



Suffolk Biodiversity
Partnership

SUFFOLK LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN Planning May 2012

Planning national lead: None

Local lead: Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership Planning Support Group

Associated plans: Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plans



Wharfdale Road County Wildlife Site, Ipswich.
Photo Simone Bullion

1. Introduction and Definition

This plan covers forward plans including local planning documents, Shoreline Management Plans and Local Authority coastal defence planning and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) management plans. It also covers development management applications.

Suffolk is the first county in England to develop an action plan dedicated to planning issues. Our aim is to provide clarity for planners by collating all the information on the county's Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) in one place and rationalising all the relevant actions contained within previous BAPs. This will assist planners in meeting their legal obligations to biodiversity.

Under the 2010/2011 Suffolk BAP review, the new species and habitats plans will be launched in the autumn of 2011. The revised format plans will be effective in helping partners to work together more effectively to deliver biodiversity gains. The review has provided an ideal opportunity to draw up a dedicated 'Planning BAP' that gives clear and concise guidance to those involved in the planning process and promotes action to conserve biodiversity effectively alongside sustainable development.

2. Current action

2.1 Legislation

The *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010* enshrine the EC Habitats Directive into UK law. The Regulations provide for the designation and protection of 'European sites', the protection of 'European Protected Species' and the adaptation of planning and other controls for the protection of European Sites.

Under the Regulations, competent authorities such as government departments have a general duty, in the exercise of any of their functions, to have regard to the EC Habitats Directive. The Regulations require competent authorities to consider or review planning permission affecting a European site, and to restrict permission where the integrity of the site would be adversely affected.

There are also a large number of species which are specially protected by UK legislation either under The Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) or specific legislation such as the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (called the NERC Act) recognises the key role that public bodies have to play in the conservation of biodiversity. This has been formalised within Section 40 of the Act (or 'Biodiversity Duty'): *"Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent, with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity"*.

Section 41 of the Act lists the Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England. Appendix 1 lists those habitats and species which have been recorded in Suffolk and are therefore relevant to Suffolk planning authorities.

2.2 Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership (SBP): Planning Support Group

This group was set up in November 2006 following the pilot introduction of the new 1App system in Suffolk and the national implementation of NERC Act. It includes representatives from Suffolk planning authorities, Natural England (NE), Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT), Suffolk County Council (SCC) and SBP. The group provides support for planning authorities, promoting best practice among planners and providing training to raise awareness of changes in legislation. It also maintains the biodiversity validation checklist for Suffolk planning applications.



Training seminar for planners hosted by Suffolk Wildlife Trust.
Photo Sue Hooton

3. Organisation statements

The day to day activities, functions and commitments of statutory and non-statutory organisations can be found in a separate document on our website, for example those of Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Biological Records Centre, Natural England, the Environment Agency, local authorities and Suffolk Wildlife Trust. To view these please visit

<http://www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/biodiversity-action-plans.aspx>

4. Objectives

1. To ensure lawful compliance towards biodiversity in planning decisions.
2. To promote best practice and provide support to planners on biodiversity issues.
3. To ensure the planning system contributes to the Natural Environment White Paper 2011 objective of no net loss of biodiversity as part of sustainable development.

5. Action Plan Targets

1. Ensure development avoids adverse impacts on biodiversity
2. Where avoidance is not possible, mitigate residual impacts of developments.
3. Where mitigation is not possible, compensate for losses incurred during development.
4. Enhance developments for biodiversity.
5. Ensure biodiversity is taken into consideration during, and after, the construction phase of development.

6. Actions

Ref	Action	Achieve by date	Delivery partners
Policy & legislation			
1	Ensure strategic plans include policies that protect and enhance biodiversity.	Annual	BA, BDC, DVSV, EA, FC, FHDC, IBC, MSDC, SCDC, SCHU, SEBC, SCC, SWT WDC,
2	Ensure all applicants are advised of relevant biodiversity legislation	Annual	BA, BDC, EA, FC, FHDC, IBC, MSDC, NE, SCC, SCDC, SEBC, WDC, SWT,
Avoidance/Mitigation/Compensation			
3	Provide biodiversity mapping data to update in-house evidence base.	Annual	SBRC
4	Check evidence base, NE Standing Advice and biodiversity validation checklist to inform decisions and avoid adverse impacts on biodiversity at all stages of the planning process.	Annual	BA, BDC, FHDC, IBC, MSDC, NE, SCC, SCDC, SEBC, SWT, WDC.
Enhancement			
5	Ensure that all stages of the planning process promote green infrastructure provision and take advantage of opportunities for habitat creation, link habitats and contribute to ecological networks.	Annual	BA, BDC, DVSV, EA, FC, FHDC, IBC, MSDC, SCDC, SCC, SCHU, SEBC, SWT, WDC.
Monitoring of planning applications			
6	Monitor the number of applications that have been refused on biodiversity grounds or have conditions related to biodiversity. Use this record to assess the effectiveness of planning policy.	Annual	BA, BDC, FHDC, IBC, MSDC, SCC, SCDC, SEBC, SWT, WDC.
Communications and publicity			
7	Hold annual Suffolk and Norfolk Biodiversity and Planning seminar.	Annual	SBP
8	Provide training sessions on biodiversity and planning issues for Local Planning Authorities when required.	Annual	NE, SBP, SCC, SWT

7. Monitoring the Action Plan

This Biodiversity Action Plan will be continually monitored and revised by the SBP Planning Support Group as necessary.

8. References and further information

- **Planning Portal.** The UK government's on-line planning and building resource. Website: <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/>
- **BIODIVERSITY PLANNING TOOLKIT (ALGE).** This is a versatile online resource aimed at helping users to incorporate biodiversity into the planning system and new development. Website: <http://www.biodiversityplanningtoolkit.com/default.asp>
The website includes essential information on:
 - UK primary and statutory legislation
 - European protected species
 - Biodiversity & Planning policy e.g. Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 9 and Local Sites
 - Good practice and technical standards
 - European Directives e.g. Habitats Directive 1992
 - Protected Site designations
 - Key Species, Habitats and Geodiversity
 - Forward Planning e.g. gathering the evidence base
- **Natural England Standing Advice for Local Authorities.**
This guidance will help Local Authority planners or ecological consultants decide when to request or carry out protected species surveys to accompany a planning application. The survey requirements are based upon the habitats that are present on an application site and the likelihood of a species being present. This guidance should result in higher quality planning applications and fewer objections from Natural England (and subsequent associated delays to decision timetables) due to lack of survey information
<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/planningtransportlocalgov/spatialplanning/standingadvice/default.aspx>
- **Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan**
<http://www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/biodiversity-action-plans.aspx>

Abbreviations

BA	Broads Authority
BDC	Babergh District Council
DVSV	Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley AONB Project
EA	Environment Agency
FHDC	Forest Heath District Council
FC	Forestry Commission

IBC	Ipswich Borough Council
MSDC	Mid Suffolk District Council
SBP	Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership
SBRC	Suffolk Biological Records Centre
SCC	Suffolk County Council
SCDC	Suffolk Coastal District Council
SCHU	Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Unit
SEBC	St. Edmundsbury Borough Council
SWT	Suffolk Wildlife Trust
WDC	Waveney District Council