

‘Sustaining the variety of life’: 5 years of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan

Report of the UK Biodiversity Group to the UK
Government, the Scottish Executive, the National
Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Executive

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To the Deputy Prime Minister,
the Rt Hon John Prescott MP, Sue Essex AM,
Assembly Minister for the Environment, Wales;
Sam Galbraith MSP, Minister for Environment,
Sport & Culture, Scotland; and Sam Foster,
MLA, Minister of the Environment,
Northern Ireland.

Dear Deputy Prime Minister and Ministers of the Devolved Administration

I am pleased to send you this report, which gives an account of progress with the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, draws conclusions and makes recommendations for the future. The report was prepared by the UK Biodiversity Group (UKBG), which I chair and which includes representatives of the public, private and voluntary sectors. In 1995, a specially formed Steering Group set out a long-term approach to achieving the aims of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. In its response accepting the Steering Group recommendations, the previous Government asked the UKBG to prepare a report on progress after five years. This Millennium Biodiversity Report responds to that request.

In 1994, *Biodiversity: the UK Action Plan* stated:

“No organism lives in isolation from other living things and each has its own way of life which contributes to the balance of nature. The inter-dependence and successful functioning of all these parts is a key contributory factor to the healthiness of the planet as a whole. If we continue to pollute the atmosphere, contaminate land and water and degrade our ecosystems by, for example destroying forests, wetlands and marine environments, then the planet will suffer accordingly. The totality of the problem is addressed by the Sustainable Development Strategy, but the harmonious and healthy functioning of all the organisms which constitute òlufeí is the concern of the Biodiversity Convention, and hence of this plan”.

I believe this statement still encapsulates the purpose of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. And I hope that this progress report remains faithful to that central purpose as it reflects past achievements and suggests responses to continuing and new challenges. In the past five years we have seen:

- a broadening and deepening of understanding of the concept of sustainable development and the part that the conservation of biological diversity plays in it, through all sectors of society;
- the development and a start on implementation of 436 Action Plans for priority species and habitats, drawing in a broad and diverse partnership of organisations and achieving some notable early successes;
- an encouraging amount of energetic and productive action at local level in the preparation and implementation of local biodiversity action plans.

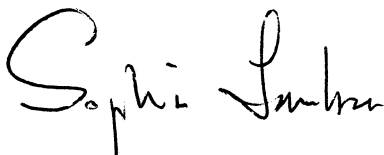
As a group, we continue to have strong faith in the process of identifying specific biological objectives for priority habitats and species and taking targeted action to meet these objectives. The individual action plans provide a framework for the organisation of action and the prioritisation of resources; but they also serve to raise general political and public awareness. Moreover, their progress provides indicators of the sustainability of a whole range of policies and programmes affecting biodiversity – including those dealing with agriculture, forestry and water.

Many of the action plan partnerships have made good progress in the initial stages of implementing their plans. As the plans are mainly by their nature long-term, we are pleased that even after such a short time some of the Lead Partners and Agencies have been able to report good progress and creditable successes. The implementation of some of the later plans has only just started, however, and over the next five years the implementation of all the plans will be the main challenge. All partnerships will need to be aware of both continuing and new threats and influences affecting their species or habitats, including longer term trends such as climate change. Renewed commitment and effort may be needed if the partnerships are to tackle them successfully and help forge a more sustainable future.

We know that the conservation of biodiversity cannot be delivered through the action plans alone. So this report also considers the broad sweep of policies and influences affecting biodiversity in the UK and identifies some of the important challenges faced by policy makers and society as a whole.

The report suggests that, whilst the current biodiversity process and broad directions should continue and be reinforced, we have reached a new phase, particularly in the organisation of delivery. The period covered by this report has seen constitutional changes as a result of devolution which have accentuated the role of the administrations and partnerships in the four countries of the UK in whose hands now rest the main instruments of implementation. The importance of these changes is such that we recommend a new arrangement with a lighter touch for co-ordination of the process at the UK level. We recommend the formation of a broader, more inclusive UK Biodiversity Partnership, to replace the UKBG, which would meet annually and concentrate only on those matters that benefit from UK-wide co-operation and the issues of common concern. We are confident that as the baton of responsibility for co-ordinating delivery is passed to the Country administrations there will no let-up in pace.

In summary, although good progress is being made, it is clear there are substantial challenges ahead. On behalf of the UKBG, I commend this report to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sophia Lambert". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sophia Lambert
Chair of the UK Biodiversity Group

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Acknowledgements

The UK Biodiversity Group is grateful to its Editorial Management Group, which has compiled this report, and the extensive network of colleagues, too numerous to mention, whom they have called on in support.

We are particularly grateful to the individuals in the Habitat and Species Action Plan Lead Partners and Agencies who, in 1999, completed the report and assessment forms that provided the basic information for much of the analysis in this report.

*I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!*

Robert Burns. To a Mouse, On turning her up in her nest with the plough, November, 1785.

Biological diversity – ‘Biodiversity’ – is the variety of life on earth. It is nature’s variety of species, habitats and whole ecological systems. Human society’s interaction with biodiversity shows whether our economic and social development is sustainable.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Where we are now

- 1.1 The diversity of our wild species, the extent and quality of their habitats and the sustained health of their populations affect everyone. We rely on biodiversity for many economic benefits and for our health and well-being. The moral and spiritual reasons for conserving biodiversity cannot be readily quantified, but its aesthetic qualities – the richness and beauty of wild places and creatures – are highly valued. Not least, we owe it to future generations to leave a world no less rich than the one we now inhabit.
- 1.2 At the June 1992 Rio Earth Summit over 150 Governments signed the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. A near-decade has now passed and we are approaching the World Summit on Sustainable Development (which will be held to mark the 10th anniversary of Rio). This report will show that important steps have been taken in the UK to realise the Earth Summit’s vision for biodiversity.

Article 6A of the Convention on Biological Diversity (the CBD) requires each contracting party :

‘to develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, or to adapt for this purpose existing strategies, plans or programmes which shall reflect, inter alia, the measures set out in this Convention relevant to the Contracting Party concerned.’

- 1.3 In response, the UK Government published, in January 1994, *Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan*¹. The UK was one of the first countries to produce a strategy, building on our world-renowned natural history and conservation experience and scientific understanding. The Action Plan set out an ambitious vision which established the goals, principles and objectives for conserving biodiversity. They remain the cornerstones of current policy.
- 1.4 The Action Plan highlighted the economic value of biodiversity for food, clothing and medicines. It identified the values of ecosystems such as wetlands for waste water treatments, and flood plains and coastal dunes for natural flood and erosion control. It declared that it is in society’s interests to maintain the genetic diversity of wild plants and animals as a gene pool for future discoveries and applications. The Plan responded to the Convention’s emphasis on the sustainable use of biodiversity by identifying the ways in

¹ *‘Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan’* (HMSO, 1994)

which society can and should work in harmony with nature. It stressed that consideration of the implications for biodiversity should be integrated into all sectors of economic and social activity, as an important component of sustainable development and as a principal measure of its success.

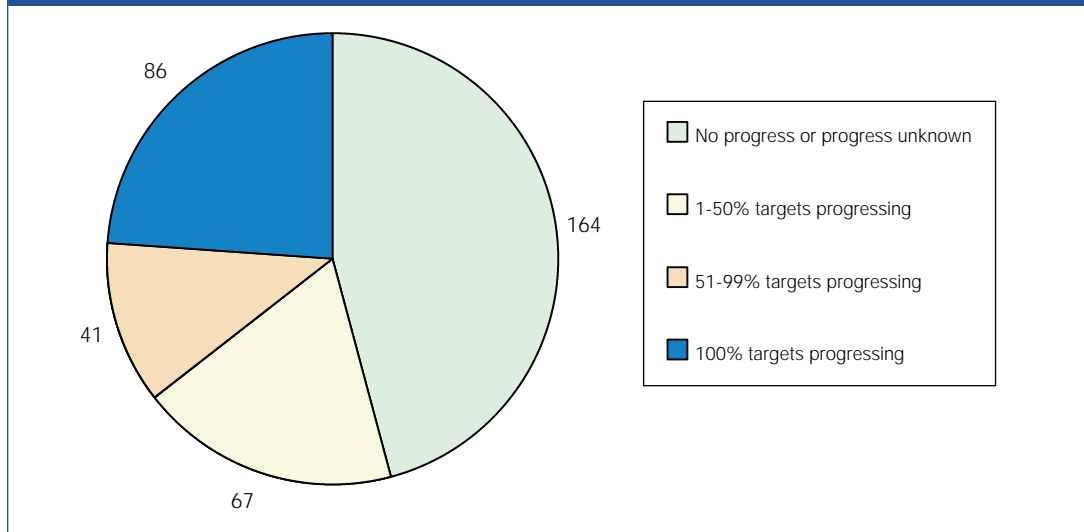


Flood plains provide natural defences. Development planning for such areas should sustain their natural processes.

- 1.5 In pursuance of the Action Plan, in 1995 the UK Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group set out a long-term approach to achieving the aims of the UK BAP². The identification of particular species and habitats, for which targeted action plans were to be prepared, was intended to serve as a focus for policy change and resource allocation and as a means to identify trends and measure achievements. But the plan also aimed to bring about a fundamental change in attitudes and policies, recognising that the quality of the country's biodiversity, wherever it occurs, is an indicator of sustainable development.
- 1.6 The current report covers the first five years of the UK BAP. It will contribute to the UK's reporting of its implementation of the CBD to the next Conference of the Parties in 2002 (COP6), which will also cover implementation measures undertaken through mechanisms other than the UK BAP. For example the management of biodiversity in the overseas territories is the responsibility of the Overseas Territories' Governments and Administrations.
- 1.7 This report does not underestimate the scale of the continuing task, but we have already seen some significant achievements, including:
 - A unique and highly successful public/voluntary/private sector partnership established to take forward the UK BAP.
 - Drawing up of 391 individual Species Action Plans (SAPs) and 45 individual Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) for the species and habitats most at risk in the UK.
 - Despite the short period for implementation, 54% of HAPs and SAPs show progress towards their targets. 33 priority species and 5 priority habitats are showing signs of recovery; 58 species and one habitat are thought to be stable.

² 'Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report – Volumes 1 & 2' (HMSO, 1995)

Figure 1.1: From 1999 data, the number of action plans progressing towards their targets, based on 358 reports from lead partners. E.g. In 86 (24%) plans there has been progress towards 100% of targets. Overall, there has been at least some progress in 194 (54%) plans.



- Preparation and implementation of around 160 Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) covering 100% of Scotland and Wales and the majority of England.
 - Major wildlife legislation in England and Wales – the first for almost 20 years – which incorporates the Biodiversity Convention into domestic law.
 - Consultation in Scotland and Northern Ireland on proposals to improve the protection and management of SSSIs/ASSIs.
 - A continuing increase in active national and local biodiversity partnerships, for example 243 separate organisations are involved in 191 HAP/SAP steering groups.
 - Establishment of the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Trust to provide a basis for the development of a comprehensive web-based information source.
 - Public membership of 10 leading biodiversity conservation organisations rose by 18% from 1995–2000, to a total of 4.99 million memberships.
- 1.8 But there is much more to be done. We must consolidate and reinforce the directions set by the original UK BAP. We must also identify new ways of delivering our overall objectives taking into account recent developments including the constitutional changes brought by devolution in 1999. We believe that, overall, we need:–
- **To translate the effort of developing action plans into effective action on the ground.** The reports of the Action Plans show that enormous effort is already being put into implementation and there have been significant successes. But 43 priority species and one priority habitat are still reported to be in decline. And frustrations remain, particularly in acquiring sufficient information to understand whether the biological status of the species or habitats is improving and in securing resources. It is essential to recognise that the conservation of biodiversity will require long-term effort before we can measure real biological achievements in many cases.

- *We should continue to pursue the targeted Action Plan approach, maintaining the impetus for implementation and identifying ways of improving efficiency and removing obstacles to action.*
- **To increase efforts to make biodiversity a mainstream consideration in the policies and practices of all sectors.** A start has been made to recognise the implications for biodiversity in the policies and practices of central and local government, their agencies and in many of the larger companies. But it is not yet central to most areas of life and the countervailing pressures are great. Effective integration across the board must be achieved if biodiversity is to be at the heart of sustainable development.



The sustainable harvesting of marine species presents a major challenge.

- *We should use the biodiversity partnership to encourage integration of biodiversity into policies and programmes as part of the overall objective of sustainable development.*
- **To recognise, encourage and facilitate the contribution made by Local Biodiversity Action Plans.** It is at the local level where most individuals and organisations can become involved and excited by biodiversity. Here we can make the fundamental changes in lifestyle necessary to achieve real sustainable development. The process must be two-way – 'bottom-up' as well as 'top-down' – and we are now improving communications between national objectives and local delivery.



Local biodiversity action plans provide the opportunity for public involvement and education.

- *We should encourage the expansion of LBAP coverage and develop effective mechanisms for them to report on their own results and contribute to national goals.*
 - **To build on the opportunities of internet technology to facilitate communication and make information available.** The National Biodiversity Network is an essential tool for the collation and dissemination of biodiversity information. Other national information systems such as the UK BAP web site (www.ukbap.org.uk) will complement the NBN.
 - *We should press ahead with the development of the NBN and support the development of more comprehensive and up-to-date information sources and interactive reporting mechanisms for the whole biodiversity partnership.*
 - **To ensure that our concepts of biodiversity conservation do not stand still.** Increases in scientific understanding, the results of monitoring and review and appreciation of society's perceptions and attitudes should all continue to influence our view of biodiversity priorities. Forces beyond our immediate control, such as climate change, will increasingly affect our response. We must be alert to such factors to ensure our approach continues to be effective and relevant in the longer term.
 - *We should ensure that the UK BAP retains a flexible and dynamic framework to respond to new knowledge and changing pressures.*
- 1.9 These, and the other recommendations and conclusions contained in this report, are brought together in Appendix 1. In many cases, it will be for the Country Biodiversity Groups to consider how the issues can be taken forward, either nationally or locally. Others remain appropriate for co-ordination at the UK level.

CHAPTER 2

Milestones in the Development of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan

- 2.1 This chapter sets out in more detail the history of the UK BAP and describes the sources of information that have fed into the current report.
- 2.2 Development of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan can be tracked from the original *Biodiversity: the UK Action Plan 1994*, through the *Steering Group Report 1995* and the *Government Response 1996*, the *Tranche 1 Species and Habitat Action Plans 1995* and the successive volumes of *Tranche 2 Species and Habitat Action Plans, 1996-99*.³
- 2.3 Following publication of the UK BAP, a UK Steering Group was set up. It was chaired by the then Department of the Environment (DOE), with members drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Sub-groups were set up to look more closely at targets, data requirements, public awareness and local action. Although chaired by DOE, the steering group was an independent partnership with its own voice.
- 2.4 In December 1995 the Steering Group published *Biodiversity: the UK Steering Group Report, Volume 1: Meeting the Rio Challenge* and *Volume 2: Action Plans*. The first volume established criteria for the selection of species and habitat types of conservation concern and the second volume contained costed Action Plans for 116 priority species and 14 priority habitats. It recommended that Action Plans be prepared for further priority species and habitats and that delivery should be co-ordinated and monitored by a UK Group. The further plans were subsequently published so that, by October 1999 a total of 391 Species and 45 Habitat Action Plans were in place. Appendix 2 lists the UK BAP publications.
- 2.5 The Government published a response to the Steering Group Report in May 1996 (Cm 3260). It wholeheartedly welcomed the Report and accepted its main recommendations. The UK Biodiversity Group (UKBG) was established as a successor to the Steering Group, serviced by a Biodiversity Secretariat based in DOE. The Government asked the UKBG to produce a report every five years.
- 2.6 The current report responds to that request. It gives an account of the action the UKBG has identified, overseen and co-ordinated in pursuit of the objectives established for the biodiversity process in the UK. It also analyses reported progress on the Species Action Plans (SAPs) and Habitat Action Plans (HAPs).
- 2.7 The UKBG and its sub-groups have drawn on research, survey, analysis and other material to support its findings and recommendations. Principally, these sources have been:
 - 358 Reports from the Lead Partners and Agencies⁴ of the SAPs and HAPs made in September/October 1999.

³ Appendix 2 gives a full list of the relevant publications, identifying those that can be found on the UKBAP website, www.ukbap.org.uk

⁴ Except where separately identified, references in this report to 'Lead Partners' generally also refer to the statutory Lead Agencies. Together these organisations from both voluntary and statutory sectors have taken the lead in the steering groups for implementation of the individual Action Plans.

- An independent evaluation of progress by outside consultants, Entec UK Ltd, of the biodiversity process⁵
- Research comparing the actual costs of implementing the Action Plans compared with the predicted costs based on a sample of Tranche 1 Action Plans undertaken by Baker, Shepherd, Gillespie⁶.
- Information gathered from co-ordinators of Local Biodiversity Action Plans, including by a survey of LBAPs in England in autumn 2000.

2.8 Information has also been drawn from other sources such as the Countryside Surveys 2000⁷, the Country Biodiversity Groups in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the work of the UKBG sub-groups, and other research. We have also had regard to the recommendations of Select Committees of the House of Lords⁸ and the House of Commons⁹. We have taken account of changes in policies and practice and international developments which have had, or may in future have implications for UK biodiversity.

UK Biodiversity Website

The biodiversity website has aimed to deliver guidance and information to those involved in national and local implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, particularly the 436 published Action Plans.

In Spring 2001 an upgraded version of the website (www.ukbap.org.uk) will be launched, giving improved access to information for everyone involved and help raise awareness of biodiversity and the UK BAP across a wider public audience. It will be dynamic and searchable.

Priorities for the website are:

- To support local, regional and national implementation of the UK BAP and SAP/HAP process;
- To raise awareness of 'Biodiversity' and the UK BAP across a wider public audience;
- To improve accessibility of the national Action Plans, and the Lead Partner reporting and LBAP databases with search and reporting options to support implementation at different geographical and administrative scales;
- To provide access to a database of contact information to facilitate effective communication between individuals and organisations involved in implementation;
- To link to related websites e.g. those of the country groups, Countryside Survey 2000, National Biodiversity Network and the CBD Clearing House Mechanism.

5 'Millennium Biodiversity Report – Independent Evaluation of Progress' (Entec UK Ltd, 2000)

6 'An Initial Investigation of the Reported Costs of Implementing the UK Biodiversity Action Plans' (Baker, Shepherd & Gillespie – unpublished)

7 'Accounting for Nature: assessing habitats in the UK countryside' Countryside Survey 2000 (DETR, 2000)

8 'House of Lords European Communities Select Committee's report on Biodiversity in the European Union' (HMSO, 2000)

9 '20th Report of the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee: UK biodiversity' (HMSO 2000)

CHAPTER 3

The UK Biodiversity Policy Framework

- 3.1 This chapter describes developments in international and national legislation and strategies which influence UK biodiversity policy.

The European context.

- 3.2 The Bern Convention on the conservation of habitats and species (1979) was the first significant step towards an agreed approach to conservation in Europe. The Bonn Convention, through its daughter agreements on species such as bats, birds and cetaceans has also provided a framework for international co-operation on the conservation of migratory species. Perhaps most significant for nature conservation was the adoption in 1992 and subsequent implementation of the **EU Habitats Directive**¹⁰. As well as enshrining the Bern Convention's species protection provisions, the Directive requires the selection and designation of Special Areas of Conservation for certain habitat types and species. These, together with the Special Protection Areas of the **EU Wild Birds Directive**¹¹, will form a network of sites known as Natura 2000 across the European Union.
- 3.3 The site selection process requires co-ordination at the EU level which has involved a number of Member States, including the UK, in an iterative process of site identification and submission to the European Commission. The EU is still some way from having established the full network. Nonetheless the selection of BAP priority habitat types and species was guided in part by the species and habitats listed in the two Directives and the protection afforded to the 499 prospective candidate SACs and 230 SPAs, covering 2.2m ha and 1.1m ha respectively, which so far forms the UK contribution to Natura 2000.
- 3.4 In 1998, during the UK Presidency of the EU, the Council of Ministers endorsed the EU Biodiversity Strategy. This strategy set the framework by which the Commission was asked to develop integrated biodiversity action plans for the agriculture, fisheries, natural resources and development and economic co-operation sectors. These sectoral action plans are expected to be published in Spring 2001. They should make an essential contribution to the process of adjusting EU policies to take account of biodiversity as an element of sustainable development. This is particularly important in the agricultural and fisheries sectors where the institutional and regulatory framework for activity by Member States is almost exclusively a matter of EU competence. **We would expect the UK to continue to play an active part in ensuring that the EU strategy is implemented fully and effectively and in monitoring its progress.**

¹⁰ EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC, 1992)

¹¹ EU Wild Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC, 1979)

- 3.5 Since 1996 the Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS)¹² has become increasingly important in reflecting and implementing the requirements of the CBD in the European region and also in co-ordinating the views of the region back to the Convention. At Riga in March 2000, a declaration was adopted to represent the views of the pan-European region to the 5th Conference of the Parties of the CBD (May 2000). It is anticipated that the PEBLDS will help to provide an interface between national strategies and the CBD itself and to implement collective action across the whole of Europe. **We would expect the UK Government to continue to support the development of the PEBLDS as a vehicle for implementing aspects of the CBD in Europe which require action beyond national boundaries and in order to facilitate information exchange and assistance to the new democracies in central and eastern Europe.**

Liaison with the Republic of Ireland

Joint action for Corncrake and Roseate tern

RSPB has worked with Birdwatch Ireland and Duchas (the Irish statutory conservation body) to implement a **Corncrake Grant Scheme**.

The British Isles has a single population of **Roseate tern** which interchanges between breeding sites.

There is a co-operative programme between Birdwatch Ireland, Duchas and RSPB for research and protection at Rockabill Island.

In 1999, Rockabill held 78% of the British Isles total of breeding pairs; protection of this colony is the key to sustaining Roseate tern in the UK and Ireland.



Conservation of the Roseate Tern involves joint action with the Republic of Ireland.

- 3.6 At the same time as proposals for a Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy have been prepared, an Irish Biodiversity Action Plan has been developed by the Government of the Republic of Ireland. There have been discussions to maximise the mutual benefit of these initiatives. For instance, both initiatives contain proposed actions relating to the effect of introduced species on native biodiversity and a co-operative project on this subject is currently being discussed. Liaison between the conservation agencies in the UK and the Republic of Ireland is supported by regular meetings of the International Designations Group (IDG). Survey work is carried out by the IDG sub-group on Biological Recording. Current joint projects include the New Atlas of Flowering Plants and Ferns for Britain and Ireland. Action Plan implementation for several species has been carried out in partnership between organisations in the UK and Republic of Ireland.
- 3.7 The actions above give weight to the view of the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group (NIBG) to the Northern Ireland Executive that a biodiversity strategy there, whilst it is part of a UK initiative, should link closely with similar initiatives in the Republic of Ireland. **We strongly support the NIBG's recognition of the importance of assessing habitat and species priorities and developing opportunities for joint action on an all-Ireland basis.**

¹² Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (COE, 1998)

The legal framework for UK nature conservation

- 3.8 The legislation governing nature conservation in the UK has been shaped and amended since 1949. Following the General Election in 1997, the Government announced its intention to legislate to improve wildlife protection. Part III of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 is the most important nature conservation legislation for England and Wales since 1981. The Scottish Executive intends to publish a policy statement setting out proposals for a new system of nature conservation and in Northern Ireland a consultation is underway on proposals to improve the management of Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs).
- 3.9 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 provides for enhanced protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in England and Wales, particularly to facilitate positive management and a duty on public authorities to manage their own SSSI land to secure its favourable condition.
- 3.10 As significant however was the Act's introduction of a new duty on Government Ministers and Departments and the National Assembly for Wales to have regard to the purpose of the conservation of biological diversity in the exercise of their functions. The duty is related explicitly to the obligations of the Convention on Biological Diversity and should be a significant spur to improved consideration of biodiversity impacts across all areas of government in England and Wales. This will be particularly important for those Departments which have extensive land-holdings, the management of which can be significant for biodiversity. The legislation further supports the current approach to the UK BAP in requiring the Secretary of State and the NAW to maintain and publish lists of 'living organisms' (species) and habitat types which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity. They must also take steps to further their conservation and to promote the taking of such steps by others.
- 3.11 **We welcome the new duties in England and Wales on Government Departments and the National Assembly for Wales to have regard to the purpose of the conservation of biological diversity in the exercise of their functions.**
- 3.12 **We note the Government's undertakings during the passage of the legislation that the new duties are intended to underpin the existing UK BAP process in England and Wales. We recommend that the Government and the National Assembly take the earliest opportunity, in exercising them, to explicitly support the continuation of the current UK BAP process and the current lists of HAPs and SAPs, pending any future systematic review by the whole UK partnership.**
- 3.13 On 7th March, Scottish Ministers published proposals for improved nature conservation policies. These will include a proposal to place a duty on Government to take account of biodiversity.
- 3.14 **We welcome the Scottish Ministers' announcement. The Northern Ireland Executive should consider similar legislative biodiversity provisions to those contained in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 for England and Wales.**

CHAPTER 4

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan: Principles and Objectives

- 4.1 This chapter sets out the UK Biodiversity Group's recommendations on the principles that should govern future work on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan; on the aims and objectives for the future; and on the indicators to be used to measure progress.

Principles

- 4.2 The essential elements of the UK BAP have always been:
- **Partnership** – involving the range of statutory, voluntary, academic and business sectors nationally and locally;
 - **Actions and Targets** – addressing the priority biodiversity needs by establishing clear actions, measurable outcomes and accountability;
 - **Policy integration** – recognising that significant shifts in policy are needed to reverse declining trends in UK biodiversity and to support sustainable development in all sectors of society;
 - **Information** – recognising that sound science and knowledge should underpin decisions and that new approaches are needed to fill information gaps and understanding;
 - **Public awareness** – recognising that the changes needed to maintain biodiversity in the long-term must be supported by people's actions, attitudes and understanding.
- 4.3 **We believe that these essential elements remain central to the implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.**

Aims and objectives

- 4.4 The UK Biodiversity Action Plan set out a number of fundamental objectives. It also elaborated a series of broad aims, which became known as 'the 59 steps' (Appendix 3) to monitor progress. The 1996 Government Response to the Steering Group Report gave an account of the action that had already been taken under the 59 steps. We have considered whether the 59 steps remain a useful framework for measuring and monitoring continuing progress under the UK BAP.
- 4.5 Entec UK, in their evaluation of the biodiversity process, took the view that, though the 59 steps addressed many of the measures needed, they were too disparate to provide a basis

for identifying objectives against which to evaluate the success or failure of the process. We agree and this report therefore concentrates on progress with the actions and targets for the individual SAPs and HAPs and an assessment of wider policy issues.

- 4.6 We accept Entec's recommendation to adopt more strategic aims and objectives for the future. The following aims and objectives flow naturally from Article 6 of the Convention, the original objectives of the UK BAP and the essential principles set out in paragraph 4.2 above. **We propose that they should be adopted by our proposed new UK Biodiversity Partnership, the form and structure of which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.**

The UK Biodiversity Partnership's aims should be:

- **To maintain and enhance biological diversity within the UK, paying particular regard to:**
 - a) **Overall populations and natural ranges of native species and the quality and ranges of wildlife habitats and ecosystems.**
 - b) **Internationally important and threatened species, habitats and ecosystems.**
 - c) **Species, habitats and natural and managed ecosystems characteristic of local areas.**
 - d) **Biodiversity of natural and semi-natural habitats where they have been diminished over recent past decades.**
- **To contribute to the conservation of global biodiversity.**
- **To increase public appreciation and enjoyment of biodiversity and recognition of its value wherever it occurs.**
- **To integrate biodiversity fully into policies and programmes as part of sustainable development.**

In pursuing these aims we should adopt the following objectives:

- **To maintain and keep under review an overall strategy for the conservation and enhancement of UK biodiversity in the light of the biodiversity priorities of the four countries of the UK.**
- **To bring together all relevant sectors to work in partnership.**
- **To develop, implement and keep under review targeted action plans for the species and habitats most important for biodiversity conservation.**
- **To take direct measures to conserve species and habitat diversity, in particular through the conservation of threatened or protected species and important sites, and through the management or control of non-native species.**

- **To take direct measures to conserve species and habitat diversity, in particular through the conservation of threatened or protected species and important sites, and through the management or control of non-native species.**



Native white clawed crayfish are severely threatened by competition from the introduced American signal crayfish.

- **To encourage the preparation, implementation and review of Local Biodiversity Action Plans to support national biodiversity objectives and to take forward local priorities for action.**
- **To take steps to minimise the adverse impacts of human activity on biodiversity, both direct and indirect.**



Sea Empress Oil spills Tenby Harbour.

- **To take steps to understand the effects on biodiversity of large-scale influences such as ozone depletion and climate change and determine appropriate responses.**
- **To integrate biodiversity considerations into public policies and programmes.**
- **To encourage more integration of biodiversity considerations into business policies and practices to support the delivery of biodiversity objectives.**



A public awareness campaign on Limestone Pavements is being 'championed' by RMC Ltd.

- **To take steps to increase public awareness of biodiversity issues.**
- **To identify, undertake and keep under review research and monitoring to support implementation of other objectives.**
- **To develop and maintain comprehensive and accessible biodiversity information systems linking national and local records.**

Indicators

4.7 Measurements of future progress should be addressed wherever possible through the identification of certain indicators. We are conscious that the effects of policies often take time to feed through, and undesirable trends may continue for a period before improvements are shown. Some of the Government's 'Quality of Life Counts'¹³ (QOLC) indicators of sustainable development are relevant. In particular:

- **Populations of wild birds (H13)**
- **Trends in plant diversity (S3)**
- **Extent and management of SSSIs (S6)**
- **Numbers of native species at risk (S9)**
- **Area of ancient semi-natural woodland in GB (S11)**
- **Progress with Biodiversity Action Plans (S4)**

Other QOLC indicators of pressures which impact on biodiversity include emissions of atmospheric pollutants, rise in global temperature, sea level rise and water abstractions.

¹³ 'Quality of Life Counts' (DETR, 1999)

4.8 The QOLC indicator of progress with Biodiversity Action Plans has to be developed further, and we believe that the reports which we have received from Lead Partners, which have contributed to this current report, form the basis for this work. Whilst each Action Plan has specific targets which monitor its own progress, we propose that the results summarised in Chapter 1 of this report should form the headline indicators for the Action Plans overall, i.e:

- **Proportion of Action Plans making progress towards their targets.**
- **Numbers of BAP priority species and habitats showing signs of recovery, those which are stable and those still in decline.**

We also consider that, in due course, an indicator showing the proportion of Action Plan targets achieved should be adopted. This figure is not meaningful at present since only 6 of some 1100 targets were due to have been achieved by the reporting period in 1999.

4.9 **Chapter 1 identifies other indicators which we consider should be adopted for the achievement of UK BAP objectives beyond the HAPs and SAPs, including:**

- **Coverage of Local Biodiversity Action Plans.**
- **Numbers of organisations involved in biodiversity partnerships.**
- **Public membership of biodiversity conservation organisations.**

4.10 **Finally, we recommend that the UK continues to work with other countries, within the framework of the CBD, to develop a suite of indicators which can be used to assess the state of biodiversity generally and progress towards the achievements of the primary aims of the UK BAP.**