

# **NORFOLK BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP**

**Co-ordinator's Progress Report for the Period:  
13 July – 16 November 2011**



**Norfolk Biodiversity Co-ordinator**  
**Progress Report for the Period: 13 July - 16 November 2011**

**Highlights**

Highlights over the reporting period have included:

- The organisation (jointly with the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership) of the 7<sup>th</sup> Planning and Biodiversity Seminar on 6 October. This attracted some 70 participants, the majority of whom were forward planners and development control officers;
- The submission of a successful application to Defra for a suite of “capacity building” activities, in support of the proposed Norfolk and Suffolk Local Nature Partnership.
- The organisation of the Annual Biodiversity Forum on 3 November, which attracted over 110 participants. The theme of this year’s conference was species’ re-introductions. The afternoon featured presentations from IUCN, the Scottish Beaver Trial, RSPB, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, the Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative and Plantlife.
- The creation of Norfolk’s first native crayfish “ark” site, at a river in north Norfolk. This project was carried out by the Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative, in collaboration with a wide range of organisations, including the Environment Agency, the River Glaven Conservation Group, Natural England, the Norfolk Rivers Trust, University College London and the Essex Wildlife Trust.
- The launch of an online directory of local community conservation groups in Norfolk. The directory was developed by BTCV on behalf of the Partnership, with a grant from the Biodiversity Project Fund.
- The re-design and launch of the Partnership’s new website.

**Norfolk Biodiversity Co-ordinator**  
**Progress Report for the Period: 13 July - 16 November 2011**

## **1. Introduction**

This report presents a brief summary of the activities of the Biodiversity Co-ordinator from the middle of July to 16 November 2011. It seeks to record the progress that has been achieved; identify any obstacles or difficulties that have been encountered; and highlight some priorities for the coming four-month period. For ease of reference, the report has been organised according to the major headings in the Co-ordinator's workplan.

Additional information is presented in a series of annexes: Annex 1 presents a summary of the issues addressed at recent Topic Group meetings; Annex 2 presents a summary of the recent project proposals considered by the Biodiversity Project Fund; and Annex 3 presents information about forthcoming biodiversity events.

## **2. Summary of Progress**

### **2.1 Facilitate and support the implementation of the Norfolk BAP**

#### Topic Group and Co-ordinator's Group Meetings

- Seven Topic Group meetings were held over the reporting period, all of which were well-attended. A summary of the meeting dates and the issues discussed is presented in Annex 1.
- In order to streamline biodiversity work in the Broads, a proposal has been made to create a "Broads Wetland Group". The aim is to bring together under one umbrella the many different strands of biodiversity work currently ongoing in the national park. This proposal would also see the Wetlands and Waterbodies BAP Topic Groups being merged, and taking on a remit for biodiversity work outside the Broads.
- The Co-ordinator's Group met on 9 November, and discussed: the proposed Norfolk and Suffolk Local Nature Partnership; proposals to the Biodiversity Project Fund; and transitional arrangements for the Biodiversity Co-ordinator's post.

#### Biodiversity Project Fund

- Following discussions within the relevant Topic Groups, four new proposals to the Biodiversity Project Fund have been approved (Annex 2). A balance of nearly £12,500 remains in the Project Fund.
- The successful projects were:

- Expansion of grazing on Litcham Common;
  - Fens Biodiversity Audit;
  - Mousehold heath earth heritage trail;
  - Assessment of County Wildlife Sites on former mineral sites.
- Previously approved projects have continued to make good progress. For example, during the course of this financial year, the Fen Restoration Project has:
    - Brought six fen CWS into HLS (90ha). A further six sites are in process of entering HLS, with an expected start date of February 2012 (65ha);
    - Initiated management work at 12 sites previously unmanaged or neglected sites (220ha);
    - Surveyed two new potential fen CWS.
  - Similarly, the Broads CWS Designation Project has surveyed six potential County Wildlife Sites this year (30ha). A total of 145ha has been designated since the project began in 2009.

#### Partnership Funding

- Contributions towards the NBP's core budget for this financial year have now been received from (or committed by) a majority of the regular funding partners. We are grateful to the following organisations for their support: Broadland District Council; Broads Authority; Environment Agency; Forestry Commission; Norfolk County Council; North Norfolk District Council; Norwich City Council; and South Norfolk Council.

#### Action Plans

- The revised Heathland/Acid Grassland Habitat Action Plan has been finalised and endorsed by the Heathland Topic Group; the plan will be considered for formal adoption by the Steering Group at its meeting on 16 November. The plan contains SMART targets as well as a list of BAP species associated with heath/acid grassland.
- Substantial progress has been made with the revision and preparation of several other action plans, including the Habitat Action Plans for reedbed, open mosaic habitats on previously developed land and saline lagoons, and the Species Action Plans for swift, barn owl and several species of mollusc.

### **2.2 Improve the quality and availability of information about Norfolk's biodiversity**

- The East Coast Seaweed Survey (supported in part by the Biodiversity Project Fund) was extremely successful. It generated a considerable number of new records for the county, and also revealed a species of sponge new to science. The survey received a large amount of local and national media publicity.

- *The Flora of King's Lynn* (supported in part by the Biodiversity Project Fund) was formally launched in November, and has also received considerable attention from the local media. The book has been written in an accessible style, and highlights the importance of urban areas for biodiversity; over 800 species were recorded during the course of the survey work leading up to the publication.
- Considerable progress has been made in finalising a publication on Important Arable Plant Areas in Norfolk. The report is the result of a study, undertaken by FWAG and the Norfolk Flora Group, with support from the NBP's Biodiversity Project Fund and the assistance of NBIS. The report confirms Norfolk's outstanding significance for arable plants, and identifies 347 tetrads of national importance and 12 tetrads of European importance. The report also provides recommendations for enhancing the conservation of arable plants in the county, including better targeting of Environmental Stewardship. It is expected that the report will be published in December.

### **2.3 Promote understanding of biodiversity and engagement in the BAP process**

- The Annual Biodiversity Forum was successfully held on 3 November, under the title: "Playing God: The Science, Art and Controversy of Species' Re-introductions". Over 110 participants attended, representing a very wide array of stakeholder groups. The day featured: an overview of the IUCN re-introduction guidelines from Mark Stanley-Price, the Chair of the IUCN Re-introduction Task Force; a presentation on the Scottish Beaver Trial by Roisin Campbell-Turner, Field Operations Manager with the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland; a summary of the RSPB's re-introduction experience from Leigh Lock, Senior Species Recovery Officer; an update on the re-introduction of the pool frog to Norfolk by John Buckley from Amphibian and Reptile Conservation; and a presentation by Mike Sutton-Croft on Norfolk's first native crayfish "ark" site. The day closed with a keynote address by Victoria Chester, Chief Executive of Plantlife.
- With support from the Biodiversity Project Fund, BTCV has developed a directory of local community conservation organisations. The results are striking and demonstrate the very significant contribution that local groups are making to conservation groups in the county: nearly 60 groups have been identified, working with some 1,300 volunteers on over 200 sites. The directory is now available as a searchable, online database on the NBP's website.
- With the assistance of the County Council's ICT team, the Partnership's website ([www.norfolkbiodiversity.org](http://www.norfolkbiodiversity.org)) has been completely re-designed, in order to give it a more contemporary look. A considerable amount of new content has also been added, and the site now more fully reflects the range of activities in which the Partnership is engaged.

- The Co-ordinator took part in the “South Norfolk Day” on 17 July and “Wild about Norfolk” on 15 October. Both events were well-attended, with Wild about Norfolk attracting in excess of 1,100 participants at its new location at Easton College.
- NBP has continued to submit material for the monthly e-bulletin which is prepared by NBIS in collaboration with the other members of the biodiversity team at County Hall. The bulletin has been running for over half a year now, and feedback has been very positive.
- A winter newsletter is currently in preparation. In response to the feedback received on earlier versions, it is proposed to trial a new and more streamlined format.

#### **2.4 Monitor and report on the progress of the Norfolk BAP**

- Reporting on the progress of the BAP has continued through the Topic Groups, the Co-ordinator’s Group and the Steering Group. Information has also been made available via the e-bulletin and the Partnership’s website.

#### **2.5 Promote the integration of biodiversity into key planning processes and sectors**

##### Planning and Biodiversity Seminar:

- In collaboration with the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership, the 7<sup>th</sup> Planning and Biodiversity Seminar was held on 6 October. The day attracted some 70 participants, the majority of whom were forward planners and development control officers. The day included presentations on: national developments related to biodiversity and development planning by Mike Oxford, Project Officer with the Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE); the implications of the Localism Bill by Marie Smith, Forest Heath District Council; biodiversity offsetting by Claire Lewis from Defra; new ways of working by Alison Collins from Natural England; the new District Ecologist post by David White from NBIS/NCC; and the role of local record centres in landscape-scale projects and planning by Martin Horlock from NBIS. The day also featured a demonstration by Mike Oxford of the on-line forward planning toolkit, which can be accessed at: [www.biodiversityplanningtoolkit.com/](http://www.biodiversityplanningtoolkit.com/)

##### Biodiversity Offsetting

- David White, District Ecologist, worked with GNDP to prepare a proposal for Greater Norwich to become pilot area for biodiversity offsetting. NBP provided a small amount of input to the proposal and looks forward to being involved in helping to implement this exciting initiative, should the application be successful. A decision is expected towards the end of November.

## Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Following discussions with NBP, NBIS and NCC, David White has now begun the process of revising the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance. This will include updating the information to reflect recent changes to policy, legislation and organisations; it will also include the incorporation of new material to address issues which were not addressed in the first version. It is hoped that a draft version of the revised guidance will be available for consultation by spring 2012.

## Community Strategies

- The Co-ordinator has continued to serve as a member of the Board for the Broadland Community Partnership, as well as the BCP's "Environment Champion". Substantial input was provided to the BCP's latest project commissioning round, to help identify biodiversity and environmental strands within the overall theme of "economic development".

### **2.6 Assist with the design and implementation of special initiatives to address new and emerging themes and county biodiversity priorities**

#### Proposed Norfolk and Suffolk Local Nature Partnership (LNP):

- Norfolk and Suffolk's joint bid to Defra has been successful and a grant of £31,000 has been received for "capacity building" activities. However, this does not confer formal Local Nature Partnership status; this will be the subject of another application round.
- The funds received from Defra will be used largely to carry out a series of consultative activities, to identify the needs and expectations of different stakeholders. Other activities will include:
  - The launch of a "Business and Biodiversity Forum", to look at the role of the natural environment in supporting the local economy.
  - A feasibility assessment of the potential to roll out a "visitor payback" scheme;
  - The preparation of a draft LNP constitution;
  - The preparation of a draft environmental vision and action plan for the two counties.
- An initial meeting has been held with Peter Holborn and Sue Hooton from Suffolk County Council to discuss implementation of the project. Future meetings will take place on a monthly basis. A positive and constructive meeting had also been held with Chris Starkie, Programme Director with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, who has offered assistance in engaging with local businesses.

## Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative (NNNSI):

NNNSI has continued to make excellent progress. Amongst other achievements, the Initiative has:

- Secured more than £45,000 in additional funding from Defra for range of awareness-raising activities and control and eradication projects on the ground. The funding is intended to assist Norfolk to meet targets under the Water Framework Directive;
- Continued the Floating Pennywort Eradication Project on the River Waveney. The work programme for 2011 has now been completed, resulting in a significant reduction in the volume of floating pennywort found in the river. The project remains on track to achieve full eradication by 2013;
- Launched the “Broad Sweep” citizen science survey, which aims to involve the public in recording six different invasive non-native species. A survey leaflet has been printed and distributed to boat hire centres, angling shops and tourist information centres in the Broads. The survey has generated a good response, with the vast majority of records being submitted through the online recording facility developed with the help of NBIS.
- Collaborated with many different groups and organisations to establish Norfolk’s first native crayfish ark site. Over 300 white-clawed crayfish were taken from the River Glaven (where they are now threatened by the invasive American signal crayfish) and taken to a new river in north Norfolk. All individuals were measured and assessed for disease, and care was taken to ensure good representation of ages and both sexes. The recipient river had previously been surveyed to identify the areas with the most suitable habitat. A search of the data held by NBIS confirmed that white-clawed crayfish had historically been present in the river but had disappeared in recent years (possibly as the result of a pollution incident). The new population will be monitored over several years to gauge its success and will also be supplemented with additional individuals.

## **2.7 Contribute to other county, regional and national biodiversity processes**

### County Groups

- The Co-ordinator has continued to represent the Partnership on the County Wildlife Site Steering Group, the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists’ Society’s Council, the Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership’s Steering Group, the Norfolk FWAG Committee and a number of other bodies.

## Regional Biodiversity Forum

- The Co-ordinator attended the Regional Biodiversity Forum meeting held at Bedfordshire on 21 July. Agenda items included the Natural Environment White Paper and a presentation on the Water Framework Directive.

### **3. Priorities for the Next Four Months**

Some of the priorities for the coming four months will include:

- Putting in place effective transitional arrangements and ensuring a smooth hand-over to the new Biodiversity Co-ordinator;
- Working with Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership to implement capacity building activities in support of the proposed Norfolk and Suffolk Local Nature Partnership;
- Continuing to work as a member of the “Brecks Biodiversity Delivery Group”, and assisting with the preparation of a Breckland Biodiversity Vision and a proposal to the SITA Enriching Nature Programme;
- Putting in place the arrangements for the implementation of the RINSE project on invasive species (should the proposal to the Interreg Two Seas Programme be successful);
- Working with NBIS and GNDP to help implement the biodiversity offsetting pilot (in the event that the proposal to Defra is successful).

Scott Perkin  
Biodiversity Services Co-ordinator  
November 2011

## Annex 1: Summary of Topic Group Meetings Held

Topic Group	Meeting Date	Principal Issues Discussed
Coastal BAP Topic Group	13 October	Agenda items included updates on: the MCZ process; the chalk reef survey; the north coast valuation study; and the Little Tern Working Group.
Communities and Nature BAP Topic Group	25 August	Agenda items included: feedback from the Community Biodiversity Awards and Natural Neighbours; updates on the proposed Local Nature Partnership, biodiversity offsetting, and the Nature Improvement Areas competition; and updates on the action plans for Open Mosaic Habitats, barn owl, swift and allotments.
Ecological Networks Topic Group	No meeting held over this period	
Farmland BAP Topic Group	1 August	Agenda items included: the North Coast AONB's farmer-related activities; an update on the grassland CWS project; a presentation from Syngenta on their "Action for Pollinators" project; and a site visit to look at the meadows at Sea Mere farm.
Heathland BAP Topic Group	27 September	Agenda items included: an update on the heathland CWS project; the finalisation and adoption of the Heathland HAP; updates on the Brecks HLF and NIA bids; and a discussion about two project proposals (CWS on former mineral sites and the Mousehold Geodiversity Trail).
Planning and Biodiversity Topic Group	28 September	Agenda items included: implications of the Natural Environment White Paper; the new District Ecologist post; the Green Infrastructure component of CIL; and the Defra biodiversity offsetting pilot.
Waterbodies BAP Topic Group	18 October	Agenda items included: an introduction to the Norfolk Rivers Trust; an update on the Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative; progress with the Norfolk crayfish "ark" site; and revision of the mollusc Species Action Plans.
Wetlands BAP Topic Group	19 July	Agenda items included: the Broads Biodiversity Audit; an update on the proposed Norfolk and Suffolk LNP; the Fen Orchid Steering Group meeting; the fen hydrology report; and the action plans for reedbeds and fen. The meeting was followed by a site visit to the Buttles Marsh wetland restoration area.
Woodland BAP Topic Group	No meeting held over this period.	

**Annex 2: Summary of Recent Proposals Submitted to the  
Biodiversity Project Fund and Decisions Taken**

	<b>Title of Proposal</b>	<b>Topic Group/ Lead Organisation</b>	<b>Amount Requested</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1.	Expansion of Grazing on Litcham Common	Heathland BAP Topic Group/ Litcham Common Management Committee	£2,750	£2,750
2.	Fen Biodiversity Audit	CPERC/ Wetlands BAP Topic Group	£1,000	£1,000
3.	Mousehold Heath Earth Heritage Trail	Heathland BAP Topic Group/ Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership	£2,500	£2,500
4.	Assessment of CWS on Former Mineral Sites	Heathland BAP Topic Group/ Norfolk Wildlife Trust	£2,500	£2,500

***A complete summary of all activities supported by the Biodiversity Project Fund since its inception in 2004 is available from the Biodiversity Co-ordinator on request.***

### **Annex 3: Calendar of Forthcoming Biodiversity Events**

#### BAP Steering Group

- Dates in 2012 to be determined

#### BAP Co-ordinators' Group

- Date in February 2012 to be set

#### Topic Group Meetings

- Coastal Topic Group: 19 March 2012
- Communities and Nature Topic Group: 8 December 2011
- Ecological Networks Topic Group: Date to be set
- Farmland Topic Group: 21 November 2011
- Planning Topic Group: 8 February 2012
- Heathland Topic Group: 17 January 2012
- Waterbodies Topic Group: 21 February 2012
- Wetlands Topic Group: No date set – may be merged with the Waterbodies Group
- Woodlands Topic Group: Date to be set

#### Annual Biodiversity Forum and Practitioners' Forums

- Heaths Practitioners' Forum: 29 November 2011
- Farming and Biodiversity Practitioners' Forum: Date to be set
- Annual Biodiversity Forum: Date in late October/ early November 2012 to be set

#### Other Biodiversity Events

- NBIS/NatSoc Recorders' Meeting: 23 November 2011
- Wild about the Wensum: 19 May 2012
- Wild about Norfolk: 13 October 2012

#### Regional and National Meetings

- Regional Biodiversity Forum: 25 November 2011