For more information about the UK Biodiversity Action Plan visit http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-5155

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan:

Highlights from the 2005 reporting round

Published by Defra on behalf of the
UK Biodiversity Partnership

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR
Telephone: 020 7238 6000
Website: www.defra.gov.uk

This document is also available on the Defra website.

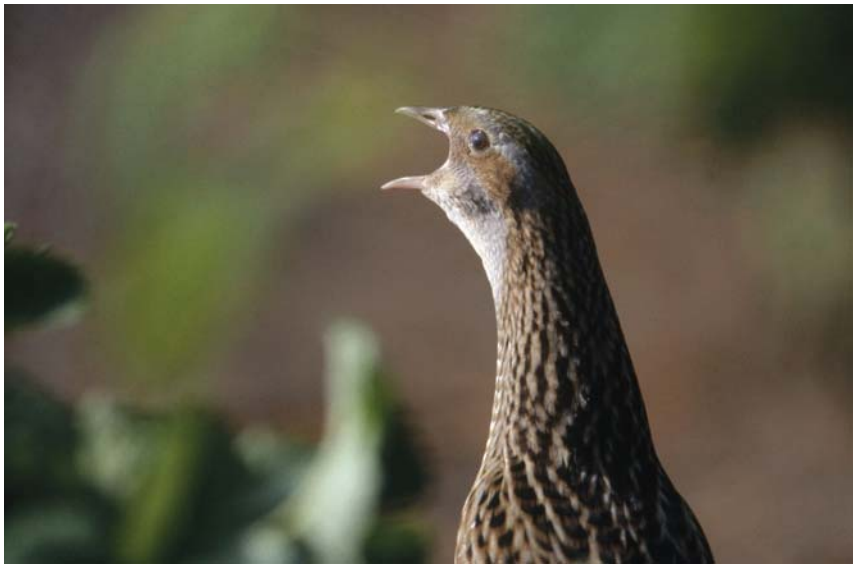
Published by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
Printed in the UK, May 2006, on material that contains a minimum of 100% recycled fibre for uncoated paper and 75% recycled fibre for coated paper.

PB 11910

Main results

This report contains an update on progress on the 391 Species Action Plans (covering 475 separate species) and 45 Habitat Action Plans produced under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan between 1995 and 1999. The main results are:

- Biodiversity Action Plan partnerships at both UK and local levels continue to deliver gains for priority species and habitats;
- 22% of habitats and 11% of priority species are increasing;
- 39% of habitats and 27% of priority species are declining but the decline is slowing for 25% of all habitats and 10% of all species;
- Overall, more priority species are showing improved trends than in 1999 and 2002;
- There was a significant improvement in the level of reporting in 2005 but there remain significant gaps in monitoring information for UK priority species and, in particular, habitats outside of designated sites. These need to be addressed if we are to monitor progress towards the 2010 target to halt biodiversity loss;
- All of the targets for 51 species and 2 habitats were met. Although many targets for other habitats and species have still to be achieved, it can take time to reverse adverse trends and progress is being made in many cases. Overall, the signs are encouraging but there is still more to do to meet the 2010 target;
- Habitat loss/degradation (particularly due to agriculture and infrastructure development) and global warming are the current or emerging threats of significance to the highest proportion of priority species and habitats;
- There have been many successes arising from the specific targeted action plans. A few examples are included in this report.



The UK corncrake population has more than doubled from 488 calling males in 1993 (prior to the UK BAP) to 1113 in 2005.

Introduction

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan, published in 1994, was the UK government's response to signing the Convention on Biological Diversity at the Rio Earth Summit. It sets out a programme for the conservation of the UK's biodiversity and led to the production of action plans to achieve the recovery of many of our most threatened species and habitats. Between 1995 and 1999 a total of 391 Species Action Plans (covering 475 separate species) and 45 Habitat Action Plans were produced, each with specific biological targets and a Lead Partner to co-ordinate plan implementation[1].

About 150 Local Biodiversity Action Plans have been developed by local partnerships to engage local communities and help deliver conservation action.

The UK Government has made a commitment to halt biodiversity decline with the aim of reaching this by 2010, and the status of UK BAP species and habitats are among the draft headline indicators for this target. Monitoring and reporting are consequently vital to assess progress towards the 2010 target, identify emerging issues and re-set priorities. Reporting on the UKBAP has followed a three-year cycle, with the first two reporting rounds taking place in 1999 and 2002. This report summarises the UK level results of the 2005 reporting round and is based on progress reports from Lead Partners and LBAP co-ordinators. A full report including country level information will be available later on the UKBAP website (www.ukbap.org.uk).

A very high response rate was achieved with reports received for 45 Habitat Plans (100%), 391 Species Action Plans (100%) and 128 Local Biodiversity Action Plans (84%). This represents a considerable improvement on 2002 reporting.

In addition, information for each species covered by grouped plans was also obtained for the first time and more information was collected at the country level compared to previous reporting rounds. The data were gathered through the web-based Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) which had the added benefit of enabling Lead Partners to draw directly on species and habitat information provided by LBAPs.

1 In addition, species statements were produced for a further 104 priority species. However, Lead Partners were not identified for these species and they are not therefore covered by this report.

2 Based on the European Council decision as set out in the 6th Environmental Action Programme, Gothenburg Summit, June 2001

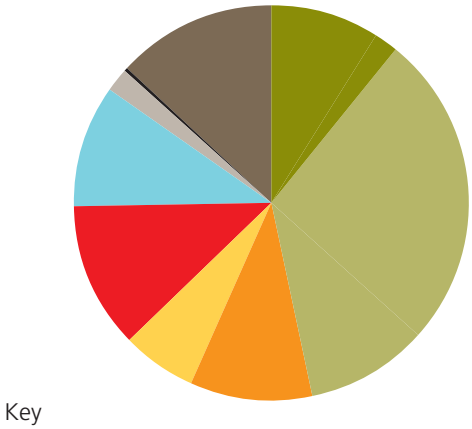
UK Trends for Priority Species and Habitats

The fundamental measure of progress on the UK BAP is whether the status of priority species and habitats is improving. The 2005 reporting results indicate that:[3]

- 10 habitats (22%) and 42 species (11%) are thought to be increasing;
- Although 17 habitats (39%) are thought to be declining, this decline is slowing for 11 (25%) habitats;
- 102 species (27%) are thought to be declining, but the decline is slowing for 36 (10%) species;
- One species (starry breck lichen) has been lost since BAP publication; and
- UK trend was unknown for 11 habitats (24%) and 47 species (13%);

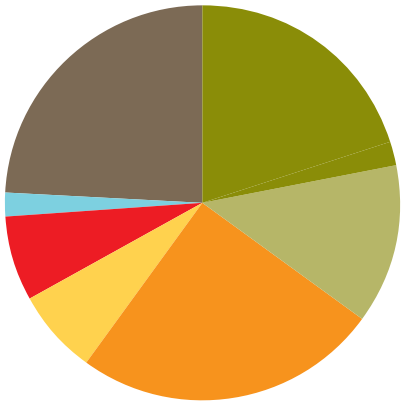
The charts below show the trends for habitats and species for 2005.

Figure 1: Single species action plan trends (N=373)



Key
- 11% Increasing
- 36% Stable
- 10% Declining (slowing)
- 6% Fluctuating – probably declining
- 12% Declining (continuing/accelerating)
- 10% No clear trend
- 2% Lost (pre BAP publication)
- 0.3% Lost (since BAP publication)
- 13% Trend unknown

Figure 2: UK Habitat Trends 2005 (n=45)



Key
- 22% Increasing
- 13% Stable
- 25% Declining (slowing)
- 7% Fluctuating – probably declining
- 7% Declining (continuing/accelerating)
- 2% No clear trend
- 24% Trend unknown

42 priority species were reported as increasing (compared to 26 in 2002). Although the number reported to be declining is similar to 2002, the proportion where the trend is unknown has more than halved (from 99 species in 2002 to 47 in 2005). This improvement in information partly reflects special effort by the reporting group to obtain at least trend information in 2005.

3 These figures exclude species covered by grouped species plans, the trends for these species are summarised separately on page 4.

Highlights from the 2005 reporting round

The decline of the ***heath fritillary*** butterfly has been slowed by improvements to woodland management in Kent.

For 224 priority species, it is possible to compare trends between 2002 (and in some cases 1999) and 2005 (for other species this comparison was impossible because the trend was or is unknown). In most cases, the overall trend is unchanged. However, for 48 species, the trend has improved and for 22, it has got worse. For example, in 1999, both capercaillie and red-necked phalarope were declining but by 2005, they were reported to be on the increase. There may still be some way to go to reach their targets and achieve full recovery for these species, but they are heading in the right direction.

An 'increasing' trend was reported for 10 habitats (compared to 6 in 2002). The trends for terrestrial habitats were generally more positive than those for coastal and marine habitats. The proportion of habitats reported to be declining is unchanged from 2002. However, there has been a reduction in those of unknown status (although less marked than for species).

This suggests that, overall, whilst some priority species and habitats are still declining, the last three years have seen more positive signs of progress. There is still much to be done to improve the status of our priority species and habitats and we should not underestimate the amount of time and effort that it takes to reverse negative trends.

In 2005, in contrast to previous years, separate status assessments were available for each species covered by grouped plans. The trends were unknown for 50 (59%) of these species, 20 (22%) were reported to be stable, with four (4%) increasing and ten (11%) declining.

Lead Partners were asked to assess whether they had adequate monitoring data to assess trends for their species or habitat and, if not, whether they were likely to have such data by 2008. This is important in gauging how much improvement we can expect in reporting prior to 2010 and if there are significant gaps that should be addressed before then. The results were:

- 3 habitats (7%) and 200 species (39%) have adequate monitoring data;
- 15 habitats (33%) and 107 species (21%) are likely to have these data by 2008;

- 22 habitats (49%) and 174 species (34%) are unlikely to have adequate monitoring data by 2008;
- No response was obtained for 5 habitats (11%) and 35 species (7%).

For some species and habitats, adequate monitoring data is available for some parts of the UK and not others. In the case of woodland habitats, data and knowledge relating to trends does exist but, unfortunately, it was not collated in time for this reporting round. In addition, monitoring data often exist for habitats within protected areas but not outside these sites.

At first glance, there appears to be a discrepancy between the proportion of species and habitats where we have 2005 trend information and the responses to the question on whether there is adequate monitoring. This is because many of the 2005 'estimates' are based on the Lead Partners best guess, rather than survey data. They reflect expert opinion and are therefore very useful in the absence of more detailed information. However, the results of the 2005 reporting round suggest that there are gaps in the monitoring of our priority UK species and habitats that need to be addressed.

Positive trends….

In 2002, the **pool frog** and **interrupted brome** were reported to have been lost. They are now 'increasing' following re-introduction. Although both re-introduction projects are at an early stage and have a long way to go before the species are successfully re-established, their status as UK BAP priority species has been important in catalysing this work.

The **corncrake** in Scotland has continued to increase with the support of agri-environment measures that have improved the habitat for this species. The UK corncrake population has more than doubled from 488 calling males in 1993 (prior to the UK BAP) to 1113 in 2005. Flower rich meadows used by corncrakes are also favoured by a range of insects, including the **great yellow bumblebee**. It is encouraging that the reported trend for this species has improved with the range now stable and it is hoped that further increases in habitat will result in population increases for this insect.

The decline of the **heath fritillary** butterfly has been slowed by improvements to woodland management in Kent. Although coppice management has declined overall, careful targeting of management and advice at key sites by the Lead Partner has helped to increase this population. This management, which is carried out for conservation rather than commercial reasons, will need to be continued if this progress is to be maintained.

Areas of concern…

The trends for some species and habitats continue to be a cause for concern. The three habitats which report continuing/accelerating declines (**saltmarsh, sheltered muddy gravels and horse mussel beds**) are marine or coastal and partly reflect the pressure on the coast, including coastal squeeze.

Progress on Targets for UKBAP species and habitats

The targets for species and habitats can be divided into those that aim to maintain the population or range of a species; or the extent or condition of a habitat (**maintenance targets**) and those that aim to increase the population or range of species or to improve the condition of, restore or recreate habitats (**enhancement targets**).

Maintenance targets

- 50% of the 436 **species maintenance** targets have been met, 20% have not been achieved and progress on the remaining 30% is either unknown or has not been reported;
- 38 habitats had targets on **maintaining extent**. These have been **achieved** for 7 habitats (18%), including those for saline lagoons, lowland heath and pinewoods. However, these targets have **not been achieved** for 12 habitats (32%) and progress is **unreported or unknown** for 19 (50%);
- 22 habitats had targets on **maintaining habitat condition**. There is less information on these targets, with only one habitat Lead Partner (for *Sabellaria alveolata* reefs) tentatively reporting that **habitat condition has been maintained**, targets have **not been achieved** for 7 (32%) habitats (mainly coastal and wetland) and progress is **unknown** for 14 (64%) habitats (mainly marine, coastal and freshwater).

Maintenance targets for the **lesser horseshoe bat** have been surpassed with population increases of 42% in Wales and 39% in SW England since 1998.

Enhancement targets

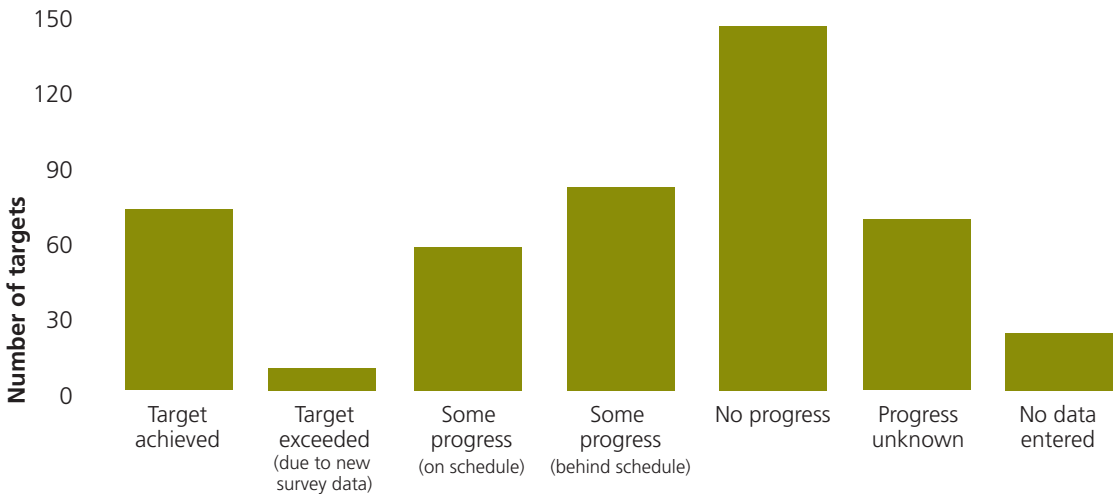


Figure 3: Species enhancement targets 2005 (N=455)

Progress with species action plans has resulted in over 70 targets (16%) being **achieved or exceeded**. A further 56 (12%) are **on schedule** (figure 3). Although a high proportion of these targets were for birds and vascular plants, a good cross section of targets for other taxa are also included, from fungi to fish and spiders to stoneworts. However, there remain a significant number of species targets where no progress has been reported.

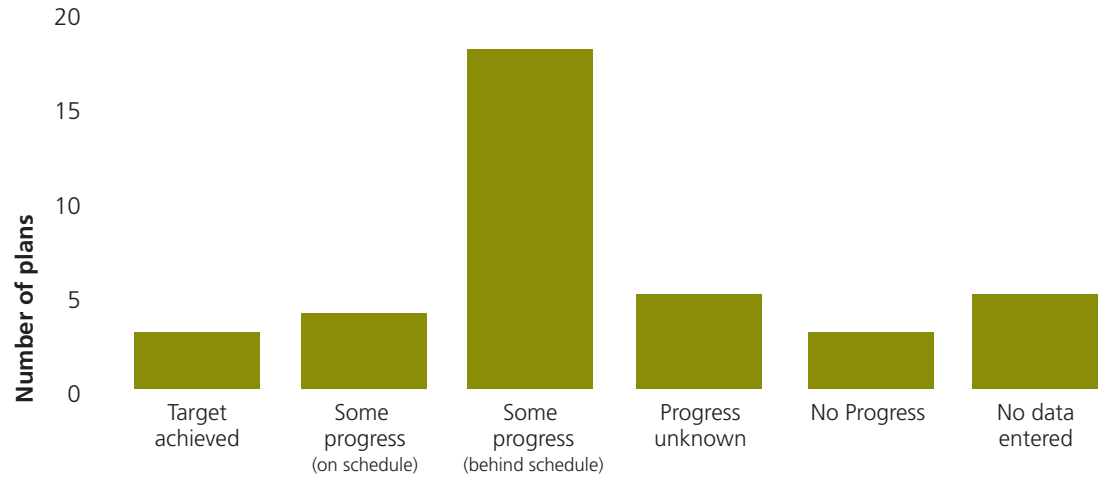


Figure 4: Progress on achieving condition / restoration for habitats (N=38)

Some 38 habitats include enhancement targets aimed at improving condition or restoring the habitat (figure 4).[4] A smaller proportion of enhancement targets have been **achieved** for habitats (8%) compared to species (16%), perhaps reflecting the scale of the task or the length of time it takes to restore damaged ecosystems.

4 Although some habitats have more than one restoration target, progress was the same for any single habitat and we have shown progress by habitat rather than by target.

Highlights from the 2005 reporting round

Species focussed, well targeted habitat restoration has increased the number of booming **bitterns** to 46 against a target of 21.

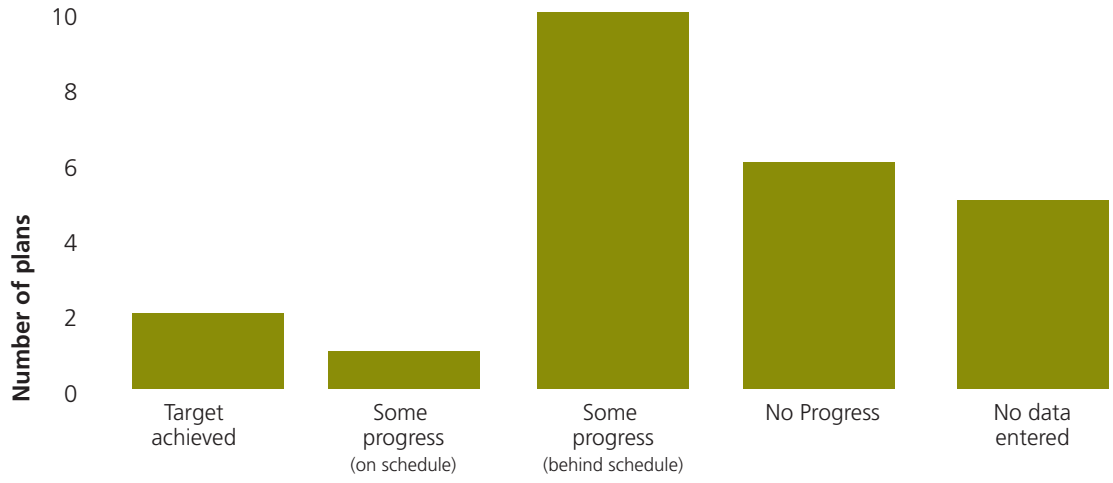


Figure 5: Progress on habitat expansion (N=24)

Targets for re-creating and expanding the extent of habitat are included in 24 Habitat Action Plans (figure 5).[5] Expansion targets for lowland meadows and for lowland calcareous grassland have been **achieved**. The latter has been exceeded due to the support of agri-environment schemes for the re-creation of chalk grassland.

5 Progress for one habitat that had more than one expansion target, was assigned to the most appropriate category.

23,018 ha of **native pinewood** has been planted against a target of 25,000 ha. There has also been welcome progress against the natural re-generation target for this habitat.

On target...

Maintenance targets for the **lesser horseshoe** bat have been surpassed with population increases of 42% in Wales and 39% in SW England since 1998. This follows BAP work including site protection and the provision of habitat management advice plus a series of mild winters.

Species focussed, well targeted habitat restoration has increased the number of booming **bitterns** to 46 against a target of 21 and increased the number of occupied sites to 28 against a 2010 target of 22. Work on this species has been part funded by the European Union LIFE fund and has involved a wide partnership of conservation organisations. It has also helped to drive reedbed habitat restoration and expansion.

The **Deptford pink** is one of a number of species where all of the current targets have been met. BAP status has led to increased survey effort and work by the Lead Partner to carry out and encourage appropriate site management. This has resulted in substantial population increases at 10 of its 24 sites across England and Wales. The BAP has also led to the discovery of two previously unknown populations and prompted a new partnership with the Highways Agency, which has developed its own Deptford pink plan. The Highways Agency now sympathetically manages all known Deptford pink sites on its land.

One of the few habitat targets that is 'on schedule' is the expansion of **native pinewood**, 23,018 ha having being planted against a target of 25,000 ha. There has also been welcome progress against the natural re-generation target for this habitat. Most of the expansion has been through the private sector but this has been supported by the provision of forestry grants. It will take some time for both planted and naturally re-generated forests to reach their biodiversity potential but the first vital steps have been taken.

Highlights from the 2005 reporting round

All of the targets for 51 species (including the Deptford pink, the large blue butterfly and the depressed river mussel) and 2 habitats (cereal field margins and mud habitats in deep water) have been met. This information will help inform consideration of new targets (see below) and the **review of priority species and habitats**, which is due to be concluded by late 2006.

The **Deptford pink** is one of a number of species where all of the current targets have been met resulting in substantial population increases at 10 of its 24 sites across England and Wales.

Many of the species and habitat targets were due to be achieved by 2005, or earlier, and all targets are currently being reviewed and reassessed as part of the **targets review**. New revised targets will be published on the UK BAP website[6] later in 2006.

6 www.ukbap.org.uk

Emerging threats to species and habitats

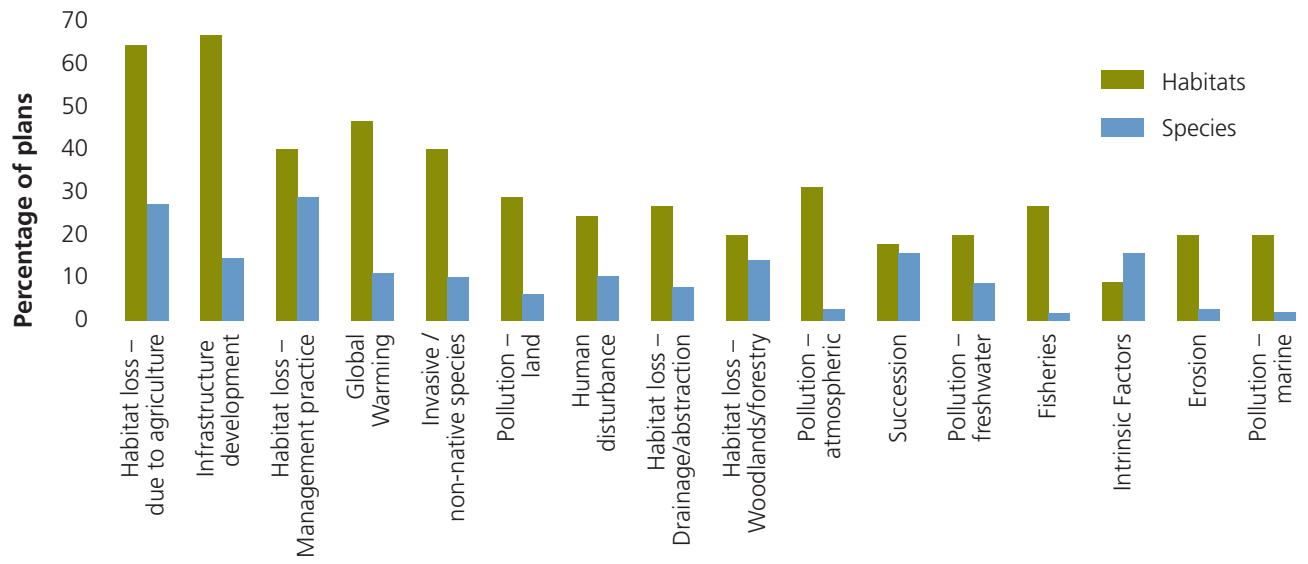


Figure 6: Current and emerging threats faced by priority habitats and species

Lead Partners were asked to list the issues that were currently posing, or likely to pose, a significant threat to the species or habitat over the next 5 years. Figure 6 shows the proportion of species and habitats reporting the 10 most significant threats. Key findings were:

- **Habitat loss/degradation** (particularly due to agriculture or changes in management practice) continues to be a significant threat for a high proportion of species and habitats. Woodland management and loss of trees, and change in habitats due to succession are also or particular concern for species;
- **Infrastructure development** (mainly housing infrastructure and development on the coast) is emerging as a particular concern for species and habitats with two thirds of habitat Lead Partners identifying this as a significant threat. This underlines the importance of the protected sites network and the crucial role of the planning system in safeguarding biodiversity;
- **Global warming** is an emerging threat for a high proportion (47%) of habitats.

Lead Partners reported that there were no current or emerging threats for 15% of the priority species.

Saltmarsh is one of three marine or coastal habitats which report continuing / accelerating declines, partly reflecting the pressure on the coast, including coastal squeeze.

Constraints to delivering actions plans

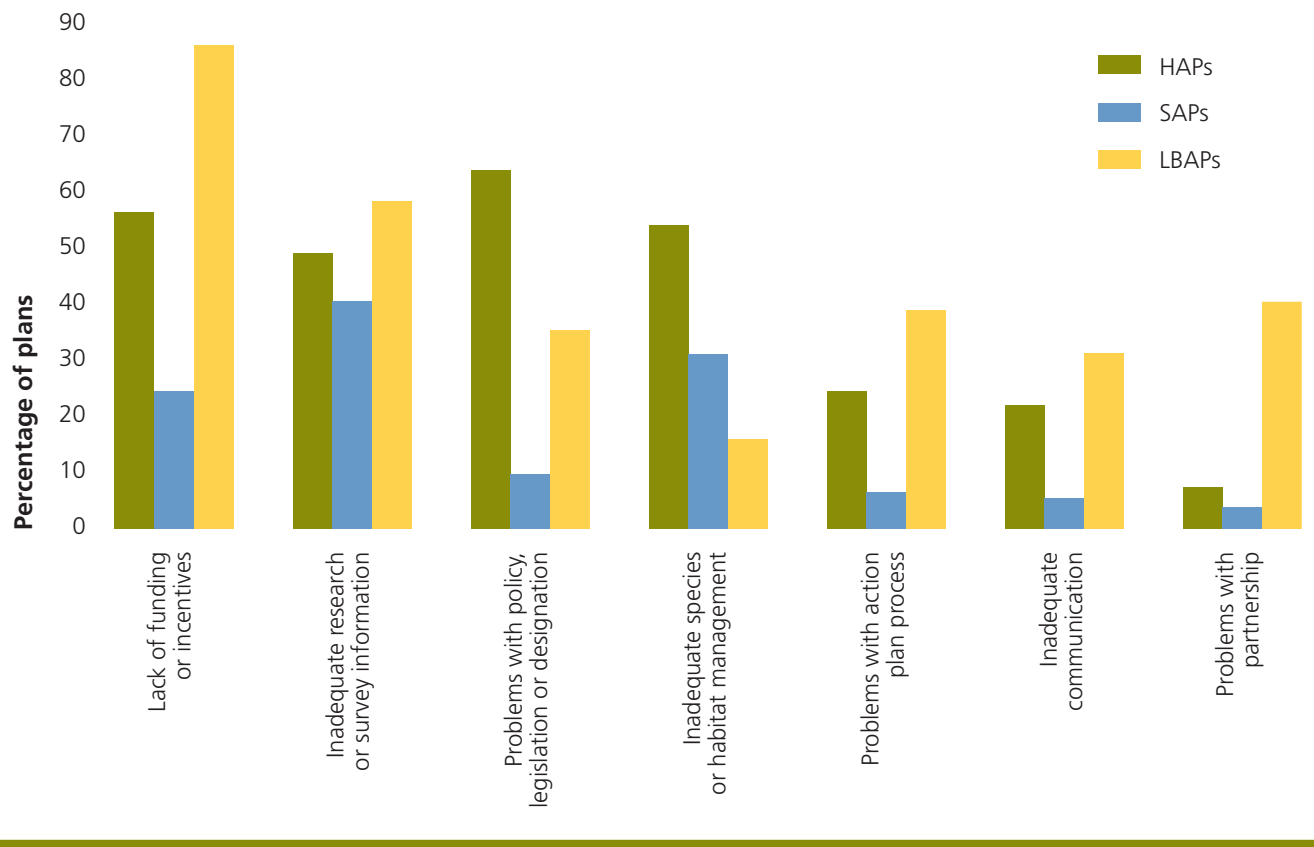


Figure 7: Constraints to meeting action plan targets

Lead Partners and LBAP co-ordinators were asked to identify and rank the main constraints to delivering the targets contained in their respective action plans. Figure 7 shows the proportion of species, habitats and LBAPs affected by the main constraints.

There appear to be differences in constraints between the types of plan. Problems with funding or resources were reported by most LBAPs. For habitats, the most reported constraint is difficulty with policies or designation (for example: incomplete protected area network or lack of control of damaging activities in marine and coastal habitats within protected areas), this is a change from 2002 when lack of research and survey was the most reported habitat constraint. In the case of species plans, lack of research or survey was cited as the main constraint (as was the case in 2002).

Lead Partners for two habitats (cereal field margins and hedgerows) and 64 (17%) species reported that there were no constraints to delivering the targets contained in their action plans.

Solutions

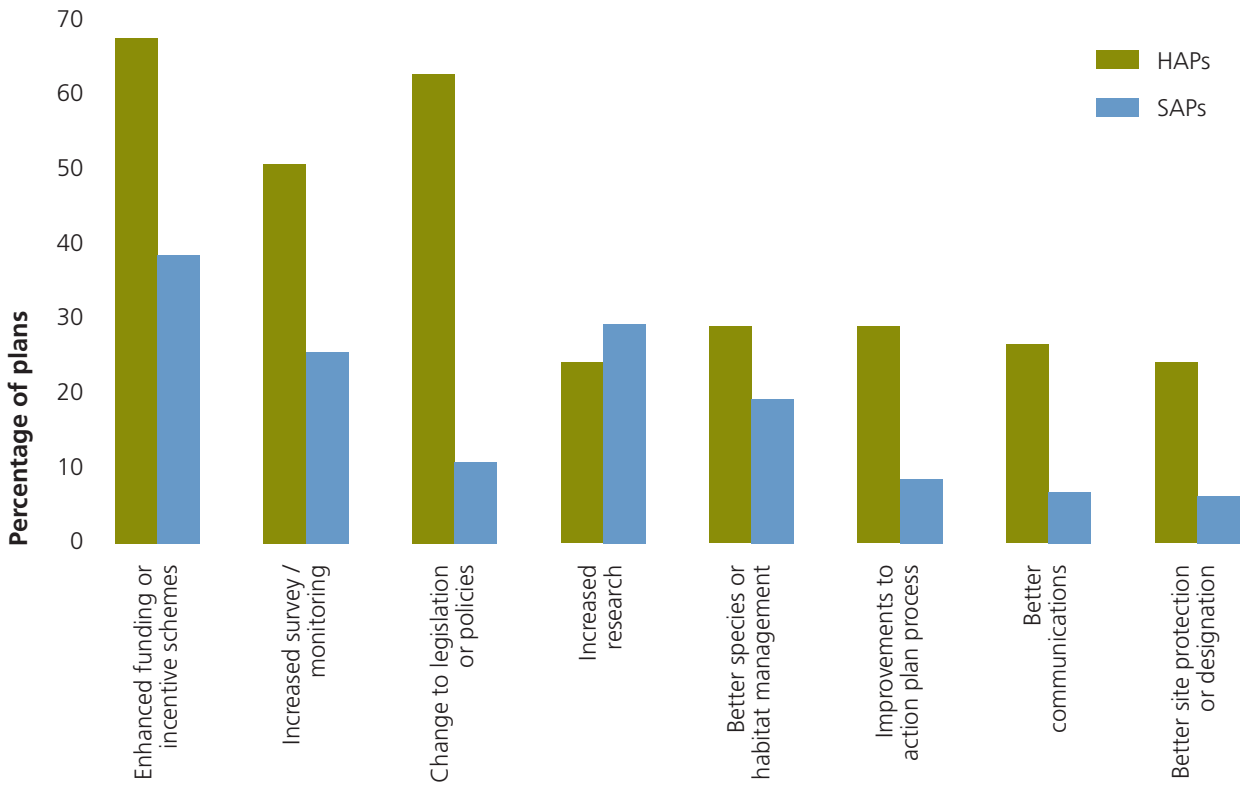


Figure 8: Types of solutions required to overcome constraints to meeting BAP targets

Lead Partners were asked to suggest possible solutions to the constraints they had identified. Figure 8 shows the main categories of solutions suggested, and the proportion of species and habitats to which they applied.

The detailed descriptions of these solutions (rather than the summary categories given here) should be of considerable help to the country biodiversity groups and relevant administrations in implementing or reviewing their biodiversity or environment strategies.

Links between national and local plans

Work by Local Biodiversity Action Plan partnerships is an important complement to the work carried out or co-ordinated by Lead Partners. Results from the 2002 Report suggested that information exchange and contact needed to be improved between these national and local levels.

Lead Partners and LBAP co-ordinators were asked whether contact had improved since 2002. Most Lead Partners felt contact was 'about the same' but 48 or 11% (13 habitats and 35 species) felt it had improved. Lead Partners for only 2 species reported that it had deteriorated. 26 (20%) of LBAP co-ordinators thought contact had improved with only 6 (5%) feeling it was worse than in 2002.

LBAP co-ordinators were asked to give examples[7] of national plans where good contact had been maintained, contact had improved or new contact had been made since 2002. LBAPs listed 130 plans (37 habitats and 93 species) in these categories including 53 where contact was improved or new.

There are therefore some signs of improving contact and the results of the 2005 reporting round will be used to further improve contact between Lead Partners and LBAP co-ordinators.

7 They were not required to list every plan but just give examples. The information obtained is not therefore a comprehensive list of good or improved contact.

Successes

Across the UK, action plans and the partnerships they have generated have been making a difference. In some cases, progress has been slow. In others, the ground work has been put in place for future recovery, or real tangible success has been achieved. All Lead Partners and LBAP co-ordinators were asked to list successes for their plans. Some 539 successes were reported by LBAPs and 1058 successes were reported by Lead Partners. It is impossible to summarise this effectively but the examples below give some indication of the range of activity.

- In **Northern Ireland**: a baseline survey of a rare mining bee *Colletes floralis* was carried out; the common skate was added to the NI Wildlife Order; and 406ha of mixed ashwood was created;
- In **England**: a local village group was formed to further the conservation of the scarlet malachite beetle; the Newcastle LBAP was one of several adopted as supplementary planning guidance; and peat extraction stopped on Hatfield Moors;
- In **Scotland**: £5 million EU LIFE funding was secured for capercaillie work; an upland juniper management booklet has been produced and an Environmental Improvement Plan for 12 important but degraded mesotrophic lochs which will benefit UK BAP plant species has been initiated;
- In **Wales**: an intertidal survey for entire Welsh coastline has been completed; the rare lichen *Cladonia peziziformis* was refound at two sites and the valleys bat group covering 5 LBAP areas was established.

Photo credits

1. Corncrake – Andy Hay (RSPB images.com). Page No 1
2. Heath fritillary – Peter Wakely (English Nature). Page No 4
3. Lesser horseshoe bat – Tony Mitchell-Jones (English Nature). Page No 6
4. Bittern – Andy Hay (RSPB images.com). Page No 8
5. Native pinewood – David Tomlinson (RSPB images.com). Page No 9
6. Deptford pink – Bob Gibbons (Plantlife). Page No 10
7. Coastal saltmarsh – Peter Wakely (English Nature). Page No 11

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan: Highlights from the 2005 reporting round

Corrigendum

1. Page 1, bullet point 3: should read "*38%* of habitats" not 39%
2. Page 3, bullet point 2: should read "Although 17 habitats *(38%)"* not 39%
3. Page 4, paragraph 1: should read "For 224 priority plans (201 species and 23 habitats), it is possible to compare trends between 2002 (and in some cases 1999) and 2005. For other plans this comparison was impossible because the trend was or is unknown. In most cases, the overall trend is unchanged. However, for 48 plans (47 species and 1 habitat) the trend has improved and for 22 (19 species and 3 habitats) it has got worse. For example, in 1999, both capercaillie and red-necked phalarope….etc"

PB 11910

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

www.defra.gov.uk