



Securing biodiversity

A new framework for delivering priority habitats
and species in England

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Ministerial Foreword

We have made good progress with delivering the England Biodiversity Strategy since its launch in 2002. There is much to be proud of, but there is still much to do. Despite some notable successes in implementing the action plans for our priority species and habitats, losses continue, particularly in our wider countryside and towns, and at sea. The recently published list of habitats and species of principal importance contained more than double the number on the original list, highlighting the continued threats and pressures on our biodiversity. Without action to tackle ecosystem degradation, these losses will accelerate as our climate changes, and we will all lose as the essential services provided by biodiversity also decline.

It is against this backdrop that this new framework has been developed, and I congratulate Natural England and the England Biodiversity Group on its

production. The framework's aims are ambitious; they need to be. First halting, and then reversing biodiversity loss requires an integrated approach, with a renewed focus on delivery for whole ecosystems, and at a landscape scale. This is what the framework will bring. I am pleased to see that the framework retains and builds upon some of the strengths of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan process, including the target-based approach and strong partnerships. It is through partnership that many of our successes have been achieved so far, and it is through partnership that we will succeed in the future.

The framework is a renewed call to action and it emphasises the need for clearer accountabilities for delivery. Government will do its part, but we also need more action from other sectors of society. As our lead delivery body for the England

Biodiversity Strategy, I am confident that Natural England will ensure that we all contribute fully towards safeguarding England's biodiversity for the generations to come.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Huw Irranca-Davies", with a horizontal line underneath it.

**Huw Irranca-Davies MP,
Minister for the Natural and Marine Environment,
Wildlife and Rural Affairs**



Introduction

Biodiversity matters. It has intrinsic value, it enriches our lives and it underpins services provided by the natural environment upon which we depend. Our national approach to its conservation is set out in the England Biodiversity Strategy which has five main themes: protect the best wildlife sites; promote the recovery of priority species and habitats; embed biodiversity in relevant sectors of policy and decision-making; enthuse people; and develop the evidence base.

This guide explains a new framework which has been developed to enhance the recovery of priority habitats and species in England (published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006), thereby contributing to the delivery of the England Biodiversity Strategy. The framework has been developed and endorsed by the England Biodiversity Group and wider partnership. It is the starting point for a more integrated approach to

biodiversity conservation in England, building on the strengths of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) process and improving those areas where insufficient progress was being made.

Causes of declines in our priority habitats and species include habitat loss and fragmentation, inappropriate management, environmental pollution and a range of other pressures such as invasive non-native species. Climate change compounds these pressures and presents us with new and urgent challenges that require us to make a step-change in our approach to biodiversity conservation. We need to go beyond protected sites and separate species and habitat action plans.

Halting (and ultimately reversing) biodiversity loss requires us to adopt integrated landscape-scale approaches that restore whole ecosystems. This will be an exciting and challenging process, requiring strong partnerships if we are to succeed.



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The aims of the framework

The purpose of the new framework is to:

- encourage the adoption of an ecosystem approach and better embed climate change adaptation principles in conservation action;
- achieve biodiversity enhancements across whole landscapes and seascapes;
- achieve our priority habitat targets through greater collective emphasis on habitat restoration and expansion;
- enhance the recovery of priority species by better integrating their needs into habitat-based work where possible, and through targeted species recovery work where necessary;
- support the restoration of designated sites, including by enhancing the wider countryside in which they sit;
- support the conservation of marine biodiversity, inside and outside of designated sites;
- establish and implement a delivery programme, with agreed accountabilities, for priority species and habitats in England;
- improve the integration of national, regional and local levels of delivery;
- improve the links between relevant policy-makers and biodiversity practitioners;
- strengthen biodiversity partnerships by clarifying roles at England, regional and local levels.

Case study







Protecting the Humberhead Levels

Centred around the Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve, the Humberhead Levels Partnership is seeking to create and connect wetland habitats to support declining wildlife in the heart of Yorkshire whilst managing flood risk and supporting the local economy. Working with stakeholders to achieve sustainable land management practices across the 2,000 square kilometres of the Levels, the Partnership is enabling biodiversity to 'spill out' of the best wildlife sites in the area and create a unique wetland landscape supporting thriving communities, economy and wildlife. This approach is protecting and enhancing important species such as bladderwort *Utricularia australis* and the rare mire pill beetle *Curimopsis nigrita* as well as the internationally important lowland raised peat bogs.



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-  Humberhead Levels
-  Wetlands
-  Urban areas
-  Estuary
-  Rivers and canals
-  Motorways

Framework overview and structure

The biggest change that the framework brings is a greater emphasis on identifying and carrying out the actions that are most urgent and have the greatest benefit for biodiversity. Strong partnerships will together establish clear delivery and policy priorities, at relevant geographical scales, with agreed accountabilities. The framework is organised around four main components, which are described below (for additional details see Annex 1).



Dawn Watson & Rob Spry / www.1townhouses.co.uk

(I) England Biodiversity Strategy Workstreams

Implementation of the England Biodiversity Strategy is currently supported by six sector and five crosscutting workstreams. These workstreams exist to achieve the best possible policy environment for biodiversity delivery and their objectives will evolve to take account of the constraints and opportunities identified by the other three elements of the framework, in particular the Biodiversity Integration Groups. Each workstream will have representation from relevant Biodiversity Integration Groups, and membership is likely to change over time depending on emerging priorities, ensuring that new policy blockages are resolved.

(II) Biodiversity Integration Groups

Biodiversity Integration Groups will bring together habitat and associated species interests at an England level. They will largely be made up of representatives of national delivery organisations and will be charged with driving the delivery of priority habitat targets and those of associated species by identifying and, where appropriate, carrying out the most important actions required by the group as a whole. The groups will not simply be devolved versions of former UK Habitat Action Plan umbrella groups: more than 10 years of experience has shown that these do not adequately take account of species' needs, nor have they been effective at engaging with the regional or local levels of delivery.

Nine Biodiversity Integration Groups have been agreed (see Annex 2). They will set the standards for habitat-based working, agree targets, and identify and carry out priority projects for delivery, in particular landscape-scale projects. They will help to steer the work of relevant EBS workstreams by identifying policy priorities. They will work closely with regional and, at times, local biodiversity partnerships to agree the most important areas for landscape-scale delivery.

(III) Targeted Species Recovery

There will be some important species actions that cannot be carried out through habitat-based work or other delivery mechanisms. These will require targeted species recovery work. As lead delivery body for the England Biodiversity Strategy, Natural England will work with partners to agree a prioritised programme with agreed accountabilities to deliver the most urgent species recovery actions and those that will have the greatest impact.

It is anticipated that many of the organisations involved in targeted species recovery work will also be involved in Biodiversity Integration Groups, so they will be well placed to take account of opportunities for habitat-based work as species recovery progresses. The needs of individual species should be delivered through, and integrated with, the regional and local delivery component of the framework wherever possible.

(IV) Regional and Local Delivery

Halting biodiversity loss and meeting the challenge of climate change requires landscape-scale approaches that improve habitat connectivity and deliver appropriate networks to meet the present and future needs of species. This requires coordinated delivery at all levels, with strong regional and local biodiversity partnerships and improved integration and alignment of national, regional and local work programmes. This is an important aim of the framework and, to help achieve this, the England Biodiversity Integration Groups and species lead partners will work more closely with regional and local partnerships than has been the case in the past. Within each region, Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission, will work together with biodiversity partnerships and other key partners, including National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to agree priorities and accountabilities for delivery.



Case study

Species and their wider habitats

Remnant populations of the threatened yellow marsh saxifrage *Saxifraga hirculus* have suffered from reproductive isolation due to inappropriate upland land management causing limited flowering, seed-set and recruitment, exacerbating their vulnerability to climate change. Introduced sustainable grazing levels at the most important sites have resulted in whole upland flushes turning brilliant yellow in summer with increasing sexual reproduction, genetic diversification and successful seed set. The aims now are to achieve natural colonisation of new sites and develop a better understanding of how this species could act as an indicator of a healthy, fully functioning ecosystem in our changing climate.



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Lead partners in the framework

Many of the species and habitats on the s41 NERC Act list have current lead partners under the UK BAP. These organisations have played an important role in underpinning the successes of the BAP process, including coordinating delivery and reporting progress. The expertise, enthusiasm and resources of these lead partner organisations are critical to the success of the England Biodiversity Strategy.

Natural England will liaise with delivery partners to decide upon appropriate lead partners for particular species or groups of species to set objectives, drive delivery, report on progress and act as the first point of contact for the species. Species lead partners will deliver actions directly, or in partnership with others, and participate in relevant Biodiversity Integration Groups. The priority will be to identify lead partners for those species requiring urgent action. Where the

most important action(s) depend upon the support or response of a government agency or department, it may be beneficial and appropriate that they have the lead role, or be joint lead partners with a non-government organisation. Natural England is liaising with other country agencies to achieve as much consistency as possible in lead partner assignment across the UK.

The lead organisation for each Biodiversity Integration Group (i.e. Environment Agency, Forestry Commission or Natural England) will also lead in England for those habitats covered by their group (see Annex 2).



Integration across the UK

The new framework is consistent with the UK strategic biodiversity framework which sets out a shared vision and approach to conserving biodiversity within our devolved structure and highlights the importance of adopting an ecosystem approach to meet our biodiversity objectives. The emphasis for future UK-level work will be achieving effective information exchange, providing guidance, standard-setting, research, and some reporting. Work to embed biodiversity into policies and programmes, set targets,

plan and prioritise action, and implement delivery mechanisms for priority species and habitats has been devolved to the country level. Other countries are considering, or already implementing, their own approaches to integrated delivery. The UK Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group (BRIG) are advising what will need to happen at UK level, and by whom, to meet the requirements set out in the UK strategic biodiversity framework.



Natural England's role

Defra has appointed Natural England its lead delivery body for the England Biodiversity Strategy. In carrying out this role, Natural England has agreed to establish clearer responsibilities for biodiversity delivery; this approach is at the heart of this framework. Our aim has been to develop a framework that is owned by a broad and empowered partnership, with all members equally committed to its success. For its part, Natural England will focus its resources on making the framework as effective as possible, and we will encourage our partners to do the same.

This is because the aims of the framework are ambitious: adopting the ecosystem approach and delivering biodiversity enhancements at a landscape-scale will be enormously challenging. Natural England and the England Biodiversity Group will keep the framework under review, so that it can evolve to take account of experience and respond to new opportunities and obstacles to delivery.

Case study

Joining up regionally

The South East England Biodiversity Forum has reviewed its regional biodiversity strategy to better align and target priorities, responsibilities and resources within the region. The strategy will be integrated into regional and local strategic documents and plans and the Forum is working to gain active support for its delivery from government agencies, NGOs, business and regional and local government. The new regional biodiversity strategy and the updated targets it contains will link directly with the national Biodiversity Integration Groups and be the regional expression of the national framework.



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Further information

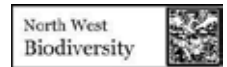
If you have questions about this framework, or want to find out how you can get involved, please either contact Natural England (enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk) or your regional biodiversity partnership.



West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership
www.wmbp.org.uk



South West Regional Biodiversity Partnership
www.southwestbiodiversity.org.uk



Biodiversity North West
www.biodiversitynw.org.uk



East of England Biodiversity Forum
www.eoebiodiversity.org



North East Biodiversity Forum
www.nebiodiversity.org.uk



London Biodiversity Partnership
www.lbp.org.uk



The Yorkshire & Humber Biodiversity Forum
www.yhbf.org



South East England Biodiversity Forum
www.sebiodiversity.co.uk



East Midlands Biodiversity Partnership

Annex 1

Functions of the components within the EBS delivery framework

(I) England Biodiversity Strategy Sectoral Workstreams

The EBS workstreams' role is to:

- 1 Lead strategy implementation
 - Implement a work programme for the sector/ theme with a three year time horizon, refreshed as appropriate;
 - To identify (with timescales) and prioritise actions that group members can carry out directly to make progress in the sector/theme. This may be through a detailed work programme linked to the general sectoral/thematic work programme;
 - To identify risks to progress in the sector/theme and report to the England Biodiversity Group.
- 2 Set the strategic direction for the EBS in their sector
 - Maintain an overview of the sector/theme;
 - “Scan the horizon” for potentially important issues in the sector/theme that may arise in the future to ensure that biodiversity is properly embedded in relevant policies.
- 3 Link across EBS and UK BAP
 - Identify synergies and/or interdependencies that exist with the work of other groups and work with them to highlight/resolve obstacles;
 - Work with relevant Biodiversity Integration Groups and regional biodiversity partnerships, in particular so that they are aware of opportunities from policy instruments (e.g. arising from the Water Framework Directive).

4 Monitor and Report

- Monitor and report on progress in the sector/theme to EBG every quarter, using the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) when appropriate;
- Develop appropriate indicators for the sector/theme, and commission the collection of the necessary data to monitor progress;
- Deliver an annual written report to the EBG every October as part of its annual stocktake.

(II) Biodiversity Integration Groups

The Biodiversity Integration Groups' role is to:

- 1 Drive the delivery of habitat and species targets
- Agree the most urgent and important actions to meet the collective needs of the habitats and

species within the overall group. Natural England will provide an analysis of the species associated with each group and the habitat features that these require;

- Set objectives/targets (incorporating existing SMART targets);
- Identify priority areas (e.g. within regional 'vision' maps) for delivering biodiversity enhancements at a landscape scale;
- Engage appropriately with regional/local partnerships to align delivery;
- Agree and implement a three-year work programme for relevant England-level action, with agreed accountabilities for delivery. Annual progress reports are to be provided to the England Biodiversity Group via BARS;
- Identify opportunities for leveraging resources.

- 2 Identify species-based success measures for habitats, e.g:
 - Indicator species
 - Habitat features
 - Aspects of habitat condition
 - Size of habitat patches
 - Habitat context (including connections with other habitats)
- 3 Identify knowledge gaps and either address these directly or recommend to the England Biodiversity Group how they could be filled.
- 4 Identify policy blockages and, through representation on relevant EBS workstream(s), help drive policy development.
- 5 Ensure appropriate links are made to relevant national strategies or policies including the Invasive Non-natives Strategy, the England Trees, Woods and Forests delivery plan, and the Ecosystem Approach action plan.
- 6 Ensure reporting is carried out to agreed standards and timetables for component habitats and species, including the use of the BARS.
- 7 Provide representation to any over-arching UK habitat group established by the UK Biodiversity Standing Committee.

(III) Targeted Species Recovery

Natural England is convening taxon-based groups of species lead partners and experts from government and non-government organisations who are tasked with:

- 1 Agreeing representation on relevant Biodiversity Integration Groups, and the key actions required by these groups, making use of the recent UK sign-posting exercise.
- 2 Identifying urgent species-focussed activities that can not be met by the Biodiversity Integration Groups, making use of the recent UK sign-posting exercise .
- 3 Developing a three-year prioritised species recovery programme for each broad taxonomic group, with draft SMART targets at England level, and agreed accountabilities for delivery of the most urgent actions identified in (2). Annual progress reports are to be provided to the England Biodiversity Group via BARS.
- 4 Providing advice to statutory agencies and relevant England Biodiversity Strategy workstreams on species' policy requirements and obstacles to delivery.
- 5 Ensuring that regional and local partnerships are aware of the most urgent species requirements in their areas and, where appropriate, developing joint projects with them.

- 6 Reporting actions and their outcomes through BARS and participating in national reporting rounds as required.

(IV) Regional and local delivery

Regional and local biodiversity partnerships are a critical component of the framework, their role is to:

- 1 Agree or confirm regional and local targets for delivering priority habitats and species, actively seeking and taking account of advice from the Biodiversity Integration Groups and species lead partners, where appropriate.
- 2 Ensure protected landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) are properly integrated into the prioritisation, decision making and delivery process.
- 3 Ensure targets are fully reflected in appropriate policy instruments and strategies at regional and local levels, including Regional Spatial Strategies, Local Development Documents, Shoreline Management Plans, River Basin Management Plans etc.
- 4 Taking account of any existing 'vision' maps, agree delivery priorities, aiming to enhance biodiversity at a landscape scale and increase the resilience of habitats, sites and ecosystems.
- 5 Develop a regional delivery plan for high priority actions with agreed accountabilities, ensuring that

these plans are integrated as far as possible with those of the Biodiversity Integration Groups and the national Targeted Species Recovery process.

- 6 Report actions and their outcomes using the BARS and contribute to national reporting rounds as required.

Annex 2

EBS workstream	Biodiversity Integration Group (lead organisation)	Priority habitats
Agriculture	Lowland farmland (Natural England)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arable Field Margins Hedgerows Traditional Orchards Lowland Dry Acid Grassland Lowland Calcareous Grassland Lowland Meadows Upland Hay Meadows Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures Calaminarian Grasslands Lowland Heathland
	Uplands (Natural England)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upland Heathland Blanket Bog Upland Calcareous Grassland Upland Flushes, Fens and Swamps Mountain Heaths and Willow Scrub Inland Rock Outcrop and Scree Habitats Limestone Pavement

EBS workstream	Biodiversity Integration Group (lead organisation)	Priority habitats
Water & Wetlands	Lakes and Ponds (Environment Agency)	Eutrophic Standing Waters Mesotrophic Lakes Oligotrophic and Dystrophic Lakes Ponds Aquifer-fed Naturally Fluctuating Water Bodies
	Rivers (Environment Agency)	Rivers Chalk Rivers
	Wetlands (Natural England)	Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh Lowland Fens Lowland Raised Bog Reedbeds

EBS workstream	Biodiversity Integration Group (lead organisation)	Priority habitats
Coastal	Coastal (Natural England)	Coastal Saltmarsh Intertidal Mudflats Coastal Vegetated Shingle Coastal Sand Dunes Maritime Cliff and Slopes Saline Lagoons
Marine	Marine (Natural England)	16 marine habitats (in England)
Towns, cities & development	Urban and brownfield (Natural England)	Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land
Woodlands & forestry	Woodland (Forestry Commission)	Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Upland Mixed Ashwoods Upland Oakwood Wet Woodland Wood Pasture and Parkland



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Natural England is here to conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings.

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