

## CHAPTER 5

# The Structure of Delivery of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan

- 5.1 This chapter makes recommendations for the development of a UK Biodiversity Partnership and considers the implications for delivery of the UK BAP of the new situation resulting from devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## The Partnership approach

- 5.2 Working in public/voluntary/private sector partnership has been essential to the biodiversity process. Entec's appraisal indicates that 'bringing together, over a short time period, a partnership comprising a very wide range of organisations covering all of the sectors that have a major influence on biodiversity' has been an important success. Some fear this approach may be too bureaucratic. We agree it would benefit from some streamlining or improved co-ordination, but we believe that the fundamental principle of partnership across the board and at all levels remains highly valued.
- 5.3 The UK Biodiversity Group (UKBG) draws its membership from Government departments and the devolved administrations, the statutory conservation agencies (English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Countryside Council for Wales), other relevant statutory bodies (such as the Environment Agency), the voluntary conservation sector, relevant interest groups, the national collections, academia and the business sector. The Membership and Terms of Reference of the UKBG are at Appendix 4. UKBG is serviced by the UK Biodiversity Secretariat in the DETR. It has a number of sub-groups in which the pattern of inclusive membership is replicated.
- 5.4 The 1995 Steering Group Report recommended that, in addition to the co-ordination of action at UK level, there should be biodiversity groups in each of the four countries of the UK. As a result Biodiversity Groups in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were established. Each is chaired by an official in the relevant country administration, serviced in Scotland, England and Northern Ireland by a Secretariat in that administration and in Wales by the Countryside Council for Wales. The Country Groups follow the partnership pattern. They have established their own structures and priorities within the broad framework of the UK BAP. Chapter 6 discusses the work and strategic directions of the Country Groups.

## The implications of devolution

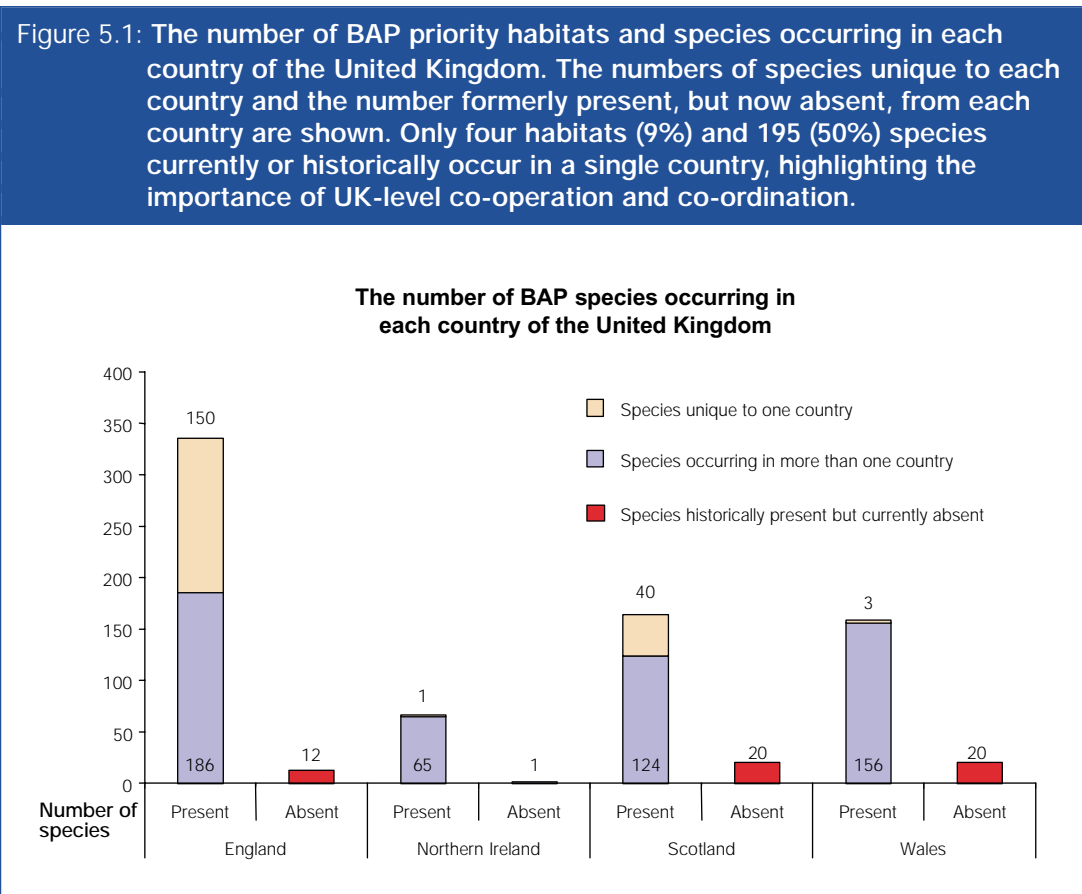
- 5.5 The devolution of powers to Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish administrations has reinforced the importance of the Country Biodiversity Groups in identifying directions and policy instruments because more of the implementation of biodiversity is now at the country level. At the same time, we believe that it must make sense to continue to perform some functions at the UK level for the following reasons:-

- The implementation of biodiversity policy is a direct response to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to which the UK as a whole is bound. The UK BAP sets out an overall approach to implementation of important aspects of the Convention which benefit from handling at the UK level.
- The framework within which biodiversity policy is delivered is significantly influenced by European Union instruments, (such as the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy) and by other international treaties which affect the UK as a whole. Here also a UK approach is often necessary.
- There are other policy issues of common concern, such as those raised by climate change and control of non-native species, where a joint consideration of the issues and exchange of views and experience would be to mutual advantage.



Juniper occurs throughout the UK; declining in GB but thought to be increasing in Northern Ireland.

- Habitat types and species do not recognise administrative boundaries. The graph at Figure 5.1 shows how the current priority species and habitats are distributed across the four countries of the UK. Though each Country Group is responsible for the means of delivery of the actions in the plans in its own area, there are practical and resource advantages in pooling certain efforts across the UK. In particular there is much to be gained by establishing common information systems, to which the whole UK biodiversity partnership can have access, and by seeking to establish common research priorities and programmes.



5.6 We believe that it makes sense to retain UK-wide co-operation whilst recognising that the means of delivery may differ in emphasis and practice from one country to another. At the UK level the aim should be to develop a joint approach to matters of common interest, with appropriate supporting systems, rather than of imposing UK prescriptions, a tendency which may have previously characterised the UK BAP.

5.7 The UKBG considers that the following should be co-ordinated at the UK level:

- **Ensuring that the components of a UK Biodiversity Action Plan implement, as a whole, the appropriate obligations of the Convention on Biological Diversity.**
- **Providing a forum for discussion and agreement of biodiversity policy issues affecting the UK as a whole, or where a consistent UK approach is necessary or advantageous.**
- **Maintaining systems to support common objectives, in particular:**
  - **the selection, implementation and review of a common set of UK Habitat and Species Action Plans.**
  - **the provision of common information and reporting systems and the identification of shared research priorities.**
  - **facilitating the exchange between the four countries of information, experience, guidance and best practice.**

5.8 The current UKBG has served a most useful function. But we believe that we now need to look at organisational arrangements which emphasise devolved responsibilities whilst retaining the elements of the previous arrangements that support the UK-level functions we have identified. We need a group at the UK level which will provide a fully transparent and inclusive partnership able to take an overview of the UK BAP and serve as a sounding board for implementation, a consultative forum for policy development and as a means of overseeing and receiving information from common support and communication systems. There should also be arrangements for regular liaison between the four countries at a number of levels to exchange information, experience and best practice. We make the following recommendations:

- **The relevant Ministers from the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations should meet periodically to consider matters of common concern relating to the conservation of biological diversity.**
- **An extended UK Biodiversity Partnership should replace the current UKBG and meet annually. Membership should include all organisations that participate in the UK BAP at UK and Country levels. It would give the opportunity to exchange information about the activities of the Country Biodiversity Groups, receive reports from sub-groups and consider common support systems.**
- **There should be a small Standing Committee chaired by the Director of Wildlife and Countryside DETR with representation from the Chairs of the four Country Groups and the four statutory agencies as well as from the non-statutory sector – i.e. Biodiversity Challenge, business and industry and farming/land management. The Committee’s central responsibility would be to prepare issues for consideration at the annual meetings of the UK Biodiversity Partnership and maintain continuity between meetings of the Partnership.**
- **Much of the work agreed for UK co-operation should continue to be delivered by sub-groups. We see a continuing role for the Biodiversity Information Group and the Biodiversity Research Working Group, reporting to the UK Biodiversity Partnership. The Targets Group and a Costings sub-group should also continue to meet as appropriate to guide the process of selection, management and review of the common list of Species and Habitat Action Plans. The Standing Committee would maintain a watching brief over the work of the sub-groups between meetings of the Partnership.**
- **The UK Biodiversity Secretariat in the Biodiversity Policy Unit of DETR should service the UK Biodiversity Partnership, the Standing Committee and the sub-groups as appropriate. It should be the focal point for information and communication. The Secretariat should work closely with the Biodiversity Information Service of the JNCC support unit to develop, maintain and effectively utilise the Partnership’s support and information mechanisms. The UK Secretariat should work in close liaison with the Country Secretariats to exchange information and identify relevant matters for UK consideration and action.**

## CHAPTER 6

# The Country Biodiversity Groups

- 6.1 Each of the four Country Groups has identified its own priorities and programmes. Appendix 4 shows the membership and structure of each of the groups. This chapter gives a brief account of the main direction and activities of the four groups.

## The Scottish Biodiversity Group

- 6.2 In Scotland it has been clear from the beginning of the UK biodiversity process that the distinctive Scottish elements of biodiversity could best be delivered by Scottish players. The Scottish Biodiversity Group (SBG) is a broad-based partnership representing government, its agencies (SNH and SEPA), local authorities, voluntary bodies, farmers, fishermen, foresters, business and scientists. Established in 1996, it has moved forward and out-performed original expectations. Progress has been achieved across a wide front and highlighted in the three SBG publications, 'Biodiversity The Way Forward (1997)<sup>14</sup>, the LBAP Development Guidance Manual (1997 and 1998)<sup>15</sup> and 'Action for Scotland's Biodiversity' (2000)<sup>16</sup>. Most significant progress to date has been:

- Engagement with UKBG in developing plans for 184 species and 41 habitats which occur in Scotland (40 species and 6 habitats are unique to Scotland).
- Local Biodiversity Action Plans being developed for all Scottish authorities. The Cairngorms Partnership is developing its own LBAP and the Loch Lomond National Park will have one.
- A series of practical management information leaflets for the agriculture sector to promote a range of 'low cost/no cost' practices and land management measures. Two have been published: Biodiversity on Lowland Arable Farms (June 1999) and Biodiversity on Hill and Upland Farms (March 2000). Two more are in preparation on Croftland and Intensive Grassland.
- A suite of education and awareness materials have been produced by the SBG: 'Biodiversity in a Nutshell', 'A Biodiversity Toolkit' and 'A Tapestry of Life' which is designed as a teaching resource which uses key biodiversity messages and texts to assist the teaching of English in secondary schools.
- The Business and Biodiversity Group has developed a communications strategy for the business community, now coming together in a national campaign. The Group is now to target three sectors, Construction and Development, Utilities and Finance.

<sup>14</sup> Biodiversity the Way Forward (Scottish Office, 1997)

<sup>15</sup> LBAP Development Guidance Manual (CoSLA, SBG – 1997 & 1998)

<sup>16</sup> Action for Scotland's Biodiversity (SBG, 2000)

- 6.3 The SBG is considering its direction to reflect Scotland's particular requirements following devolution. The policy context of biodiversity in Scotland has recently been clearly set within the Government's overall policies for sustainable development. The Ministerial Group on sustainable Scotland has endorsed the SBG's 10 Point Action Plan to build biodiversity across the range and make biodiversity relevant to all. This will also focus on the benefit and potential that a healthy natural heritage can bring to the socio-economic health of Scotland. This is particularly important in the context of the EU biodiversity strategy which seeks to integrate promotion of biodiversity in all other policy areas and will emphasise in particular that the biodiversity process is not just about the conservation of threatened species and habitats.



Conserving and enhancing biodiversity on farm and croft land should be seen as an essential component of good farming.

- 6.4 The SBG has invested heavily in improving communications and data sharing through its own web site, [www.Scotland.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.Scotland.gov.uk/biodiversity) and the development of the Scottish Biodiversity Information System. The information system was initially designed to make biodiversity data available and relevant to staff, such as the Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department's agricultural officers and will in due course be further developed for LBAP practitioners. It will be a portal to the UK Biodiversity web site as well as the National Biodiversity Network.
- 6.5 The Scottish Executive Trunk Road Biodiversity Action Plan (TRBAP) is one of the first BAPs to be produced for a specific business sector. The TRBAP builds on other initiatives like the trunk road landscape policy document 'Cost Effective Landscape: Learning from Nature' and the Landscape Action Plans being developed to describe and direct landscape activities throughout the Scottish Trunk Road network. The principles and practical applications and guidance contained in the associated toolkit will be extended to local road systems.

## The England Biodiversity Group

- 6.6 The England Biodiversity Group has brought together the principal organisations responsible for influencing the implementation of the BAP in England and maintained an overview of BAP developments. It has sub-groups looking at public awareness (commissioning market research to identify attitudes to and understanding of biodiversity in the education and farming sectors), and local issues (facilitating the development of

Local Biodiversity Action Plans). A first workshop for English Local Biodiversity Action Plan co-ordinators was held in January 2000. It provided an opportunity for exchange of information, knowledge and best practice and is to be repeated in May 2001. We anticipate that significant progress will be made in encouraging and supporting LBAPs as a result of English Nature's appointments of an LBAP co-ordinator based in the Biodiversity Policy Unit in DETR and an LBAP facilitator in the Wildlife Trusts.

- 6.7 It is clear that one of the most important issues for England is the extent to which biodiversity can be delivered by the emerging regional structures, such as the Regional Development Agencies and the Regional Chambers. The England Group has established a sub-group to look at these matters and to advise on how the UK BAP can be supported in the English Regions through the exchange of best practice, the establishment of regional BAP targets and the integration of biodiversity concerns into regional organisations. The sub-group aims to facilitate the process that has already begun, where biodiversity is incorporated into regional initiatives such as Regional Planning Guidance and the emerging regional sustainability frameworks. An early example is of habitat re-creation targets incorporated into the new South-West Regional Planning Guidance. It will also look at how national bodies such as English Nature, the Environment Agency, FRCA and the Forestry Commission can best operate at a regional scale to achieve biodiversity goals.
- 6.8 In 2000 there were a number of significant developments for biodiversity in England. The passage of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000<sup>17</sup> established a new biodiversity duty for Government Departments and Ministers which enshrines the current UK BAP policy and process into law. The Government's Rural White Paper<sup>18</sup> stated that an England Biodiversity Strategy would be prepared in consultation with the England Biodiversity Group. This is a significant opportunity to establish a clear strategic direction, priorities and monitoring framework for biodiversity in England.



The Countryside and Rights of Way Act increased protection for SSSI's like this ash woodland at Rodney Stoke Somerset.

<sup>17</sup> Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (HMSO, 2000)

<sup>18</sup> 'Our Countryside: The Future – A Fair Deal for Rural England' (DETR, 2000)

- 6.9 The publication in Spring 2000 of the Green Ministers' Biodiversity Checklist<sup>19</sup> was an important first step in encouraging all Government Departments and their Agencies to take account of biodiversity as part of their response to sustainable development in the management of their own estates and in delivering policies and programmes.

## The Wales Biodiversity Group

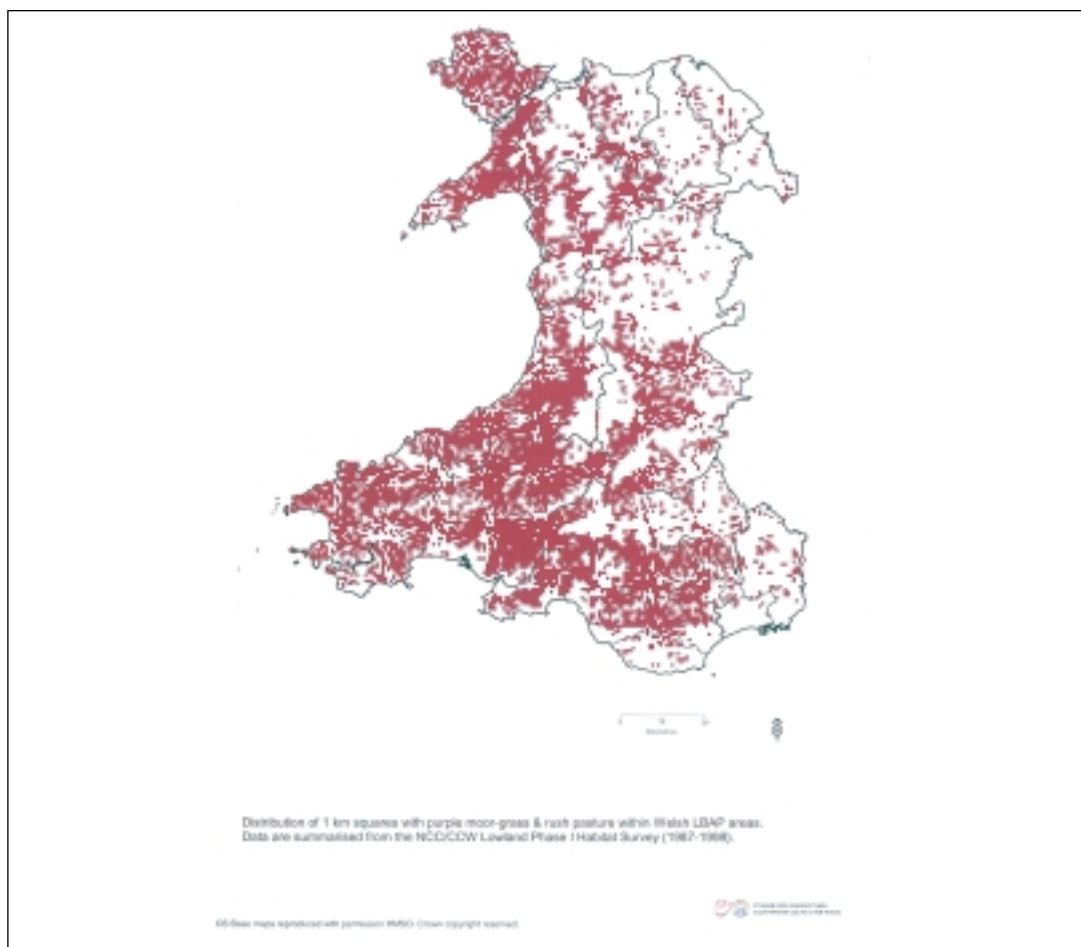
- 6.10 Following its formation in October 1996, the WBG established four groups covering local issues, BAP actions and targets, public awareness and information needs. The work of the Welsh Local Issues Advisory Group has been a big success – with the preparation of Welsh language versions of the five LBAP Guidance Notes<sup>20</sup>, a supplement to Guidance Note 3 focusing on the *Context for LBAPs in Wales* and a guidance note on links between biodiversity and other local initiatives. The Group also organises an annual thematic workshop for LBAP practitioners in Wales to exchange best practice and identify important future work. Local partnerships rose to a Ministerial challenge to prepare LBAPs for every part of Wales by 2000. There are now active LBAP groups covering all 25 Unitary Authorities or National Parks in Wales.
- 6.11 Members of the Actions and Targets sub-group published *Action for Wildlife* (CCW, 1997)<sup>21</sup> – a bilingual compilation of pen pictures describing the status of each of the Tranche 1 priority habitats and species found in Wales. Subsequent work has sought to help Welsh LBAPs set appropriate targets for priority habitats. A parallel initiative, led by the RSPB, has provided a detailed electronic database of all priority and Red Data Book species in Wales broken down by LBAP, Unitary Authority and vice-county areas. Both initiatives provide a scientific basis for biodiversity action planning at a local level.
- 6.12 Action to raise awareness of biodiversity and the UK BAP in Wales has led to the planned launch in 2001 of a new journal, *Natur Cymru*, to disseminate wildlife news and the results of conservation action. The journal aims to capture and build upon the audience of the much-loved, *Nature in Wales*, which first appeared in the 1950s. Awareness raising and improved access to information will also be at the heart of the WBG website, due to be launched in 2001.
- 6.13 Devolution, the National Assembly for Wales' Sustainable Development Scheme and the enactment of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 ensure an important role for the Wales Biodiversity Group in the future. The Assembly is developing sustainability appraisal toolkits to support its work on sustainable development and envisages a central role for the Group in developing the biodiversity elements. Improved resources have already led to a commitment by the Group to appoint a dedicated full-time LBAP facilitator to aid the rapidly expanding work of the Welsh LBAPs and CCW is contributing £660,000 over two years to the preparation and implementation of LBAPs in Wales. Future challenges for WBG include the development of a marine emphasis, better information handling and reporting capabilities and stronger links with industry and the business sector.

19 'Making biodiversity happen across Government: Green Ministers biodiversity checklist' (DETR, 2000)

20 Welsh LBAP Guidance Notes: 1-5 (LGMB, UKBG – 1998)

21 *Action for Wildlife* (CCW, 1997)





Breakdown of habitat targets in Wales

## The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group

- 6.14 From its inception, the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group (NIBG), which comprises nominees of local government, the business and farming communities, the voluntary sector and central government, took the view that its priority was to produce a regional strategy for Northern Ireland which would subsume, but go beyond, the implementation of the UK Action Plan. It recognised that such a strategy would provide an opportunity to identify priorities and set targets for action which took into account the abundance, distribution and status of species and habitats in Ireland as a geographical whole as well as those priority species in the UK Plan for which Northern Ireland has a special responsibility.
- 6.15 The NIBG consulted widely in 1999/2000 on a draft document, which identified the main features of biodiversity in Northern Ireland and the main factors affecting it; and which proposed wide-ranging measures to support the conservation of Northern Ireland biodiversity for a 15-year period. The Group received many helpful and encouraging comments which resulted in significant revisions to the original proposals.
- 6.16 The NIBG subsequently produced a report<sup>22</sup> setting out its recommendations on how best to sustain Northern Ireland's biodiversity. The report describes the importance of diversity of habitats and species in both local and international terms; it looks at the every-day activities which affect biodiversity; and it suggests the steps which should be taken to deal

<sup>22</sup> Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group Recommendations (October 2000)

with those issues. The document clearly places biodiversity in a sustainable development context and provides a basis for action not only by statutory bodies but also the wider community. The report includes 76 recommendations to government. Against each of the recommendations it suggests lead government bodies and the potential for involvement of other key sectors, including local government, museums, universities, voluntary environment groups, land managers, and business and industry. The recommendations, in addition to those of a general nature, are grouped in sections covering:



- Agricultural systems and support
- Forestry and woodland management
- Coastal and marine management
- Water use and management
- Construction and development
- Tourism and recreation
- Peatland management
- Introduced species and genetic material
- Protecting special areas for biodiversity
- Protecting priority habitats and species
- Research and monitoring
- Knowledge, understanding and participation

A habitat action plan for Montane heath is proposed for the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy.

The recommendations are being examined by relevant departments. The Northern Ireland Executive is committed to publishing a Biodiversity Strategy in 2001.

## CHAPTER 7

# The Habitat and Species Action Plans

7.1 This chapter describes the action planning process and the costing of Action Plans.

## Establishment of the Action Plans

7.2 **The completion of the 391 individual Species Action Plans and 45 Habitat Action Plans has been one of the great successes of the biodiversity process. It has only been possible because of the enormous efforts of a great many people from a wide range of sectors.**

7.3 The priority species and habitats to be covered by Action Plans were selected under the guidance of the Targets Group in accordance with criteria set out in the 1995 Steering Group report.

### Criteria for the selection of priority species and habitats in the 1995 Steering Group report

#### Species

- Numbers or range declined substantially in recent years;
- Endemic;
- Under a high degree of threat internationally;
- Covered by relevant conventions, directives and legislation.

#### Habitats

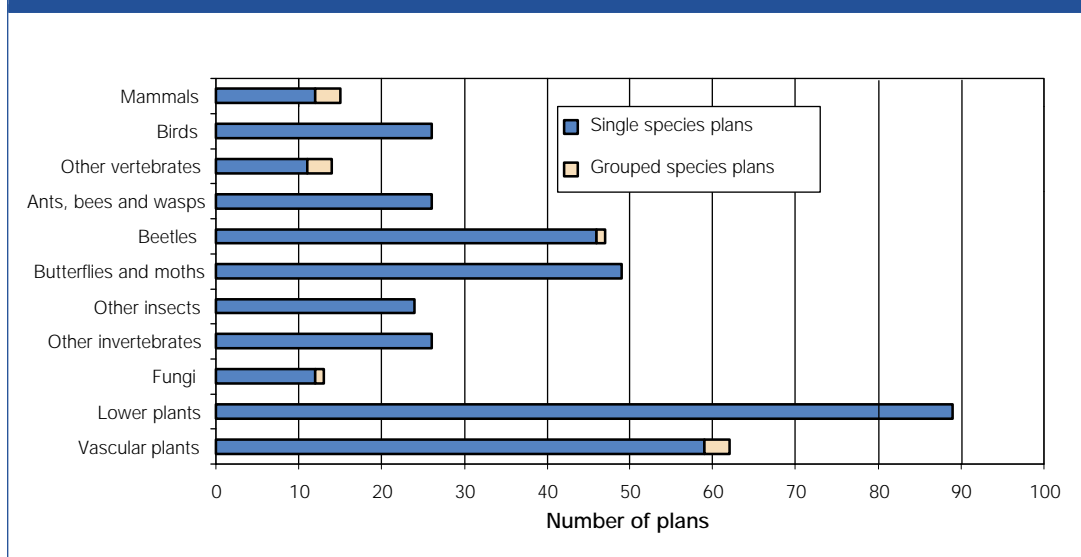
- Habitats where UK has international obligations;
- Habitats at risk, e.g. those with a high rate of decline, or which are rare;
- Areas, especially marine which may be functionally critical;
- Areas important for key species.



The action plan process has highlighted the threats to nearly 90 species of lower plants.

7.4 The Targets Group co-ordinated the process of Action Plan preparation. Guidance Notes for Lead Partners<sup>23</sup> were prepared setting out advice on work planning, partnership, monitoring and review and funding. The notes advised that establishment of Action Plan Steering Groups, comprising the principal actors for implementation, would be central to success. Regular workshops have been held to give Lead Partners the opportunity to exchange experience and discuss issues of common concern.

Figure 7.1: Number of species plans representing each taxonomic group. The species action plans cover a broad spectrum of animal and plant groups. Eleven of the 391 species action plans are for groups of species whose conservation is best achieved through a concerted approach (e.g. commercial fish); together these plans cover a total of 95 species.



7.5 The main hallmarks of the Action Plan approach are:

- Each is agreed through a consultative process involving the organisations whose actions and policies could influence the status of the species or habitat concerned.
- Actions are assigned to members of the partnership who are principally responsible for delivery.
- Measurable, time-limited targets are identified.
- A Lead Partner (for species) and a Lead Statutory Agency (for habitats) is identified for each plan as well as a Contact Point within Government. (Appendix 5 shows the Lead Partners and Agencies and the numbers of plans which they lead).
- Wherever possible the plans are costed.

23 Guidance Notes for Lead Partners (DETR, 1999)

## The costs of Action Plans

- 7.6 Estimates of the costs of implementation were made under the supervision of a Costings sub-group of the Targets Group for all the Species and Habitat Action Plans. Following publication of the final plans in October 1999, a summary report was published<sup>24</sup> which gave a full account of the means by which the costs were estimated, the assumptions made and the total estimated additional costs of all the plans. The total extra annual costs of the plans throughout the UK (including administration and private – i.e. mainly voluntary – sector costs) was estimated to be £86.5m per annum in the first period up to 2004 and £149.7m per annum in the second period up to 2013.
- 7.7 The Costings sub-group supervised a DETR-funded research contract to Baker, Shepherd, Gillespie in 2000. It aimed to identify, on a sample of plans, the actual costs of implementation compared with the estimates; to identify the main funding sources for the plans; and to recommend a methodology for the continuous monitoring of costs. A summary of the research report, which is unpublished at the time of writing, is at Appendix 7.
- 7.8 Broadly the research findings show substantial differences between the estimated and reported costs for most of the sample Action Plans. Some of the differences can be explained by the inevitable uncertainties contained in the estimated costs, including assumptions about the timing of actions. More or less progress than anticipated can explain some of the higher or lower cost findings. Major changes in the type and extent of the actions carried out are also important for some of the sample and, where actions have been carried out for other policy purposes, the costs attributable only to the Action Plans can be reduced significantly. Further work would be needed to establish whether the costs of the Action Plans overall are likely to be significantly different from those predicted.
- 7.9 The research has shown a very wide divergence in recorded expenditure between Action Plans. For example, recorded costs between 1996/7 and 2000/01 for the sample HAPs ranged from £226,000 for Seagrass Beds to £10.4 million for Upland Oakwood. For SAPs they ranged from £5,112 for Green Shield Moss to £2.1 million for Corncrake.
- 7.10 The statutory sector has provided most of the funding required to implement the Action Plans mainly through agri-environment and forestry programmes. For some plans (including Black Grouse and Upland Heath) EU Structural Funds have also been significant. The statutory conservation and environment agencies have been major providers of grants to NGO Lead Partners (English Nature for instance spends £100,000 annually on its Biodiversity Grant Scheme and an additional £500,000 on contribution contracts to the voluntary sector). NGOs have contributed substantially from their own resources to the implementation of the plans and have attracted external funding from the private sector, the National Lottery and the Landfill Tax particularly to actions related to habitat management/protection and surveying/monitoring. For example the Heritage Lottery Fund has allocated £112m to countryside and nature conservation projects of which the major proportion support biodiversity.

<sup>24</sup> 'UK Biodiversity Group Tranche I and II Action Plans: Cost estimates – a summary report' (English Nature, 2000)



The EU Life (Nature) Programme helped safeguard and enhance core areas of the bittern's reedbed habitat.

- 7.11 The research shows that collection and reporting of Action Plan expenditure has been haphazard. In the short term there is a need to consider further how far and in what detail the costs of plan implementation should be monitored. Increasingly, it is our aim that biodiversity objectives will be achieved through adjustments to other expenditure programmes. Effective implementation of action plans will continue to require efficient work planning with transparent estimation and allocation of planned expenditure so that the distribution of costs between specific conservation action and other policy mechanisms can be clearly identified. **In the light of the research report, the Costings sub-group should consider further what advice it can give to lead partners for the planning and monitoring of expenditure and work with the Biodiversity Information Group to ensure that relevant reporting of costs is included in the main Action Plan reporting framework.**