

## WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK TOP TWENTY POLICY PRIORITIES TO TEST DELIVERY OF THE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY FOR ENGLAND

Members of Wildlife and Countryside Link's Biodiversity Task Force (BTF) participate fully in the Biodiversity Action Plan process at national, regional and local levels. The BTF members are collectively Lead Partners for around 200 species, and are actively involved with a number of species and habitat BAP groups. Link has identified twenty policy priorities outlined in the England Biodiversity Strategy which it believes will act as key tests for the delivery of the strategy. Delivering on these priorities should not be seen as representing all that is needed for biodiversity conservation, but simply as an indicator of whether sufficient critical action is being taken to implement the Strategy.

Here we provide Link's first assessment of progress made with implementing these priority actions in the first year since the launch of the Strategy. The long-term test of biodiversity improvement will be the relative performance of the headline indicators categorised by sector (as shown in the indicator report):

- Status of wild birds
- % of SSSIs in favourable condition
- Status of BAP priority species and habitats

Policy	Priority Actions	Lead	EBS Ref	Progress	Comment
Biodiversity process and policy	Annual Stock take of progress on EBS, particularly on trends and achievement of targets as part of progress reports on HAPs and SAPs implementation in 2003 (and 2006)	Defra	Pages 6,12, 26	GREEN	Stock take completed with list of key policy blockages. Full indicator report to be published December 2003.
	Finalise Strategic Environmental Assessment programme	DTI	Page 142	AMBER	Some progress in programme of assessment for sections of continental shelf and offshore renewable energy proposals, but no offshore designations causing problems for effective assessment

	Progress towards establishment of favourable condition of Natura 2000 sites including those beyond territorial waters	Defra, EN	Page 25	AMBER	Condition assessment of SACs on track, but no clear link to favourable conservation status and no list of offshore Natura 2000 sites published to date.
Agriculture	Roll out entry level agri-environment scheme	Defra	Page 97	GREEN	Pilot Entry Level Scheme launched in February 2003. Report and review due in 2003 prior to full launch in 2005.
	Achieve protection, good management, enhancement and extension of important farmland features through development of agri-environment schemes and farm advisory services	Defra	Page 97	AMBER	Higher Tier Scheme currently being redesigned with a view to being launched in 2004.
Water	Implementation of package of measures to address diffuse pollution	Defra, EA	Page 103	AMBER	Consultation paper on diffuse pollution strategy overdue. Will need to result in tangible action.
	Water quality and quantity targets for BAP priorities drive PRO4 and 5	Defra, EN and EA	Page 105	AMBER	PRO 4 programme currently being negotiated. Water quality standards for statutory sites and priority habitats are planned to be included as a driver for funding. Still vulnerable to weaknesses of regulatory and price review system.
	All Operating Authorities contributing to high level BAP targets	Defra	Page 107	AMBER	Policy progress in last six months should help in long term. Current information suggests not making significant contribution to BAP targets.
Invasive species	Non-native species review report published and recommendations implemented	Defra	Page 28	GREEN/ AMBER	Review Group's report published in March 2003. Government consultation expected by the end of 2003.
Woodland	Target incentives to delivery of local and national BAP priorities	FC, Defra	Page 116	AMBER	New EWGS under development by FC, ELS pilot underway and HTS pilot under development by DEFRA; profile of

					woodland birds, HAPs and SAPs has increased but explicit linkage between BAP priority woodland habitats and species and incentives reform yet to be fully achieved.
Towns, cities and development	New planning legislation and guidance to be underpinned by SD objectives reflecting the core objectives of the strategy	Defra	Page 124	AMBER	Government's Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill refers to SD. However Link members believe this reference needs to be strengthened if it is to have any impact.
	Revised PPG9 to set clear framework for planning policies to protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity	ODPM, Defra	Page 124	AMBER	New draft statement due out for consultation before end 2003. Key test will be the inclusion of new measures to support positive planning for biodiversity.
	Key brownfield biodiversity species conserved through site protection, mitigation and habitat creation.	Defra, ODPM, GOs	p.125	AMBER	EN committed to protecting some key sites and reviewing SSSI guidelines relating to brownfield invertebrates. Planning applications outstanding on at least one site containing key brownfield biodiversity species. Research into mitigation and habitat creation techniques required, as is Government guidance in this area.
The coasts and seas	A coherent legal and administrative system for nature conservation in marine <i>and coastal</i> environment	Defra	Page 29	RED	A process is in place through the Government's RMNC, its Legislation Sub Group and Irish Sea Pilot to progress this agenda but there is no clear commitment (e.g. manifesto) to subsequent action including comprehensive legislation engaging all relevant departments and stakeholders, a timetable or the resources needed to bring it about.
	Implement the revised EU Common Fisheries Policy	Defra	Page 137	AMBER	Perhaps too early to assess, CFP only adopted in Dec 2002.

	Consult on and introduce regulations to implement the Birds and Habitats Directives in the 12-200 nm zone, <i>identify sites and implement management.</i>	Defra	Page 139	AMBER	Consultation out now, but it will still be some time before regulations are in place and before sites are designated, meanwhile biodiversity is being damaged.
Local and regional action	Promote the integration of local biodiversity objectives into community strategies and foster links between LBAP partnerships and LSPs.	DEFRA, ODPM, GOs	Page 151	AMBER	Guidance on integration of local BAPS into Community Strategies due out before end of 2003. Improved integration between local and national levels still required as is the need for community strategies to take on board local BAPS.
The economics and funding of biodiversity	Continue to research and implement economic instruments to address biodiversity and wider environmental problems (especially tax on nutrients)	Defra	Page 156	GREEN	Rolling programme of proposals on market based incentives to feed into PBR September each year.
	Ensure that existing government funding programmes do not damage but instead enhance biodiversity	Defra	Page 77	RED	Delivery of low-cost biodiversity valuation framework for use in project and policy appraisal techniques to be developed by December 2004. Habitat destruction by Government funded infrastructure projects still occurring.
	Identify the main gaps in biodiversity funding	Defra	Page 77	GREEN	Proposals for gap analysis to be prepared by the end of 2003.

GREEN

Completed or significant progress made

AMBER

Progress being made, but either behind schedule or encountering some problems

RED

Not started, significantly behind schedule and/or encountering major problems

This paper is supported by the following members of Wildlife and Countryside Link's Biodiversity Task Force:

*Bat Conservation Trust*

*British Ecological Society*

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*Butterfly Conservation*

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*Marine Conservation Society*

*Plantlife*

*Royal Society for the Protection of Birds*

*The Wildlife Trusts*

*Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society*

*Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust*

*Woodland Trust*