



3.3 A dedicated Council Officer currently contributes time towards the implementation of the North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan (NELBAP), and sits on both the NELBAP Management and Steering Groups. Existing staff resources from the Planning & Sustainable Development team and others from Housing and Environment will continue to help implement the NELBAP and receive guidance from the NELBAP coordinator. All costs incurred are currently covered under existing salary budgets within the relevant service.

#### 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no health and safety or property implications. Existing ICT equipment will be utilised.

4.2 Should the Council choose not to support the NELBAP, there is a high risk to the Council of failing to meet its international obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity 1992, EU and UK Biodiversity Action Plans, and the Council's own Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015.

4.3 Improving our built and natural environment will bring environmental, social and economic benefits and contribute to our overall quality of life.

#### 5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 The North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Partnership was formed in 1996 by statutory and voluntary agencies plus individuals with a common interest in conserving biodiversity. The aim of the partnership is to protect and enhance the local biodiversity by developing and implementing a North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan (NELBAP).

5.2 The NELBAP is a locally driven process to meet the requirements of the UK and EU Biodiversity Actions plans, plus, the Convention on Biological Diversity 1992 which the UK Government has committed to.

5.3 The implementation of the NELBAP is by way of focusing on individual ecosystems such as freshwater, wetland, woodland, coastal and marine plus species that are relevant to the NELBAP area. The Council also recently setup and currently lead on a new Urban and Communities Local Biodiversity Action Plan which focuses on habitats and species found within urban environments plus the communities that depend on and benefit from them. Further details on NELBAP can be found at <http://www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk/>.

5.4 The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 places a legal duty on local authorities to further the conservation of biodiversity, enhance natural features and protect wildlife. The Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Structure Plan (2009) outlines the importance of biodiversity and wildlife habitats. Supporting the

NELBAP enables the Council to contribute to meeting its legal obligations plus the requirements of its own strategies and plans.

- 5.5 The Resources Management Committee on 10 March 2009 approved to continue funding and support the NELBAP on an annual basis for three years, 2009-2012. NELBAP are now looking to continue that funding for the next three years covering their updated 3 year Plan.
- 5.6 The NELBAP are also looking for funding from other organisations to partner fund the contribution from Aberdeen City Council. These include Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Forestry Commission Scotland. The exact amounts, however, could not be confirmed at the time of writing this report.

## 6. IMPACT

- 6.1 The NELBAP has direct links with the administration's Vibrant and Dynamic & Forward Looking requirement to 'adopt and implement policies which safeguard Aberdeen's green belt and green wedges'.
- 6.2 The NELBAP will also assist the Council in delivering a number of Single Outcome Agreement National Outcomes including: -
  - 1 – 'We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe';
  - 10 - 'We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need'; and
  - 12 - 'We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and enhance it for future generations'.
- 6.3 This report is a request for continuation of funding and, therefore, does not require an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment.

## 7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

APPENDIX 1 – Draft North East Scotland LBAP 3 Year Plan 2012-2015.

## 8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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**3-Year Plan 2012-2015**

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) was published in 1994, and is the UK Government's response to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which the UK signed up to in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. The CBD called for the development and enforcement of national strategies and associated action plans to identify, conserve and protect existing biological diversity, and to enhance it wherever possible.

The Scottish Biodiversity Forum is responsible for implementing the objectives of the UK BAP in Scotland. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy "Scotland's Biodiversity: It's in your hands" sets out a 25 year framework for the conservation of habitats and species in Scotland. During 2008, a second set of Implementation Plans were approved and the LBAP process is seen as a key means of delivering these.

The Biodiversity Duty, which was made law in 2004 (as part of the Nature Conservation Act) gives all public bodies in Scotland a duty to "further the conservation of biodiversity". Delivery of biodiversity actions through local biodiversity partnerships is one way that public bodies can help fulfil this duty.

North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan (NES LBAP) Partnership was set up in 1997 and brings together three local authorities and a whole range of conservation, farming, forestry and land agencies. Its role is to provide the framework for local action on national priority species and habitats. The partnership's work also includes the conservation of species and habitats that are important to local communities, whether or not they are national priorities.

NES LBAP benefits from the participation of a wide range of partners with shared goals and objectives. NES LBAP pools limited resources and provides a mechanism for shared action. Through involvement with LBAP, partners promote nature conservation within their organisations and this helps integrate biodiversity friendly practices into the work of these organisations.

**The Aims of the North East Biodiversity Partnership:**

- To work towards the protection and enhancement of the biodiversity of the North East through the development of effective, local working partnerships.
- To develop and encourage local action towards national targets for species and habitats, as specified in the UK Action Plan.
- To identify targets for biodiversity conservation appropriate to the area, incorporating issues of local importance and reflecting the values of local people.
- To strengthen understanding of, support for, and involvement in the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the North East.

- To provide a focal point and information exchange, to assist those working in biodiversity conservation throughout the region.

### **LBAP Partnership: Progress to Date and Looking Forwards.**

This is the fourth 3-Year Plan developed by the NES LBAP Partnership. The three year plans identify ongoing and longer term priorities and detail budgets to deliver this work.

The focus on the last 3-year plan was the establishment of ecosystem groups and the completion of Action Plans for the majority of the UK priority habitats present in the North East. Where possible, actions for LBAP priority species have been incorporated into relevant Habitat Action Plans but in a few cases, individual Species Action Plans have been prepared. A new national list of UK priority habitats and species was approved in 2008 and a review of this has been undertaken to identify which of these habitats and species are present in the North East and to identify additional species which are of local importance in this area. Ecosystem groups have reviewed existing action plans and identified priorities for action over the coming three year period.

Continued development of the website has been undertaken will information on biodiversity issues together with links to useful documents and guidance.

The emphasis within the 3-Year Plan 2012-15 is on the implementation of these priorities together with continued awareness raising on a range of biodiversity issues. A mechanism for monitoring progress on actions will be established.

- Priorities for action over the next three years will include:
- the delivery of a wetland habitat restoration project
- a pond survey initiative involving schools across the North East
- establishment of a demonstration project to seed and manage a new roadside verge for local biodiversity and monitor success.
- sharing information on seed mix and methods used and aim to establish best practice guidelines for seeding new verges
- the promotion of natural woodland restoration and management to land owners
- the continued production of a quarterly, electronic newsletter with the specific objectives of; making a wider public aware of the socio-economic importance/value of biodiversity and the role they can play in protecting biodiversity
- development and implementation of a plan to make more proactive use of regional/local media outlets.
- the delivery of regional "campaigns" which engage with communities and promote the importance of biodiversity e.g. a "Bio Blitz" public biological recording/awareness-raising event planned for 2012

NES LBAP will continue to work with other partnerships in the area to promote the delivery of habitat and species action plans. Close working with NESBReC to map and monitor the distribution of priority habitats and species will continue.

## **The Partnership Structure (see Figure 1)**

The NES LBAP Partnership employs a full-time LBAP Co-ordinator responsible for the day to day running of the project. This post is hosted and line managed by the James Hutton Institute. The finances and general direction of the project is provided by the LBAP Steering Group which is made up of ecosystem group chairs together with representative of partner organisations. Day to day guidance of the project is delegated to a Management Group.

There are five ecosystem groups and an overarching awareness group which supports the work of all ecosystem groups and the Steering Group.

The ecosystem groups are chaired by relevant partner organisations and meet three to four times a year. The groups have representation from all relevant partner organisations together with other relevant experts or interested individuals or groups.

The NES LBAP Awareness Group has developed an awareness strategy which aims to promote awareness of the partnership and key biodiversity messages, together with promoting the work of the ecosystem groups.

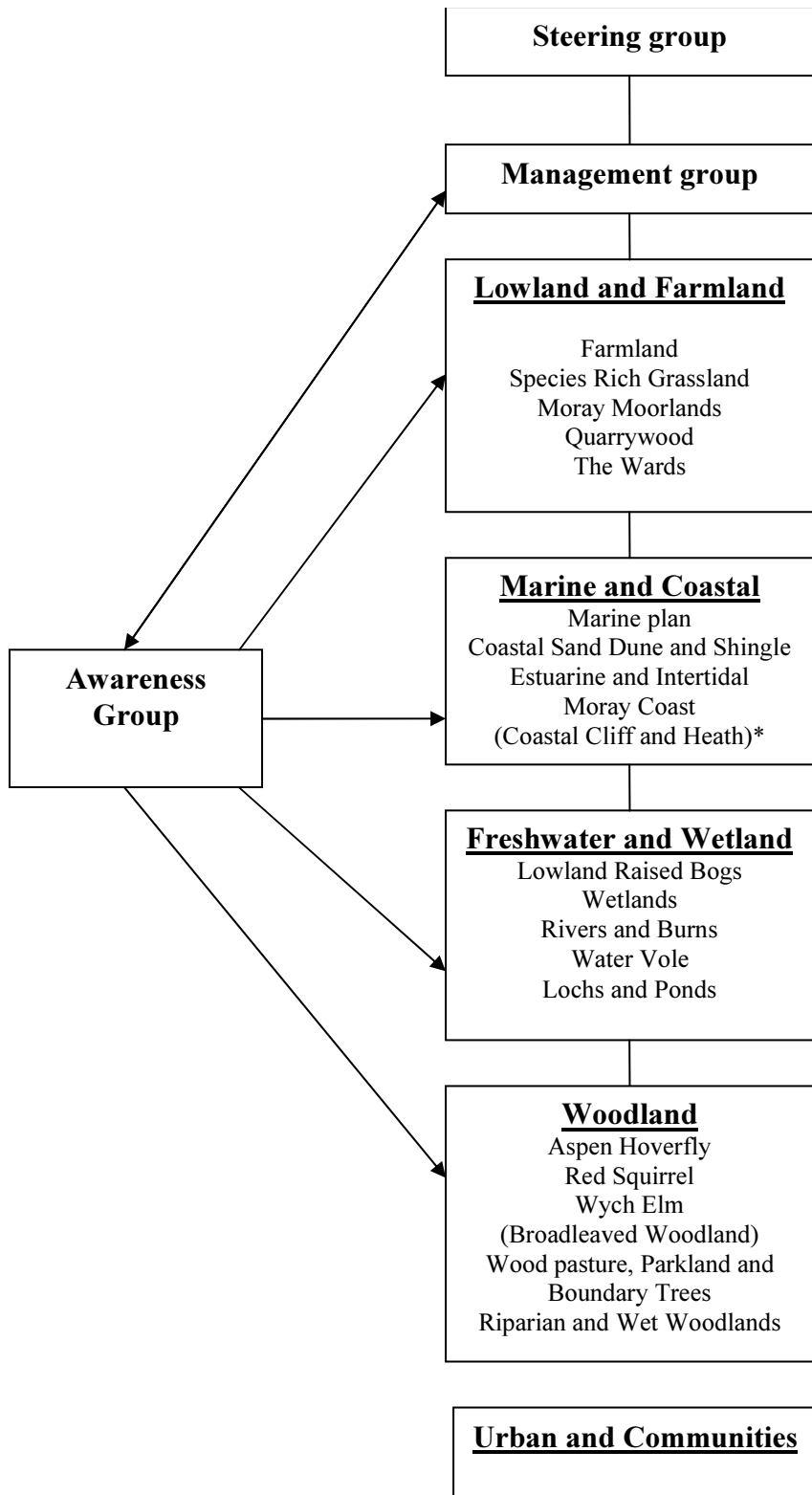
## **Project implementation and Monitoring**

Many of the actions identified in the habitat and species action plans are carried out on a day to day basis by partner organisations. These include the protection of priority habitats through regulatory roles and promoting awareness of priority species by Rangers when leading guided walks and educational activities.

Other actions require a more co-ordinated approach or additional resources. Where these are identified by the ecosystem groups, the Co-ordinator will work together with the group to establish the feasibility of a project and possible sources of funding. The Steering Group will make the final decision on which of these projects to implement, based on the funding and resources available.

Ecosystems groups report progress on action plans to the LBAP co-ordinator. Discussions are ongoing regarding the continued use of the national Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS). This is a centrally collated database of biodiversity action carried out across the UK with the information being used to monitor progress towards national targets for UK priority species and habitats. It is understood that this system can be used to monitor local actions. If this system is to be discontinued, a local system of monitoring actions will be established.

**Figure 1: The North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Partnership**



## Plan 2012-15 Aims, Objectives and Actions

<b>Aim 1: To work towards the protection and enhancement of the Biodiversity of the North East through the development of effective working partnerships.</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Partners</b>	<b>Other Partners</b>
1.1 To maintain the North East LBAP Partnership.	1.1.1 To maintain a partnership agreement with associated funding.	All funding partners	
	1.1.2 Seek additional core funding.	LBAP co-ordinator.	
	1.1.3 To support and maintain the NE LBAP working groups including steering group and ecosystem groups.	Steering group	
1.2 To build and maintain links with the Scottish Biodiversity Forum (SBF) and other national groups.	1.2.1 Ensure information from SBF is circulated to partners.	LBAP co-ordinator.	
	1.2.2 LBAP Co-ordinator to sit on national Freshwater and Wetland group and to attend LBAP network meetings.		
1.3 To work with partners and local experts in supporting projects for biodiversity by community groups.	1.3.1 Facilitate community groups to undertake biodiversity projects by providing advice, guidance and information on funding via the website and input from the Project Co-ordinator.	Awareness group, Urban and Communities group.	Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, The Moray Council, SNH
<b>Aim 2: To develop and encourage local action towards national targets for species and habitats as specified in the UK Action Plan.</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Partners</b>	<b>Other Partners</b>
2.1 To ensure all relevant habitats and species are covered by action plans and to review plans on a regular basis.	2.1.1 Ecosystem groups to review action plans on a regular basis to ensure information is up to date and actions are in line with national and local objectives.	Ecosystem group chairs	Other relevant partners
	2.1.2 Action plans are to be made available on the website.		
	2.1.3 Maintain a list of Priority Habitats and Species relevant to NE Scotland on the NE LBAP website.	Habitats and species group	
	2.1.3 Incorporate habitats and species in existing plans where possible and consider the requirement for new plans if necessary	Ecosystem groups	



<b>2.2 Ensure actions identified in plans are carried out, subject to availability of resources.</b>	2.2.1 Review existing action plans and make sure actions are achievable.	LBAP co-ordinator, Ecosystems groups	
	2.2.2 Ecosystem groups to monitor implementation and to report progress at each Steering Group meeting	Ecosystem groups	
2.3 Identify actions where there is no clear lead organisation or where co-ordinated action or additional resources are required.	2.3.1 Identify actions requiring additional resources and in association with the ecosystem groups outline a mechanism for implementation of these actions and identify funding and resources required. Implement as directed by steering group.	LBAP co-ordinator, Management group, Steering group	Ecosystem groups
2.4 Identify and seek protection for key sites within the North East for LBAP priority habitats and species.	2.4.1 Contribute towards review of Local Nature Conservation Sites.	Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council	Ecosystem groups
2.5 Monitor effectiveness of local action plans in contributing to national actions.	2.5.1 Ecosystem Chairs and Partners to supply information on implementation to LBAP Co-ordinator	Ecosystem chairs	Other relevant partners
	2.5.2 System for yearly monitoring of action implementation to be established. Data extracted to be entered into the national Biodiversity Action Recording System.	Ecosystem chairs and partners, LBAP co-ordinator	
	2.5.3 Work with NESBReC to collate baseline data on habitats and species (in addition to action monitoring) using the integrated habitat survey data and species records stored by NESBReC	Habitats and species group	
<b>Aim 3: To identify targets for biodiversity conservation appropriate to the local area incorporating issues of local importance and reflecting the values of local people.</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Targeted Action</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Other Partners</b>
3.1 Provide mechanism for additional plans based on local priorities	<b>3.1.1 In association with local experts, NESBReC and other interested groups, identify local priority species and encourage Ecosystem Groups to include actions for these species within any relevant Action Plans.</b>	Habitats and species group Ecosystem groups	

<b>Aim 4: To strengthen understanding and support for and involvement in the protection of biodiversity in the North East.</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Other Partners</b>
4.1 Strengthen awareness and understanding of biodiversity within the local area and support and extend practical opportunities for participation.	<b>4.1.1 Review and update website on a regular basis to provide up to date information, news on LBAP activities and examples of good practice.</b>	Awareness group, LBAP co-ordinator	
	<b>4.1.2 To seek press coverage for launch of action plans and any other events or projects as relevant.</b>	Awareness group, LBAP co-ordinator	
	<b>4.1.3 Run recording projects jointly with NESBReC to encourage public participation and awareness raising.</b>	Awareness group	
	<b>4.1.4 Produce annual report of NE LBAP achievements for distribution to partnership members and other interested parties</b>	Awareness Group	
<b>4.2 Support action plan development</b>	<b>4.2.1 Liaise with partner organisations providing walks, talks and education activities to ensure maximum awareness raising of biodiversity issues.</b>	Awareness group	Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen City Council, The Moray Council, NTS, SNH
	<b>4.2.2 Provide stands/displays at relevant events subject to resource availability.</b>	LBAP co-ordinator and partners	
	<b>4.2.3 Provide training/workshops in association with specific plans aimed at land owners/land managers.</b>	Ecosystem groups	

**Aim 5: To provide a focal point for information exchange to assist partnership development between those working in biodiversity conservation throughout the region.**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Other Partners</b>
5.1 Provide information to partners, other interested organisations and individuals	<b>5.1.1 An annual LBAP workshop will be held for the partnership to re-focus ideas and review progress.</b>	LBAP co-ordinator	
	<b>5.1.2 Provide an information exchange network and source of contacts for those interested in biodiversity locally, and the work of the LBAP locally and nationally.</b>	Awareness group, LBAP co-ordinator	Partner organisations
	5.1.3 Provide advice and guidance to NE businesses on incorporating biodiversity considerations into their operations and projects.	Awareness group, LBAP co-ordinator	