agreements and planning conditions.
- Monitoring of planning conditions and where necessary serving enforcement/breach of condition notices where conditions have not been complied with.
- Preparation and distribution of advice to developers and individuals on the required content of planning application submissions e.g.
 - Site survey: landform (site contours), soil type, trees, shrubs, grassland, wildflowers, water features, specially protected species of flora and/or fauna.
 - Assessment of impact of proposals on any features of nature conservation/natural history value.
 - Proposed measures to protect natural features during site development.
 - Compensatory features to be provided (on or off site) where natural features are lost.
 - Maximisation, in the proposals, of natural features on site for their nature conservation/biodiversity potential.
 - Proposals for new natural features.
 - Proposals for tree and shrub planting (respecting the existing natural vegetation on the site).
 - Future management of the site.

Habitat restoration or creation can be achieved through:

- Use of legal agreements, planning conditions and negotiation to achieve mitigation measures and/or compensatory sites or to maximise on-site potential for biodiversity.
- Preparation and implementation of community based area initiatives in partnership with wildlife and interest groups e.g. Riverscape Study, Sandyford Street Consultation.
- Developing Council Strategies and Management Schemes e.g. Tree Strategy, Barlaston and Rough Close Management Plan.
- Working in partnership with experts e.g. the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

It is always advisable to discuss development proposals at the outset with your local planning department who can then alert you to any nature conservation/biodiversity issues which might arise. Please see Appendix (v) for more details on planning policy.



11 The Way Forward

To ensure the success of this Biodiversity Strategy, the Biodiversity Strategy Steering Group will continue to meet regularly to review progress.

Its success will be monitored on a regular basis by external agencies. The continued involvement of all the partnership organisations will ensure that its objectives remain a high priority, within the continuously changing social and economic scene of Stafford Borough. The Strategy will play an essential role in highlighting the importance of biodiversity to decision makers. In addition it will inform the biodiversity elements of Stafford Borough's Local Agenda 21 Strategy and the Local Plan Review.

This Biodiversity Strategy identifies our Vision for the wild places, plants and animals of Stafford Borough. It also sets out the mechanisms through which the Vision can be achieved.

Now it's up to us all to make the Vision a reality and put plans on paper into practice.





Appendices

(i) Characteristics of a Sustainable Community

Source: DETR/LGA (Adapted from LGMB 1994)

Creating a Sustainable Society involves:

Protecting and Enhancing the Environment

- Use energy, water and other natural resources efficiently and with care.
- Minimise waste, then re-use or recover it through recycling, composting or energy recovery, and finally sustainably dispose of what is left.
- Limit pollution to levels which do not damage natural systems.
- Value and protect the diversity of nature.

Meeting Social Needs

- Create and enhance places, spaces and buildings which work well, wear well and look good.
- Make settlements 'human' in scale and form.
- Value and protect diversity and local distinctiveness and strengthen local community and cultural identity.
- Protect human health and amenity through safe, clean and pleasant environments.
- Emphasise health service prevention action as well as cure.
- Ensure access to good food, water, housing and fuel at a reasonable cost.
- Meet local needs locally wherever possible.
- Maximise everyone's access to the skills and knowledge to play a full part in society.
- Empower all sections of the community to participate in decision-making and consider the social and community aspects of decisions.

Promoting Economic Success

- Create a vibrant local economy that gives access to satisfying and rewarding work without damage to the local, national or global environment.
- Value unpaid work.
- Encourage necessary access to facilities, services, goods and other people in ways which make less use of the car and minimise impacts on the environment.
- Make opportunities for culture, leisure and recreation readily available to all.

(ii) Gardening for Wildlife

Make Your Garden More Wildlife Friendly

Gardens can be very important for wildlife. Often rare and/or protected species can be found within gardens and even in towns. These include species such as bats in houses, great crested newts in garden ponds and grass snakes in compost heaps. You can contribute to the wildlife value of your garden in many ways:

- Create a garden pond (but do not stock it with fish!).
- Use home-made compost or a peat substitute instead of peat.
- Install bird and bat boxes.
- Provide regular, clean water for birds.
- Leave some tall grasses at the edge of your lawn for insects.
- Plant native fruiting shrubs and grow native climbers up fences and walls as shelter and nest sites for birds and insects.
- Make log piles which are used as a refuge for beetles, frogs, toads and newts.
- Plant native fruit trees, or an orchard if you have space.
- Make compost heaps and vegetation piles over the winter so they can be utilised by hibernating grass snakes and hedgehogs.
- Do not use slug pellets or insecticides as many of these affect beneficial insects.
- Preserve old hollow trees which provide excellent habitat for insects, birds and bats.
- Find out more about nature conservation and organic gardening.
- Avoid use of herbicides and moss killers on lawns.

You could also enter the Stafford and Stone in Bloom Awards 'Conservation Awareness' category!

(iii) Greening School Grounds

- Tree planting can be carried out free of charge, as part of the Stafford Borough Tree Strategy, through a joint SBC/BTCV scheme.
- Millennium shades, made of live willow, can provide a great outdoor classroom in appropriate locations, whilst screening children from the sun.
- Create a wildlife garden, wild flower meadow or develop a pond to enhance biodiversity and provide a science lab on your doorstep.
- Exploit the experts. Invite in guest speakers, and seek their views on biodiversity at your school.

(iv) Biodiversity in Farming and on the Land

Farming communities and land managers play a vital role in biodiversity maintenance and have potential to act as driving forces in the restoration of wildlife and natural habitats in Stafford Borough. They can:

- Encourage farming and land management practices that enhance natural and locally characteristic diversity of flora and fauna, by implementing various agri-environmental schemes.
- Consider taking up Countryside or Arable Stewardship Schemes on farms and take advantage of available grants.
- Improve livestock management to minimise pollution from wastes, not forgetting to check systems regularly!
- Establish stocking densities and practices on moors, heaths and semi-natural grasslands in keeping with the environmental carrying capacity of the land.
- Adopt cropping systems which reduce the need for fertilisers and pesticides.
- Encourage technological and other innovation to develop environmentally sympathetic farming methods.
- Encourage the commercial use of crop varieties and traditional breeds which are particularly adapted to the specific environment of a region.
- Recognise the importance of those traditional skills and practices upon which many valued habitats depend.
- Encourage greater diversity on the farm, for example through the encouragement of reversion of arable land to pastoral use in appropriate areas and the use of more varied rotations.
- Maintain, restore or reinstate hedges where possible and appropriate.
- Assess farms for areas of wildlife value and report them to the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's Biodiversity Officer.

The local Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) can offer expert advice on farm conservation management, as can the FRCA.

(v) Planning Policy Background

This Appendix is aimed at development control officers, forward planners, developers and their professional advisers. It demonstrates how Government Guidance cascades down through Structure Plan to Local Plan policies and how the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity can be achieved through the plan led system.

Government Guidance

PPG7

provides guidance on the need to balance economic, conservation, agricultural and other factors in considering development in the countryside.

PPG9

sets out the principles and policies that apply to the integration of nature conservation policies and land use planning.

PPG 12

makes clear that the planning (and especially the development plans) system can contribute to sustainable development and that plan policies and proposals should be subject to appropriate environmental appraisal.

PPG13

advises on mitigating the impact of transport proposals on the natural environment.

PPG17

advises on the interaction of nature conservation with sport and recreation.

PPG20

advises on coastal planning.

PPG21

advises on tourism.

Designated Sites

Sites of International Importance

- Ramsar Sites listed under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds.
- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to be designated under the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora.

Sites of National Importance

- National Nature Reserves (NNRs) declared under section 35 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) notified under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Sites of Regional/Local Importance

- Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) designated by local authorities under section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- Non-Statutory Nature Reserves established and managed by a variety of public and private bodies eg county wildlife trusts, RSPB.
- Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation or equivalent (Sites of Biological Importance in Staffordshire), usually adopted by local authorities for planning purposes.

Legislative Landmarks in Nature Conservation

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

introduced NNRs and SSSIs and conferred powers on LAs to create nature reserves.

The Countryside Act 1968

strengthened the powers given under the 1949 Act and imposed on every public body and Government department a duty to have regard to the conservation of the countryside.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

strengthened protection for SSSIs and provided additional safeguards for particular areas and restricted killing and taking from the wild.

The Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985

further strengthened the protection for SSSIs.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990

established 3 country conservation councils and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and provided further protection for SSSIs.

The Planning and Compensation Act 1991

strengthened planning enforcement and development control powers and required structure, local and unitary development plans to include policies in respect of conservation of the natural beauty and amenity of the land.

The Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994 (the Habitats Regulations)

formally transpose the requirements of the EC Habitats Directive into national law.

International Obligations and Interests

The Government attaches great importance to the various international obligations it has assumed and these underlie much of the legislative framework for conservation.

The Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats gives particular emphasis to endangered species and their habitats.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (as amended by the Conference of the Parties, 1987) requires the conservation of wetlands, especially sites listed under the Convention.

EC Directives: Conservation of Wild Birds, Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (adopted by the Council 1992) require Member States to protect, manage and control all species of naturally occurring wild birds and contribute to the conservation of biodiversity by taking measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species.

The Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals requires the protection of endangered migratory species listed. An agreement covering the conservation of bats in Europe came into force in January 1994.

EC Directive: Assessment of certain Public and Private Projects on the Environment requires environmental assessment to be carried out before decisions are taken on development likely to have significant environmental effects.

National Strategy for Biodiversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity, designed to halt the world-wide loss of animal and plant species and genetic resources was drawn up at the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in June 1992 requiring contracting parties to develop national strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

A National Biodiversity Action Plan was published in January 1994.

The UK Biodiversity Steering Group set up by the Government to examine these issues in detail, reported in December 1995, identifying key habitats of national importance and setting out lists of Globally Threatened and Declining Species in need of protection in the UK. It produced Action Plans, including specific targets for conserving many of the key habitats and species.

The Government Response to the UK Steering Group Report was published in May 1996. It set out a range of actions considered necessary, including the production of Local Biodiversity Action Plans by local authorities at County or other appropriate level.

The Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan was produced in November 1998.

Biodiversity and the Development Plan

Deposit draft Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011

This plan was placed on deposit in January 1999 and the Examination in Public took place in October 1999. The Panel's report was published on 20 December 1999. The policies listed below are those contained in the Deposit Draft Structure Plan and may be subject to change.

In the chapter 'Natural and Cultural Assets', the explanatory memorandum to the document places a particular emphasis on the conservation, enhancement and restoration of landscapes, the maintenance and promotion of biodiversity and the maintenance of the quality of the historic environment.

The following policies are relevant :

Biodiversity: General Considerations

Policy NC3

Planning authorities will seek to further the objectives of the UK and Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plans through appropriate policies and proposals for safeguarding and increasing key habitats and species. In considering or formulating proposals for development or land use change, local planning authorities will ensure wherever possible that damage to important semi-natural habitats or other features of nature conservation or geological value is avoided.

Particular care will be taken to safeguard and consolidate the integrity of linear and other landscape features which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna. Where damage is unavoidable, measures to mitigate or compensate through establishment of replacement habitats or features should be taken wherever possible.

Sites of International Nature Conservation Importance

Policy NC4A

Development or land use change which is likely to have significant effects on a site of international importance for nature conservation (either individually or in combination with other plans and projects), and which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site, will not be permitted unless the local planning authority is satisfied that there is no alternative solution, and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the development or land use change. Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, development or land use change will not be permitted unless the planning authority is satisfied that it is necessary for reasons of human health, or for beneficial consequences of primary importance for nature conservation.

Sites of National Nature Conservation Importance

Policy NC4B

Development or land use change likely to have an adverse effect, directly or indirectly, on a SSSI will not be permitted unless there are no reasonable alternative means of meeting that development need and the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site itself and the national policy to safeguard the national network of such sites. Where the site concerned is a NNR or a site identified under the Nature Conservation Review (NCR) or Geological Conservation Review (GCR) particular regard will be paid to the individual site's national importance.

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SBI, RIGS, LNR)

Policy NC4C

Development or land use change likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal which outweigh the need to safeguard the intrinsic nature conservation value of the site.

Habitats of Protected Species

Policy NC5

Development or land use change which would have an adverse impact on legally protected species will not be allowed.

Protection of Water Resources and Systems

Policy NC6

The highest possible degree of protection will be afforded to groundwater resources, and to standing water bodies and river systems with their associated wetlands. Development or land use change which would lead to pollution or degradation of these resources will not be permitted unless, exceptionally, it can be demonstrated that adequate mitigation measures to counteract the effect of such adverse impacts can be satisfactorily implemented.

Protection of Landscape and Landscape Features

Policy NC1

Development should be informed by and be sympathetic to landscape character and quality and should contribute, as appropriate, to the regeneration,

restoration, enhancement, maintenance or active conservation of the landscape likely to be affected. Proposals with landscape and visual implications will be assessed having regard to the extent to which they would:

- (a) cause visual intrusion, incapable of satisfactory mitigation
- (b) introduce, or conversely lead to the removal of incongruous landscape elements
- (c) cause the disturbance or loss of, or conversely help to maintain:
 - (i) landscape elements that contribute to local distinctiveness
 - (ii) historic elements which contribute significantly to landscape character and quality, such as field settlement or road patterns
 - (iii) semi-natural vegetation which is characteristic of that landscape type
 - (iv) the visual condition of landscape elements
 - (v) tranquillity.

Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Policy NC2

The landscape quality of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting will be conserved and enhanced, and its nature conservation and recreational value protected and extended. Proposals for development within the AONB will be subject to special scrutiny, having regard to the economic and social well-being of the proposal. Development will be restricted to uses compatible with the conservation of the area's natural beauty, and major industrial or commercial development will not be permitted unless proven national interest and lack of alternative sites can justify an exception. The acceptability of development proposals outside the AONB boundary will be assessed with regard to the extent of any adverse impact on the landscape, nature conservation or recreation interest of the AONB.

Establishment of Trees and Woodlands

Policy NC7

The extensive planting of trees and new woodlands will be sought, in appropriate locations, and to established standards of design. In areas identified as preferred for an extension of woodlands planting, development proposals which provide for the creation of an appropriate woodlands setting will be permitted, subject to other plan policies. In and around the larger towns, measures will be taken to encourage and promote urban forestry.

Protection of Trees Hedgerows and Woodlands

Policy NC9

Measures to improve the management and conservation of existing woodlands and important trees and hedgerows, including those in urban areas, will be supported. Development or land use change likely to have an unacceptable adverse effect on ancient woodlands, or on other woodlands or hedgerows which contribute significantly to landscape character and quality or the meeting of biodiversity targets, will not be approved unless it can be demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal which outweigh the need to safeguard the site. Where, exceptionally, such a woodland is lost to development, the developer should incorporate or provide for such compensatory planting as is appropriate and feasible in order to minimise the loss of an environmental resource. Schemes for the planting of a new woodland should include subsequent management.

Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001

This Plan was adopted on 20 October 1998 and is the operative Local Plan for Stafford Borough.

General Aims

The overall aims of the Plan are:

- To make provision for the levels of development established in the Staffordshire Structure Plan.
- To balance the need for development with the protection and enhancement of the environment.

Specific Nature Conservation/Biodiversity Objectives

- Conserve wildlife interests and natural features by the conservation, protection and enhancement of habitat.
- Promote nature conservation interests by the creation of new habitats and enhancement of existing areas of value.
- Identify, protect and create a network of wildlife corridors.
- Encourage appropriate public access to areas of nature conservation value.
- Encourage community involvement in the creation, management and enjoyment of areas of nature conservation value.

Nature Conservation

General Requirements in Consideration of Planning Applications

Policy E&D36

Planning applications for developments that may affect sites of acknowledged importance for nature conservation, will normally be required to be accompanied by an ecological survey and report.

Sites of International Importance

Policy E&D37

Development which may affect a European site, a proposed European site or a Ramsar site, and which may have a significant effect on the site (either individually or in combination with other proposals), will not be permitted unless there is no alternative solution and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest. Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, development will not be permitted unless it is necessary for reasons of human health or public safety or for beneficial consequences of primary importance for nature conservation.

Sites of National Importance

Policy E&D38

Development which may have a harmful effect, directly or indirectly, on an SSSI or NNR will not be permitted unless the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the value of the site and the national policy to safeguard the intrinsic nature conservation value of the national network of such sites.

Sites of Regional/Local Importance

Policy E&D39

Development which may harm, directly or indirectly, LNRS, sites of Nature Conservation interest and RIGS sites will not be permitted unless the reasons for the proposal clearly outweigh the need to safeguard the intrinsic nature conservation value of the site or feature.

Mitigation and Amelioration of Impact on Sites of Nature Conservation Value

Policy E&D40

Where development is to be approved which could affect any site of nature conservation value appropriate measures will normally be required to:

- (a) conserve, as far as possible the site's nature conservation interest
- (b) replace habitats or features where damage is unavoidable
- (c) ensure sympathetic siting and develop suitable planting
- (d) introduce site management if appropriate.

Protected Species

Policy E&D41

Development likely to have an adverse effect on species protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, will only be permitted where harm to the species can be avoided.

To avoid harm to the species the LPA may consider the use of conditions and planning obligations to:

- (a) facilitate the survival of individual members of the species
- (b) reduce disturbance to a minimum
- (c) provide adequate alternative habitats to sustain at least the current levels of population.

The Water Based Environment

The value of the water based environment ranges from nature conservation, landscape and amenity to recreational resources and wildlife movement corridors.

Protected Water Resources

Policy E&D53

Development which would have an adverse effect upon water quality, water levels, and the nature conservation value of water will not be permitted.

Where development is to be approved that would affect an area of water related nature conservation value, reference will be made to the provision of nature conservation policies, which aim to protect and conserve those areas of existing value and restore and enhance the natural elements of the environment.

Development and Water Based Environments

Policy E&D52

Development considered acceptable adjacent to the water based environment will be granted planning

permission where the proposal

- conserves, restores and enhances the natural elements of the environment
- caters for public access where it will not conflict with the ecological value of the area.

Land Drainage and Flooding Considerations

Policy E&D50

Unless satisfactory mitigation measures can be undertaken development will not be allowed where *inter alia*:

it would lead to detrimental changes in the characteristics of a surface water run off system to the deprivation of wildlife or habitat networks, such as drying out a wetland or flow disruption to a neighbouring watercourse resulting in species reduction or loss.

Protection of Landscape and Landscape Features

Stafford Borough Local Plan has defined Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) in the north, north-east and north-west of the Borough. These are areas of open countryside which have high intrinsic landscape quality arising from a variety of distinctive natural features and tend to relate to and include areas of varied relief, areas of nature conservation value, woodland areas and historic parks.

Part of Cannock Chase AONB lies within Stafford Borough and it is subject to an enhanced level of policy protection to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape.

Landscape Conservation

Policy E&D28

Planning permission will not be granted for development that will have a detrimental effect on the landscape unless adequate mitigating measures are undertaken. The impact assessment of new development proposals on the landscape will be based on the following factors:

- physical factors e.g. relief/landform, land use, vegetation, ecological habitats, archaeology, buildings and structures
- visual factors but also including other senses
- the significance of the landscape with respect to the historical and cultural associations of the area
- the areas value relative to other areas i.e. nationally rare, regionally rare or typical to an area
- evaluation of the areas character
- the degree of public accessibility to the site and surrounding the site, either directly i.e. by vehicle, bicycle, horse or foot, or indirectly i.e. visual.

Areas of Designated Landscape Value

Policy E&D29

Planning permission will only be granted for proposals within areas of designated landscape value. (Cannock Chase AONB, designated SLAs, historic landscapes, historic parks and gardens), where proposals impact on the landscape is minimal and the proposed landscaping treatment will conserve and enhance the character of the local landscape.

Mitigation of Impact on the Landscape

Policy E&D30

Proposals for development on the edge of settlements or in rural areas, which have an adverse impact on landscape, will normally be required to carry out landscape enhancements incorporating tree and shrub planting, preferably using native species.

Cannock Chase AONB

Policy E&D31

Proposals within, or likely to affect the Cannock Chase AONB or its setting, will only be allowed where the proposal will enhance the visual, nature conservation and/or historical qualities of the Development which will have an adverse impact on the character or setting of the Chase, or which would add to urban fringe pressures will not be granted planning permission. Proposals within or likely to affect the Cannock Chase AONB will be restricted to uses compatible with the conservation of the natural beauty of the area. Proposals for development will be subject to special scrutiny.

Development Proposals in Special Landscape Areas

Policy E&D32

Proposals for development within SLAs will need to ensure that

- the scale, siting, design, use of materials and colour and landscaping treatment are sympathetic to the character of the area
- they conserve and enhance the quality of the landscape.

Protection of Trees and Hedgerows

Trees and woodlands and hedgerows have a very important role in the environment. They provide valuable wildlife habitats and the Borough Council places high priority on their protection. Their retention in development schemes will be sought by agreement, by planning obligations or by planning conditions. Statutory protection is afforded by Tree Preservation Orders and the making of new Tree Preservation Orders will be considered in the case of trees which contribute significantly to the amenity of an area.

Tree Preservation Orders

Policy E&D42

Consents which are sought to carry out works to trees which are covered by a Tree Preservation Order will be resisted, except where there is a demonstrable need for the works sought. Where consent is given for works to a tree covered by a Tree Preservation Order the Local Plan Authority will require the replacement of any lost amenity by the planting of new trees nearby of like species as appropriate to the site.

(iii) where appropriate a plan for the protection of trees, hedgerows and shrubs during construction of the development may be required as part of the conditions imposed on any planning consent given. This would be in accordance with advice contained in the British Standard Institute Code of Practice, Trees in relation to Construction (BS 5837:1991) or any amendment thereafter.

Trees in Conservation Areas

Policy E&D43

Within a Conservation Area, if notice is received by the Local Plan Authority to carry out works on any trees, the Local Plan Authority may, within six weeks of receiving the notice, place a Tree Preservation Order on the tree(s) if it feels the unaltered presence of the tree(s) is vital to the character, amenity and enjoyment of the Conservation Areas.

Protection of Ancient Woodlands

Ancient and semi-ancient woodland is a diminishing resource but is recognised to have the greatest nature conservation value

Policy E&D45

Proposals that would have an adverse effect upon the nature conservation and/or landscape value of an Ancient Woodland will be refused.

Development Affecting Trees and Hedgerows

Policy E&D44

Where development is proposed on sites containing trees and hedgerows, not necessarily covered by Tree Preservation Orders, the Council will expect a detailed planning application to be accompanied by:

- (i) an accurate tree and hedgerow survey indicating the location, identity, height, canopy spread (for trees) coupled with any shrubs likely to be affected by the development proposal;
- (ii) a general landscaping plan which shall be approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works. The need for the submission of plans detailing precise landscaping shall normally be required as part of any conditions of consent imposed by the Local Plan Authority if permission is granted. These detailed plans will normally include trees, hedgerows and shrubs to be retained or felled, and showing the location and species of new planting.

Forestry Consultations

The Borough Council acts as a consultee for some forestry proposals and grant applications and applies the following policy when considering proposals referred by the Forestry Commission.

Forestry Proposals

Policy E&D46

Forestry proposals which involve clearfelling, replanting or afforestation will generally be acceptable unless the proposal:

- a) would detract from the appearance of the landscape due to the location and design, particularly in the AONB or SLA
- b) does not include acceptable proposals for replanting, management or the future use of the land. This is considered particularly important in relation to ancient and broadleaved woodland
- c) would adversely affect nature conservation or archaeological interests. This is particularly important in relation to ancient woodland
- d) restricts public access.

Open Space

Stafford Borough Local Plan has objectives with regard to open space provision and protection, recognising the value of undeveloped areas as amenity, recreation and wildlife resources. Specific policies in the plan cover the particular situations of land use such as formal/informal recreation, conservation, wildlife, historical importance. Areas of protected open space have been identified.

Protected Open Space

Policy E&D26

Development proposals which would lead to the total or partial loss of those areas identified as Protected Open Space on the Proposals Map will not normally be granted planning permission unless it can be shown that the local need for development outweighs the value of the land as an open area. Where protected open space forms part of the curtilage of another use, proposals involving the

development of, and for the operational purposes of the user will be considered in the light of the operational needs of the occupier of the site.

Green Network

In both Stafford and Stone there are extensive areas of undeveloped land that link the town centres to the open countryside and provide valuable wildlife habitats. These areas have been designated as 'Green Networks'. Adjoining areas of undeveloped land, that may for instance be used for formal recreation, are included in the network where uninterrupted pedestrian links or wildlife corridors are apparent. Features such as river valleys, canals, dismantled railways and railway verges form important links between the more extensive open areas.

Green Network

Policy E&D27

Development will not be permitted where it would adversely affect the character of the green network or sever important linkages between more extensive areas of undeveloped space.

Where development is to be permitted on sites within or adjacent to the green network it should:

- (i) locate the majority of open space required as part of the development adjacent to the network

- (ii) retain or create pedestrian access to the network
- (iii) maintain and enhance the green network to increase its nature conservation value and provide informal recreation for residents
- (iv) utilise appropriate landscaping techniques using native species.

Historic Parks and Gardens

Historic Parks and Gardens are an important part of the Borough's heritage and contribute to the attractiveness and variety of the landscape. Some have been included in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, but the Borough Council encourages the conservation, restoration and maintenance of all historic parks and gardens, whether listed or not.

Historic Parks and Gardens

Policy E&D35

Proposals within or likely to affect historic parks and gardens will be accompanied by a detailed historical evaluation of the park and a survey of the existing landscape. Proposals should take account of that evaluation and:

- (i) safeguard the historic park or garden and its landscape setting
- (ii) retain, manage and, where appropriate, restore the surrounding gardens or parkland, boundary

- features and surroundings
- (iii) conserve any other facets of interest in the area eg archaeological, architectural, nature conservation

Development proposals which would damage the character, setting or appearance of a park or garden of historic interest will not be granted planning permission.

Trees and New Development

Existing trees in the vicinity of buildings create a maturity of landscape that would take decades to attain. It is essential that during examination of planning proposals specific consideration is given to the retention of trees.

It is inevitable that on a site with good tree cover some trees will have to be felled during the course of development. There will be a requirement to retain the most important trees and to ensure that new planting schemes form part of the development proposals.

The Submission of Landscaping Schemes

Policy E&D47

With the aim of securing the protection and enhancement of the quality and character of the environment, layout plans for development proposals will normally be required to be accompanied by a general landscaping scheme. This should consider the general siting and provision of major landscape features such as open space areas, water features and tree planting. Exact particulars of the landscaping scheme will normally be established via conditions of planning approval imposed by the Local Planning Authority. Any such scheme should endeavour to protect existing trees, hedges shrubs and other natural features, and where possible, incorporate them into the proposed development, together with proposals for new features. Development should not normally take place until a suitable, detailed landscaping scheme is approved by the Local Plan.

Landscape Proposals Submitted with Planning Applications

Policy E&D48

Landscape proposals submitted with an application, or in accordance with conditions imposed by the Local Planning Authority will normally be expected to detail the species type, siting, number, size and density of trees, shrubs and any other natural features proposed. The Borough Council will consider the following criteria:

- (i) whether it is appropriate for landscape works to be carried out before development commences, in order to minimise the visual impact of the development
- (ii) whether it is appropriate for a condition to be imposed requiring the maintenance of approved planting for a suitable period with provision for replacement to be carried out if originals fail

within a suitable period following original planting
(iii) whether a condition requiring planting species to comprise indigenous stock is appropriate
(iv) the opportunity for the creation of areas of nature conservation value.

New Planting

Tree and shrub planting will be encouraged throughout the Borough to maintain and enhance environmental quality with particular emphasis on planting indigenous species and on creating areas of nature conservation value where development is proposed in proximity to existing green open space and vegetation/wildlife corridors.

There are areas where new planting would be inappropriate including specialised habitats such as lowland heathland, unimproved grassland, certain wetlands or where it could obscure geological features.

New Tree and Shrub Planting Proposals

Policy E&D49

Tree and shrub planting proposals will be acceptable where they:

- (i) are sympathetic to local patterns of vegetation
- (ii) improve visual amenity
- (iii) mitigate the visual effects of an obtrusive structure or use
- (iv) enhance the nature conservation value of an area.

Derelict, Vacant, Underused and Contaminated Land and Buildings

At any time there will always be a number of eyesores, intrusive uses or areas of derelict and degraded land which require treatment to mitigate their visual impact. Landowners will be encouraged to improve sites which are in need of enhancement, maintenance or landscape implementation.

Encouragement will be given to owners to explore the nature conservation possibilities of vacant land even if this land is only likely to be available on a short term basis.

Re-use of Vacant Land and Buildings

Policy E&D54

Planning permission will normally be given to proposals that bring into beneficial use at the earliest opportunity vacant land and buildings. In circumstances where it is necessary for land to be left vacant for any purpose, including redevelopment,

the owners will be encouraged to undertake screening and/or landscaping of the land. Provision should be made for the accommodation of any protected species which use the land or buildings as a breeding or roosting site.

(vi) Audit of Wildlife Sites Within Stafford Borough

Those sites which are considered to be of national importance, have been notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) by English Nature. This is a statutory notification, which gives some protection to the site. There are currently sixteen SSSIs notified within Stafford Borough.

There are also Sites of Biological Importance (SBI), which were surveyed and graded in 1996. These sites are considered to be of county importance to wildlife and although they do not have any statutory protection, they are recognised as significant by various organisations who endeavour to ensure appropriate safeguards through a range of policies and proposals. A total of 135 Grade 1 SBIs can be found within Stafford Borough. The table below shows many of the important habitats which can be found in both SSSIs and SBIs and summarizes the total amount of the habitat present.

Habitat	SSSIs(Hectares)	SBIs(Hectares)	Total(Hectares)
Semi-natural Broadleaved Woodland	461	236	697
Plantation Woodland	0	948	948
Acid Grassland	124	19	143
Neutral Grassland	32.8	151	183.8
Heathland and Degraded Heathland*	819	92	911
Lowland Wet Grassland	179	38	217
Standing Water and Swamp	191.2	44	235.2
Peat Bog	31.7	0	31.7
Other	60.1	39	99.1
Total**	1898.8	1567	3465.8

* Total includes parts of Cannock Chase, some of which does not lie within Stafford Borough. Degraded heathland is often covered in scrub and bracken which has a much lower ecological value.

** A significant amount of other habitats are not yet included in SBIs. These include rivers and streams, wood-pasture and parkland, hedgerows and arable field margins.

Wildlife Trends in Stafford Borough

Sites of Biological Importance in Staffordshire have been surveyed twice over the past twenty years. They were initially surveyed between the period of 1979-1984 and have now been resurveyed in 1996. By comparing the two surveys it has been possible to determine some changes which have occurred in the Borough.

Habitat	Percentage Loss of area in SBIs (between 1979-84 to 1997)
Lowland Wet Grassland	51%
Neutral Grassland	15%
Standing Water and Swamp	8%
Broadleaved Woodland	2%
Heathland	None lost, but loss of habitat quality continues

As can be seen, although woodlands have not declined considerably, there has been a dramatic decline of wet grassland and a significant reduction of other wetlands and 'unimproved' neutral grassland. At the current rate of decline, all wet grassland, which has not been designated as SSSI, will be destroyed by 2020. Although heathland has not declined in size, a large but unknown quantity has now been lost to scrubland and bracken.

Declining Species of Note

Water Vole
Brown Hare
Skylark
Lapwing
Snipe
Grass Snake
Black Poplar
Small Pearl-bordered
Fritillary

Extinct Species of Note

Red Squirrel
Marsh Helleborine
Marsh Fragrant Orchid
A beetle (Cryptocephalus decemmaculatus)

Increasing Species of Note

Mink*
Japanese Knotweed*
Himalayan Balsam*
Otter
Buzzard
Polecat
Nightjar
Woodlark

* These are considered to be pest species which cause damage to natural habitats and ecosystems.

(vii) Where to Go for Information and Help

Information on species and habitats is held by a variety of organisations.

Information on wildlife sites is held at Stafford Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Potteries Museum, The Environment Agency and English Nature.

Species data is also held with the above organisations but more detail can be sought from specialist groups who often monitor and record within the county. These groups include Staffordshire Fungus Group, Staffordshire Invertebrate Group, Staffordshire Flora Group, West Midland Bird Club, Staffordshire Bat Group, Staffordshire Badger Group, Staffordshire Mammal Group and Butterfly Conservation.

British Dragonfly Society

The Haywain, Hollywater Road, Bordon, Hants GU35 0AD

Botanical Society for the British Isles

c/o Department of Botany, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD

British Herpetological Society

c/o Zoological Society of London, Regents Park, London NW1 4RY

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

Friars Mill, Friars Terrace, Stafford ST17 4DX

British Trust for Ornithology

The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU

CARIS (Board for Care, Action, Responsibility and Justice in Society)

c/o Shallowford House, Shallowford, Staffordshire ST15 0N7

Church Conservation Project

Arthur Rank Centre, National Agricultural Centre, Stonleigh, Warwickshire

Cannock Chase Project Manager

c/o Staffordshire County Council, Development Services, Riverway, Stafford ST16 3TJ

County Ecologist

Staffordshire County Council, Development Services, Riverway, Stafford ST16 3TJ

Community Council of Staffordshire

Friars Mill, Friars Terrace, Stafford ST17 4DX

Council for the Preservation of Rural England

41 Eastgate Street, Stafford ST16 2LZ

Countryside Agency

1st Floor, Vincent House, Tindal Bridge, 92-93 Edward Street, Birmingham B1 2RA

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions

Tollgate House, Houlton Street, Bristol BS2 9DJ

Eco Schools Group

c/o Local Agenda 21 Co-ordinator, Stafford Borough Council, Civic Offices, Riverside, Stafford ST16 3AQ

English Nature

West Midlands Team, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury SY4 4TW

Environment Agency

Upper Trent Region, Sentinel House, Wellington Crescent, Fradley Park, Lichfield WS13 8RR

Farming and Rural Conservation Agency

North Mercia Region, Regional Service Centre, Electra Way, Crewe Business Park, Crewe CW1 6GJ

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group

c/o Rodbaston College, Penkridge, Stafford ST19 5PH

Forestry Commission

Assistant Conservator, Midlands Conservancy, Station Road, East Leake, Nr Loughborough LE12 6LQ

Environmental Co-ordinator

Government Office of the West Midlands, 77 Paradise Circus, Queensway, Birmingham B1 2DT

Friends of the Earth

c/o 35 Dartmouth Street, Stafford ST16 3TU

The Mammal Society

15 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London SW8 4BG

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries

North Mercia Region, Regional Service Centre, Electra Way, Crewe Business Park, Crewe CW1 6GJ

National Trust

Mercia Regional Office, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury SY4 4TP

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

4 Lansdown Way, Wildwood, Stafford ST17 4RD

Local Agenda 21 Co-ordinator

Stafford Borough Council, Civic Offices, Riverside, Stafford ST16 3AQ

Staffordshire Local Records Centre

Potteries Museum, Bethesda Street, Hanley ST1 4HS

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

Coutts House, Sandon, Stafford ST18 0DN

Staffordshire Bat Group

c/o Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Coutts House, Sandon, Stafford ST18 0DN

Staffordshire Fungus Group

c/o Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Coutts House, Sandon, Stafford ST18 0DN

Staffordshire Badger Conservation Group

c/o Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Coutts House, Sandon, Stafford ST18 0DN

Staffordshire Invertebrate Group

c/o Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Coutts House, Sandon, Stafford ST18 0DN

Staffordshire Flora Group

c/o Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Coutts House, Sandon, Stafford ST18 0DN

Stafford Friends of the Earth

c/o 35 Dartmouth Street, Stafford ST16 3TU

Staffordshire Business and Environment Network

PO Box 1273, Stafford ST16 3FT

Trees of Time and Place

c/o Esso UK Ltd, Mailpoint 08, Esso House, Ermyrn Way, KT22 8UX

Veteran Tree Initiative

c/o English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA

West Midland Bird Club

Staffordshire Branch, 4 Ashlands Crescent, Harpfields, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 6QT

World Wide Fund for Nature

Regional Co-ordinator, 4 Upper Crescent, Harpfields, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 6BP



ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY



Staffordshire
County Council



*This document has been put together by the Biodiversity Strategy Steering Group,
a partnership of organisations committed to conserving Stafford Borough's biodiversity heritage.*

*This Strategy has been produced as part of Stafford Borough's commitment to Sustainable Development,
improving quality of life for all, both today and in the future.*

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