

Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan



Urban Areas

This plan is in need of review, some of the actions are out of date and the text has not been reviewed since 2002. The text below is provided for information only.

Urban areas have their own biodiversity character. They contain key habitats such as ancient woodlands, heathland and species-rich grassland; habitats that have developed on industrial land; parks and open spaces; networks of private gardens and other green areas; and habitats associated with buildings and hard surfaces. All of these greenspaces, are valuable to wildlife.

'Greenspace' can be used as a generic term for all open land or water in towns and cities including remnants of countryside that pre-date urban development, railway land, road verges, green networks, formal parks, playing fields, rivers, ponds and gardens.

Urban greenspaces support a great variety of plant and animal species. Many common species occur, but specialist or rare species can also thrive. It is important to conserve urban greenspaces for wildlife, but equally important is providing access to nature for people

Most people spend a large part of their lives in towns and cities. The need to have regular contact with nature is well documented and many rely on urban greenspaces for that contact. Ensuring that people have ready access to nature in urban areas is an important objective in Shropshire's biodiversity programme.

1 Objectives and Targets

1.1 Objectives

- A. Protect all sites of nature conservation importance in urban areas.
- B. Increase the extent of greenspace in urban areas through restoration of degraded or impoverished land or through habitat creation.
- C. Maintain and enhance existing areas of urban greenspace through appropriate management.
- D. Improve knowledge of urban greenspace through survey, research and monitoring.
- E. Increase awareness of the importance of greenspace in urban areas.
- F. Promote widespread access, enjoyment and involvement in urban greenspace.

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1.2 Targets

- Produce an Urban Green Networks guidance document by 2003 to give advice on planning, protecting and managing greenspace in Shropshire's urban areas.
- Progress Urban Green Networks in Shropshire's urban areas, initially in Oswestry, Wem, Whitchurch and Telford by 2005.
- Form an Urban Habitat Action Plan Working Group by 2003 to research urban biodiversity issues and ensure all relevant organisations are kept informed.

2 Current Status

2.1 Importance

'Urban' is a broad habitat type identified in the UK Biodiversity Programme. This type has recently been renamed 'built up areas and gardens' to reflect the inclusion of both urban and rural settlements and all man-made built structures. Conservation action is outlined in the national 'Urban Habitat Statement'.

'Greenspaces' can be very diverse in size, ownership and how they are managed and vary considerably in their value to biodiversity. Often an intimate mosaic of habitats found in close proximity is particularly valuable to urban wildlife. Assessing the importance of an urban wildlife site is also closely related to the availability of other green areas nearby. For example a green area in an impoverished built-up area may be more valuable than a similar greenspace in a very green suburb.

Several nationally important species such as great-crested newt, stagbeetle, song thrush and bullfinch are commonly found in urban areas. In Shropshire, otters have been located in Shrewsbury, great-crested newts in Ellesmere, water voles in Whitchurch and dippers in Ludlow.

Greenspaces may be as valuable for their social importance as their biological value. The criteria used to assess the importance of an urban greenspace therefore must include both ecological and social factors. Greenspaces provide an excellent educational resource, a venue for community activities, a place for quiet recreation, and an incentive to respect nature and the environment more generally. Greenspaces give many people their first contact with wildlife.

2.2 Trends

Habitats in urban areas have always been subject to development pressures. However recent decades have brought an increased understanding of the value of urban wildlife and many urban local authorities now incorporate protection for greenspaces in their local plans. In many towns and cities new greenspaces have been created for the benefit of both wildlife and people. In Shropshire there are an increasing number of statutory Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and many newly created Millennium Greens.

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Habitats that have colonised industrial land no longer in use, often termed 'brownfield' land, are particularly threatened by development. One of the main principles to emerge from the Government's Urban White Paper is to direct 60% of development to urban brownfield land and away from 'greenfield' sites out of town. Clearly, valuable wildlife sites and some land with potential as nature areas will have to be identified as no-go areas for development.

2.3 Area / Extent

Approximately 18% of Shropshire is urban.

2.4 Distribution

In 1996 the population of Shropshire was 277,100 giving a population density of about 0.9 persons per hectare. This is considerably less than the English national average of about 3.7 persons per hectare. About 65% of the county's population live in settlements of 1,000 or more, but these settlements take up less than 2% of the county's land area. About 93,000 people, 35% of the county's population, live outside these larger settlements.

Nearly a quarter of the county's population lives in Shrewsbury. There are 5 other main market towns with populations ranging from Oswestry with 14,600 to Whitchurch with 8,500. Below this there are a number of smaller towns, with populations ranging from 6,400 in Shifnal to 1,600 in Bishop's Castle.

3 Current Factors Affecting the Habitat

- Many urban greenspaces are subject to development pressure, particularly brownfield sites or wasteground.
- Contamination from industrial pollutants, road salt, tars and oils can have a detrimental effect on wildlife.
- Greenspaces often suffer from neglect or inappropriate management such as overtiding or overly intensive park management.
- Human disturbance can be considerable in densely populated areas, and some sites suffer from vandalism, litter, dumping, or simply from over-use. Domestic pets can also disturb wildlife.
- Urban greenspaces are often inadequately surveyed and therefore their importance goes unrecognised.

4 Current Action

4.1 Policy and Protection

- Some urban greenspaces have statutory protection through designation as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) – for example Telford Town Park and the Rea Brook Valley, Shrewsbury.
- Greenspaces identified as county Wildlife Sites have some protection through the local planning process.
- Natural England (NE) recommends that LNRs should be designated much more widely. NE offers grants to create, manage and promote LNRs.
- Trees or groups of trees can be protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) administered by local authorities.

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- Some local authorities have identified 'green networks' for recreation and nature conservation. Work is progressing on the Oswestry Green Network which is being developed by the North Shropshire Countryside Project.

4.2 Management, Research and Survey

- The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) and Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) undertake conservation management in Shropshire's urban greenspaces.
- A number of surveys of urban greenspaces have been completed including the Telford and Oswestry Green Network Ecological Assessment and wildlife surveys for Bridgnorth, Oswestry, Whitchurch, Ludlow, Ellesmere and Minsterley.

5 Benefits of Conserving Urban Greenspace

- Conservation of a wide range of plant and animal species, both common and rare.
- Attractive green areas promote inward investment to urban areas.
- Provision of venues for community activities.
- Greenspaces provide places for quiet recreation and inspiration.
- Opportunities for learning about nature and the natural world close to home or school.
- Encourages respect for the environment generally.
- Greenspaces can assist with flood control, filter wastewater, mitigate impact of developments, create buffers against wind and noise.

6 Key Species

Mammals hedgehog, fox, several species of bats

Reptiles grass snakes

Birds bullfinch, song thrush

Butterflies peacock, small tortoiseshell

Plants common spotted orchid, perennial wall-rocket, autumn crocus

7 Complementary Plans

UK Urban Habitat Statement

Shropshire Hedgerows HAP

Shropshire Lowland Heathland HAP

Shropshire Reedbeds HAP

Shropshire Rivers and Streams HAP

Shropshire Semi-Natural Broadleaved Woodland HAP

Shropshire Standing Open Water HAP

Shropshire Veteran Trees and Parkland HAP

Shropshire Pipestrelle Bat SAP

Shropshire Song Thrush SAP

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Habitat / Species	Action category code	Action text	Location of action	Start date	End date	Lead	Assisting
Urban areas	SHR URB CA 01	Encourage the production of an Urban Green Network guidance document to give advice on all aspects of Shropshire's urban greenspace.	Shropshire	2002	2003	SC T&W	SWT
Urban areas	SHR URB CP 01	Encourage community involvement in the management of wildlife habitats.	Shropshire	2002	-	SC T&W	SWT
Urban areas	SHR URB CP 02	Ensure that all landowners are aware of the importance of wildlife sites in their ownership identified through strategic studies.	Shropshire	2002	-	SC T&W	SWT
Urban areas	SHR URB CP 03	Encourage community involvement in urban wildlife projects.	Shropshire	2002	-	SWT	
Urban areas	SHR URB CP 04	Raise awareness of the importance of urban green spaces, initially through activities at a number of sites and targeting specific audiences.	Shropshire	2002	-	SC T&W SWT	
Urban areas	SHR URB HC 01	Using planning conditions and promotion by the Shropshire Biodiversity Partnership, create 1ha of green or brown roof in Shropshire by 2015.	Shropshire	2006	2015	SC	
Urban areas	SHR URB HS 01	Review the management of parks and other local authority controlled land to consider introducing additional measures for nature conservation.	Shropshire	2002	2005	SC SWT	
Urban areas	SHR URB HS 03	Ensure that all LNRs and County Wildlife Sites have management plans or are well managed by 2015.	Shropshire	2006	2015	SWT	SC T&W
Urban areas	SHR URB PL 01	Include policies for the protection and enhancement of urban biodiversity in local plans and associated Supplementary Planning Guidance.	Shropshire	2002	-	SC T&W	SWT
Urban areas	SHR URB SP 03	Ensure that all urban greenspaces meeting LNR or County Wildlife Site criteria are designated until 2015.	Shropshire	2002	2015	SWT	SC T&W

Urban Areas

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Key to Organisations

SC Shropshire Council
T&W Telford & Wrekin
SWT Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Plan created 2002

Pfd correct on 24.03.2009

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