

Meeting: Environment Sub-committee

Date: 6 September 2022

Title: Biodiversity Action Plan Report Update 2020-22

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Service: Environmental Sustainability
Wards affected: All

1.0 Purpose of briefing

The purpose of this briefing is to inform Committee on the progress of the Newcastle and North Tyneside Joint Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

2.0 Background

The joint BAP was approved by North Tyneside Council Cabinet in February 2012 and Newcastle City Council in June 2012. Progress reports on target delivery are completed annually and this is the Report for 2020-22, covering a two-year period that includes the lockdown/Covid period of 2020/21.

3.0 Delivery of the Newcastle & North Tyneside BAP

There are a number of Habitat and Species Action Plans in the BAP as shown below:-

Habitat	Species
Buildings & Structures	Farmland Birds
Estuary & Coastal	Bats
Brownfield Land	Amphibians
Transport Corridors	Dingy Skipper
Open Water & Wetland	Otter
Rivers & Watercourses	Urban Birds
Managed Urban Greenspace	Water Vole
Native Woodland	Red Squirrel
Lowland Grassland	Hedgehog
Scrub, Shrub & Hedgerow	Slow Worm
	Bumblebees
	Brown Hare

The progress report attached in Appendix 1 outlines the targets from each Habitat and Species Action Plan, which have been delivered between 2020-22.

3.1 Examples of BAP Projects Delivered between 2020-22

Lowland Grassland & Bumblebees

- 23,135sqm (2.3ha) of wildflower grassland restored, managed and created across 84 amenity, green space and roadside verge sites in North Tyneside
- Species rich grassland secured through a number of planning schemes including sites at Murton, Backworth, Wallsend and North Shields
- Annual grassland and invertebrate monitoring surveys undertaken at Howdon Nexus site and submitted to the Local Authority
- Species rich grassland areas managed and new areas created within the Brierdene, Holywell Dene, Killingworth Lake Park and Benton Quarry
- Scrub management undertaken by the Friends of Brierdene to prevent encroachment into wildflower meadow areas
- Annual bee and butterfly surveys undertaken in Brierdene by the FoB
- Monthly bee surveys undertaken at Northumberland Park (Citizen Science Surveys)
- Management of grassland and meadows undertaken annually in the Rising Sun Country Park and creation of new species rich grassland areas
- Grazing project at St Mary's Island Nature Reserve continues to restore and enhance the species rich meadow areas
- Botanical surveys undertaken at St Mary's Island Nature Reserve by the Friends of St Mary's Island Wetland Conservation Group.

Native Woodland, Scrub & Hedgerow

- Woodland, hedgerow and scrub planting secured as part of a number of planning schemes including sites at Murton, Backworth and Wallsend
- Tree and scrub management work undertaken in Holywell Dene, Brierdene, St Marys wetland, RSCP and Killingworth Lake Park
- 5760m of native hedgerows managed annually in RSCP
- Trees and native scrub planted in Northumberland Park, RSCP, Wallsend Parks and Brierdene
- 500 native bluebell bulbs planted in woodland at Killingworth Lake Park
- More than 300 standard street trees planted across the borough by the Council
- 3.8ha of woodland/trees planted through the NECF (North East Community Forest) and Trees for Cities (TfC) projects at RSCP, Henley Gardens and Love Avenue. Over 8000 native trees were planted as part of the project.
- 350 trees (whips) and 56 heavy standard trees have been planted across the borough as part of the Local Authority Treescape Fund.
- 500 native bluebell bulbs and a standard cherry tree planted at the Suez site in Wallsend

Open Water & Wetlands

- SUDs features including ponds and swales secured through Planning on various development schemes including sites at Murton, Backworth, Monkseaton and North Shields.
- Pond restoration works carried out at RSCP on the educational pond which included a survey for great crested newt prior to works commencing.
- Management of St Mary's wetlands undertaken through Friends of St Mary's Island Wetland Conservation Group.
- 0.3km of watercourse improvements (re-profiling works) undertaken in the RSCP which also included the planting of native hedgerow, native scrub and wildflowers in spring 2021.
- 0.3km of watercourse improvement undertaken on the Seaton Burn at Wideopen to reduce flooding and improve biodiversity. S106 funding has also been secured to treat Japanese Knotweed along the watercourse around Little Waters Local Wildlife Site (LWS).
- Watercourse improvements undertaken in Wallsend Parks (Wallsend Burn), Holywell Dene (Seaton Burn) and Brierdene.

Urban Birds

- 195 bird boxes secured through planning schemes including 1 no. Kittiwake Ledge and Oystercatcher habitat
- Bird boxes installed at a number of parks including Killingworth Lake Park and Benton Quarry
- 5760m of native hedgerows managed annually in RSCP to provide bird feeding and nesting habitat
- St Mary's Wetlands annual vegetation management to maintain suitable habitat for roosting waders
- St Mary's Wetlands regular bird surveys/monitoring, including annual breeding bird surveys and monthly WeBS surveys
- Bird surveys undertaken at Brierdene, Northumberland Park, and Marden Quarry
- RSPB 'Big Garden Birdwatch' events at Northumberland Park

Bats

- Habitat secured for bats (woodland, hedgerow, grassland etc) through Planning development schemes
- 180 bat boxes/features secured through a number of planning schemes
- Bat training events (BCT) Northumberland Park
- Organised bat walks in parks and Local Wildlife Sites including RSCP and Wallsend Park

Managed Urban Greenspace

A number of projects have been undertaken in various parks and as part of community projects. These include the following:-

1) Friends of Brierdene

- Over 9000 volunteer hours between 2020-2022 including work in the Dene, school visits and website management
- Wildflower grassland management
- Tree and scrub management
- Watercourse management (clearance and bankside repairs)
- Invasive plant management
- Footpaths repairs
- Community events including pond dipping event
- Wildlife surveys including water vole and plant surveys
- 27 new species recorded in the Dene between 2020-2022.
- Duke of Edinburgh Gold each month
- Royal Horticultural Society “*It’s Your Neighbourhood*” (IYN) Inspection with Judges
- Wildflower sowing of 20 areas in Dene, plug planting and collection of wildflower seed
- Native scrub planting in lower reach
- Bridge repairs and fencing improvements
- Clearing fallen timber, cutting back damaged trees and clearing footpaths
- Litter picking/graffiti removal

2) St Mary’s Island Wetland Conservation Group

- Wetland Restoration / Management
- Conservation grazing with Exmoor ponies Jan-Mar 21 and Feb-May 22 to manage the species-rich grassland. The conservation group provided signage and carried out daily checks on the ponies’ welfare.
- Managing vegetation on the islands –annual strimming of the islands to maintain suitable habitat for roosting waders in August 2020; 2021 and 2022.
- Regular litter picks undertaken throughout the year.
- Viewpoints maintained by removal of vegetation and strimming in front of main screen.
- Fencing repaired following damage due to Storm Arwen in Nov 21.
- St Mary’s Island Wetland Management Plan updated in February 2021 covering the period 2021-25.
- Regular bird surveys/monitoring, including annual breeding bird surveys and monthly WeBS surveys.
- Annual botanical surveys/monitoring in June/July
- Monitoring data provided to ERIC North-East
- Won the Royal Horticultural Society ‘It’s Your Neighbourhood’ ‘Outstanding’ award for Northumbria in October 2021

- Bi-monthly newsletters produced and Facebook page regularly updated. Facebook page now has 950 followers an increase from 530 two years ago
- Public engagement activities have been limited due to Covid. The Group will have a stand at the SMI Wildlife Festival August 2022 and will be offering a guided walk to members on September 3rd

3) *Friends of Holywell Dene*

- Strimming - upstream meadow and surrounding paths
- Sycamore bashing - between wooden bridges, south side
- Strimming - NTC land from upstream wooden bridge working downstream
- Strimming - upstream and downstream meadows
- Downstream from wooden bridge - clearing big tree in river and river sweep upstream
- NTC south side - path edging, mesh replacement on boardwalk, repairing fence near side waterfall
- Opposite meadow - extending walkway path by waterfall
- South side opposite gabions - rerouting path behind tree
- Production of FoHD calendars
- Bird feeding, squirrel box checking and hedgehog rescuing all continued during lockdowns.
- Six monthly newsletters produced and continued throughout Covid.
- Environmental Records Information Centre (ERIC) training event "Introduction to Wildlife Recording" attended by members
- Members took part in the 'New Year Plant Hunt' (ERIC) in January 2022 and in April collected data for the 'City Nature Challenge' using the iNaturalist and iRecord Apps.
- Red Squirrel Project in partnership with North East Red Squirrel Group

4) *Northumberland Park & Marden Quarry*

- Regular RSPB 'Big Garden Birdwatch' events
- Monthly bee walk and survey (Citizen Science Surveys)
- Easter chick trail
- Tree planting events
- Pond management
- Management of butterfly meadow
- Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) staff training (prepare & lead bat walks)
- Volunteer meetings and activities
- Regular monthly wildlife/biodiversity surveys (Northumberland Park)
- Quarterly biodiversity surveys (Marden Quarry)
- Gardening group
- Northumberland Park Wildlife Group regular newsletter/sightings board and Facebook page.

5) *Rising Sun Country Park*

- 5760m of native hedgerows managed annually
- 0.3km of watercourse improvements including planting of native hedgerow and scrub and wildflowers.
- 2.7ha of native woodland created through NECF project
- Pond restoration works carried out in Nature Reserve which included a survey for great crested newt prior to works commencing
- 4 wildflower meadows managed annually including removal of invasive species and scrub removal to prevent encroachment.
- 200m of new post and rail fence provided along the route into the Nature Reserve.
- Tree management/thinning works in Hadrian Woodland with habitat piles created for wildlife and over 300m of redundant fencing removed.
- Vegetation clearance to improve viewing areas in front of bird hides at Swallow Pond.
- Wildflower meadows cut and hay used at donor sites within park to create/enhance species rich grassland
- 386 volunteer hours provided within the Park.
- 189 Education visits with 2680 participants including bat events
- Red Squirrel Project in partnership with North East Red Squirrel Group

6) *Killingworth Lake Park & Benton Quarry Park*

- Management and sowing of wildflower areas
- Woodland management works (Killingworth)
- Commemoration Project (Killingworth)
- 500 bluebell bulbs planted (Killingworth Lake Woodland)
- Bird boxes installed in trees at both parks
- Control of invasive plants by volunteers at Killingworth

7) *Wallsend Parks*

- 1298 Volunteer hours
- Volunteers have carried out hedgerow management, weeding and litter picking
- 23 Environmental education visits with 360 participants (2021/22 – Covid affected education events the previous year)
- Regular bat walks
- Wildflower areas managed and sown with wildflower seed. Three new areas installed in 2021/22
- Areas of long grass created and maintained for invertebrates
- Watercourse improvements – North Burn and Wallsend Burn cleared between 2020-2022
- All grass risings composted on site and re-used for annual bedding
- Over 1000 shrubs planted including species for pollinators
- Tree management in Hall grounds to enhance woodland ground layer
- Five trees planted in Richardson Dees Park and Hall Grounds.
- Lime tree planted by Elected Mayor to commemorate Platinum Jubilee

