

## Guidance for planning authorities on implementing the Biodiversity Duty

**Planning authorities are required to implement the Biodiversity Duty in development planning and management. The Scottish Wildlife Trust has produced this guidance on the five first steps local authorities should take to fulfil the Biodiversity Duty**

### Background

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 places the following duty on every public body and office-holder:

*S1 (1) It is the duty of every public body and office-holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.*

Biodiversity is a core component of sustainable development and can make a significant contribution to the Scottish Government's central purpose of sustainable economic growth.

Conserving biodiversity is not only vital in Scotland's response to tackling climate change but also provides ecosystems services which have substantial benefits underpinning Scotland's social, economic and cultural wellbeing.

### Actions

#### 1. Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs)

LBAPs are key strategies dedicated to the delivery of biodiversity conservation at the local level.

Development plans should list locally important habitats and species and development management should ensure that LBAP species and habitats are protected from inappropriate development.

#### 2. Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS)

LNCS provide important wildlife refuges and act as stepping stones in the local green network.

Designating LNCS helps local authorities identify and prioritise actions for habitats and species (i.e. those listed in local and UK Biodiversity Action Plans).

LNCS should be identified using published guidance and incorporated in the development plan. Their boundaries should be marked on policy maps to ensure their protection from inappropriate development, damaging operations or other impacts.

#### 3. Green networks

Green networks are connected systems of land and water in which biodiversity is given special consideration.

As well as connecting people with nature and providing a more permeable landscape for wildlife to move and migrate (supporting adaptation to climate change), green networks have the added benefits of:

- Making the local environment a more attractive place to work and live
- Helping to maintain an ecologically healthy landscape which is essential to the local economy
- Acting as carbon sinks

#### 4. Supporting local record centres (LRCs)

Biological data is a valuable resource which is essential for decision making. It is Government policy that: *the best new and existing knowledge on biodiversity is available to all policy makers and practitioners.*"

Planning authorities should support and actively engage with local record centres. LRCs can speed up the planning process by:

- Identifying local biodiversity hotspots
- Identifying local nature conservation sites
- Providing data to local authorities (using an appropriate model) to enhance functional green networks
- Providing a planning screening service

#### 5. Education and public understanding

Planning authorities should provide biodiversity advice to land owners and managers in relation to planning and the protection of designated sites. Biodiversity supplementary guidance will assist developers to give due consideration to the biodiversity objectives of the local authority.

Local authority managed sites and other areas of open space can be used to promote learning and increase awareness of wildlife among local people.

Education of school children raises awareness of biodiversity and indirectly targets a much wider audience through families and friends. As the curriculum for excellence promotes outdoor learning, primary and secondary schools should be encouraged to use their local sites to learn about biodiversity.