

Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan ACTION FOR WILDLIFE IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Annual report 2006-2007 *Towards a Biodiversity Partnership*

INTRODUCTION

This is the last report which refers only to the BAP: during the 2006-07 financial year the scene was set for establishment of the country's first Biodiversity Partnership. It will combine coordinated action to achieve targets for biodiversity conservation with the services provided by the Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre and management of the system for selection of Local Wildlife Sites.

Since the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust published "*Nature in Lincolnshire – towards a biodiversity strategy*" in 1996 and during the preparation of the first edition of the Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, it has always been recognised that there is a need for sound information on wildlife and their habitats in the historic county of Lincolnshire. Such information is necessary to enable sensible decision-making by all and to ensure that public bodies are able to comply with their statutory responsibilities. Four key BAP partners – Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Lincolnshire County Council and English Nature (now Natural England) – sponsored the development of the Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre (LERC), which was officially 'launched' in November 2006. LERC is continuing to bring together data from a variety of sources and is now in a position to make that information available to partners, and to others on a commercial basis.

The BAP Partnership also recognised the need to update the system for identification and selection of Local Wildlife Sites which, along with biological Sites of Special Scientific Interest, are the most important places for wildlife in the county. A BAP Partnership working group developed guidance, which was published by the Partnership in July 2006, making Lincolnshire the first county to produce guidelines in accordance with those issued by Defra. The first Lincolnshire Local Wildlife Sites have been designated and it is expected that all previously recognised Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) and other sites of value will be assessed by 2010.

After the publication of the 2nd edition of the Lincolnshire BAP in 2006 it seemed appropriate to combine the work of the BAP with the Records Centre and Local Wildlife Sites and establish a new partnership – the Lincolnshire Biodiversity Partnership (LBP), complete with a new logo and website. This was launched in 2007.

This last Annual Report has been delayed by the preparatory work involved in the launch of the new partnership and further complicated by staff changes. After playing a major role in the preparation of the 2nd edition of the BAP Andy Simpkin resigned to take up a new post. After a gap of a few months he was replaced by Catherine Collop, by which time the staff had been reorganised as the LBP with Margaret Haggerty now managing 3.6 staff.

It seemed logical for me to step down as chairman at the launch. I wish the new partnership well and hope that it proves to the nation that integrating the three strands of biodiversity work is the way forward to tackle issues of the 21st Century.

Don Wright
former chairman
Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan



Coastal and marine

Alkborough: The largest flood storage project in Europe, the Alkborough Flats Tidal Defence Scheme in Lincolnshire was officially opened on 20 September 2006. This will reduce the risk of flooding for 300,000 people and become a haven for wildfowl and wading birds. The managed re-alignment at Alkborough allows flood water from the Humber estuary to spill out of the river during the highest tides to fill the low lying land. The capacity of the site is so great that the Environment Agency is predicting a 150mm reduction in high tide levels over a large part of the upper estuary. The project is also creating a large new inter-tidal habitat, attracting more species of wildfowl and wading birds to the area including shelduck, wigeon, teal, avocet and redshank.



Chowder Ness: In July 2006 the managed-realignment at Chowder Ness Foreshore (near Barton-upon-Humber) was completed before its official opening in April 2007 by Helen Phillips, Chief Executive of Natural England. Twelve hectares of inter-tidal wetland have been created on former agricultural land by Associated British Ports to compensate for habitat loss through port developments in the Humber Estuary – demonstrating a commitment to the sustainable development of its ports.

Donna Nook: As part of the Humber Flood Risk Management Strategy, the Environment Agency is also planning realignment works at Donna Nook. Phase 2 appraisal work is timetabled for 2007-08, and it is hoped that construction will begin in 2009, producing around 130 hectares of inter-tidal habitat.

Gibraltar Point National Nature Reserve:

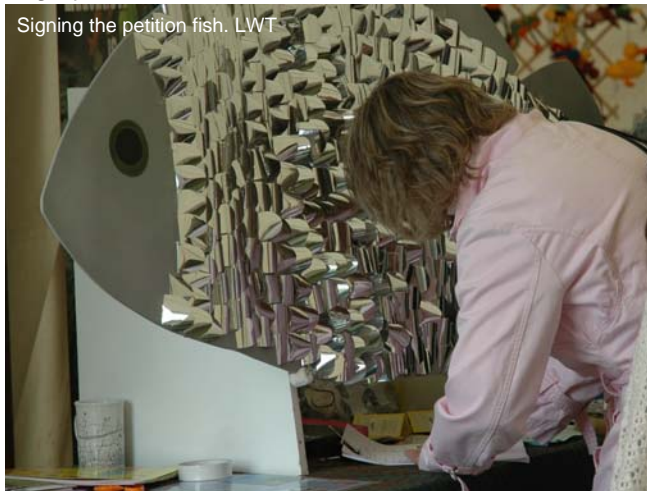


A major re-development of the Visitor Centre was completed in 2006. As part of the new Wild Coast Exhibition two key Biodiversity Action Plan habitats were focused on: the development of sand dunes and saltmarsh, and their importance for wildlife are explained with interpretive displays and models. The visitor centre also includes interactive displays in the Nature Discovery Room and upgraded residential and educational facilities for visiting groups.

The centre was also extended to provide space for a café and viewing area. Gibraltar Point is the Trust's premier site for visitors and for education and the new facilities will

improve the quality of the visitor experience and help to extend the tourist season. The improvements were a partnership effort involving the Trust, Lincolnshire County Council and East Lindsey District Council, securing funding from a variety of sources.

Marine Bill and Petition Fish: Lincolnshire's long coastline and the two estuaries of the Humber and The Wash are vitally important for wildlife. Nationally important nature reserves safeguard wildlife and habitats along the coast but out to sea there is little protection: less than 0.001% of the UK's seas is currently protected. Following years of campaigning by conservation bodies, the Government issued a Marine Bill White Paper in March 2006. The Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust has been campaigning for the Bill to include strong conservation measures and a mechanism for designating Highly Protected Marine Reserves.



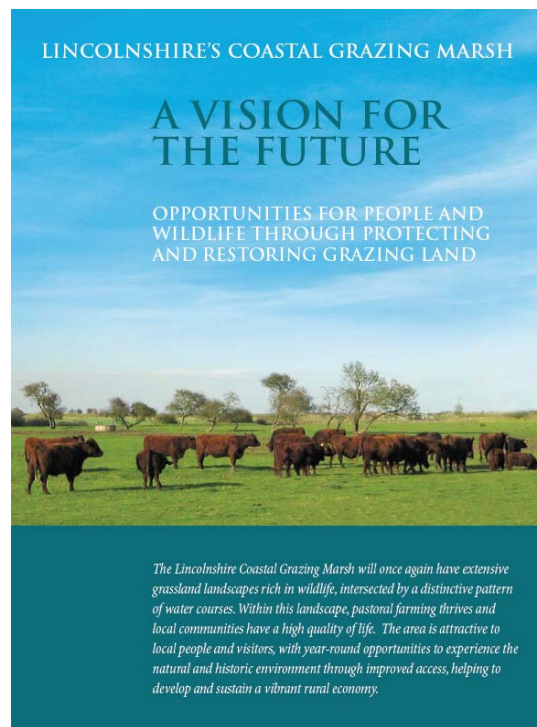
Signing the petition fish. LWT

At the Lincolnshire Show in June 2006, the Trust collected over 600 signatures in support of Highly Protected Marine Reserves – the signatures were on the back of silver fish scales and stuck to a large cut-out of a fish. The idea was adopted by The Wildlife Trusts to be used nationally in 2007. Visitors to the Trust stand were also asked to say which areas they would like to see protected. The Wash and the Humber were high on the list of places in Lincolnshire.

Farmland and grassland

Lincolnshire Coastal Grazing Marsh:

In February people living on the Lincolnshire coast were invited to take part in three community consultation meetings to discuss the Lincolnshire Coastal Grazing Marsh Project. The Project's vision for the Coastal Grazing Marsh can only be achieved with the support of the local community. Since the launch of the Vision document, several landowners have joined the Higher Level Stewardship scheme, resulting in the creation of 71ha of grazing marsh. Additional applications were submitted for habitat maintenance grants for 2007-08. Successful applications were submitted to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to employ a part-time farm adviser for 3 years and to the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop a Landscape Partnership funding bid.



Hedgerows: 2006 saw the Lincolnshire Limewoods Project support another 4 applications to the Limewoods Links Challenge Scheme (supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Countdown 2010) aiming to create and restore habitat linkages across the Limewoods area. 15 landowners received advisory visits from FWAG to identify potential areas for habitat creation, management or enhancement as part of the scheme. A total of 3200 metres of new hedgerows were planted, with additional smaller lengths of hedgerow restoration also completed.

Heathland and peatland

Coversands: Habitat management has been carried out for endangered and vulnerable species including wood lark, nightjar, grayling butterflies, adder and common lizard, as well as many species of plant and lichen.

Work has also begun to identify inland sand dune sites – both within existing Coversands sites and in other areas.



Grayling butterfly, Eric Wright

Water Level Management Plans are being drawn up for Haxey Turbary, Epworth Turbary and Crowle Moors. The quality of these raised bog habitats has been greatly reduced by falling water tables (and other factors) so periodic flooding will add considerably to the heathland and peatland conservation interest by providing habitat for a range of specialised plants, amphibians and invertebrates.



Epworth Turbary LWT Reserve. LWT

Heath Forum/Week 2006: In July 2006 the Coversands Project held a Heathland Forum at Woodhall Spa Golf Course. With over 70 people attending, the day provided an opportunity to share knowledge on heathland management and visit the local heathland resource in the area. Also held in July, the Coversands Heath Week provided an opportunity for people all over Lincolnshire to visit and find out more about the county's heathlands. With 14 events there was something for everyone and many children and adults joined in with the various activities, walks and talks.

Rivers and wetlands

Lincolnshire Chalk Streams Project:

A Project Officer has been in post since April 2006; offering advice, implementing enhancement schemes, supporting stewardship applications and raising awareness. The project has supported seven Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) applications with strong chalk stream elements, three of which involved very detailed surveys and specific management advice. These seven schemes would cover over 25km of Lincolnshire chalk streams, adding to the four enhancement schemes already in place covering 1105m.

Three chalk springs are also benefiting from protection, and the HLS applications mentioned cover a further four.



Greater water-parsnip: Plants were brought on in 2006-07 for planting at a number of sites in 2007-08.



Water vole: Following site surveys and desk studies, Lincolnshire Key Water Vole Sites have been identified at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR and Gibraltar Point NNR: as well as suitable habitat these two sites have secure tenure and sympathetic management. In Oct 2006 the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust carried out further survey work in a variety of watercourses inland from these two coastal sites and in an area to the south-east of Bourne to try to identify additional keys sites for water voles.

Trees and woodland

Lincolnshire Limewoods Project: As part of the Wildlife Corridors in the Lincolnshire Limewoods Project* (supported by Natural England's Countdown 2010 Biodiversity Action Fund) Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust ran a consultancy project to undertake a study of woodlands in the area. This involved identifying all potential ancient woodland sites within the project area and carrying out botanical surveys to confirm their status. 21 sites were surveyed and the information will be used to target woodland and hedgerow creation where it will be of most use with regard to biodiversity. As part of the study the LWT also collated, evaluated and mapped the use of the Lincolnshire Limewoods project area by breeding, wintering and migrating farmland birds listed within the UK and Lincolnshire BAPs. These data will be used in combination with other BAP species and habitat data to inform habitat creation schemes.

* This project aims to help achieve UK, regional and local BAP targets and supplements the work funded by the HLF and project partners.

45 hectares of new native woodland have been established in the Limewoods – this far exceeds the 2015 target of 25 hectares, and the Limewoods Project Partners expect to continue with establishment work. 100 hectares of restoration work began at Skellingthorpe Wood, and further conifer removal has been undertaken within the Bardney Limewoods National Nature Reserve to restore planted ancient woodland sites to appropriate native broadleaved woodland.

Lincolnshire Limewoods. Liz Fleuty



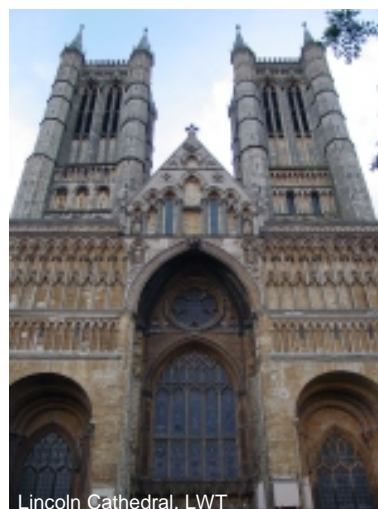
In addition, a total of 2300m of rides have been widened to diversify woodland structure and improve access for visitors, with a further 505m of ride-edge coppicing carried out in Forestry Commission owned woodlands.

Beech Clumps Project: The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Management Plan (2004 to 2009) recognises the special landscape contribution of the Beech Clumps and a priority action is to help landowners to retain, enhance and re-create these features. The trees and shrubs that were planted in 2005-06 received two follow up maintenance visits in 2006-07, during which weed treatment and replacement of guards was undertaken. Even though the summer was hot and dry, the trees grew well, with only occasional losses. During 2006-07 the Beech Clump Project supported the planting of a further 1,780 trees and shrubs, creating 11 new clumps, and under-planting five existing ones, with two schemes also including neighbouring hedge planting. As the uptake of and interest in this initiative continues to grow the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service looks forward to maintaining the same level of commitment over the coming years. At least 16 potential new clumps were earmarked for 2007-08.

Urban

Lincoln BAP: An ecological survey of the city was carried out between July 2006 and Oct 2007 – over 150 sites were surveyed, including seven churchyards and cemeteries, and 18 parks and open spaces. As well as informing the Lincoln BAP process, the survey has been used to inform the review of Lincoln's Local Wildlife Sites.

God's Acre: The first meeting of the God's Acre Project in Lincolnshire took place in September 2006 to discuss a way forward for the revitalised project. In November 2006 letters and a questionnaire were sent to churches within the Wolds AONB in order to gauge interest in and direct the Project: by March 2007 around 30 church community groups had expressed an interest in taking part in the Wolds God's Acre Pilot Project. The next step was to apply for funding and to organise workshops and training days.



Lincoln Cathedral. LWT

Common themes

BioBlitz 2006:

To raise awareness of the importance of biological recording and the value of gardens for wildlife, the first ever Lincolnshire BioBlitz was held at Banovallum House in Horncastle on 7th and 8th July 2006. Organised by the Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership and the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, the BioBlitz was a 24-hour biological survey of the grounds of the Trust Headquarters. Members of the



Identifying pond invertebrates. LWT

public were invited to observe the recording of wildlife as it happened and to participate in bat surveys, moth recording, dawn walks, pond dipping and other wildlife-related activities. Many family groups joined in with the activities and by the end of the 24 hour period, over 250 species had been recorded; including seven species of bumblebee, three species of woodlouse, six species of spider and five fish species.

Lincolnshire Wolds AONB – Trees of our Time: During 2006-07, the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service (LWCS) invited the public to nominate their favourite tree in the Lincolnshire Wolds, send in photographs and give reasons for their nominations. The project sparked interest and discussion and has helped to record a



Nominated tree. Helen Gamble

number of noteworthy specimens including an impressive sweet chestnut at Skendleby and a stunning horse chestnut near Tetford that has been struck by lightning.

Children from Partney Church of England Primary School got involved by undertaking creative arts and poetry activities inspired by the project. They designed and constructed a large tree, complete with foxes, birds and butterflies, and produced a number of posters of trees within the landscape. This artwork, together with their poetry, was displayed alongside the images of the 'Trees of Our Time' nominations at various events throughout 2007, including the Lincolnshire Show. It is hoped the results will encourage people to appreciate the trees around them and recognise their landscape, wildlife and cultural value within the Wolds.

Tree Wardens: An important role that local people can undertake is to become a volunteer Tree Warden, appointed by their parish council or other community organisation. Tree Wardens help to gather information about their local trees, get involved in local tree matters and encourage local practical projects to plant and restore trees and woodland. 2006 saw a revival of the Tree Warden Scheme within Lincolnshire and especially the Wolds, in which the LWCS helped initiate a more coordinated approach across the boundaries of local authorities of East Lindsey, West Lindsey and North East Lincolnshire. Following an article in Wolds News two successful training events were held for Tree Wardens within the Wolds with a further regional conference held at Branston near Lincoln. Training sessions dealt with planting, protection and maintenance, Tree Preservation Orders, mapping ancient trees, and seed collection.

Landscape Grant Scheme:

St. Mary's Church, Fotherby. Fotherby Group Parish



The Landscape Grant Scheme (LGS) managed directly by the LWCS continues to be extremely popular with farmers, landowners and local community groups alike. This easy to access scheme provides 50% to 75%, and for special community projects up to 100%, grant assistance up to a maximum of £1,000. It aims to encourage and support projects that protect and enhance the

Lincolnshire Wolds AONB landscape, its special features and immediate surrounds. During 2006-07 thirteen schemes were awarded LGS grants totalling £9,698 and drawing in £16,346 of match funding. The projects, summarised below, included path and access improvements at All Saints in Oxcombe and St Mary's in Fotherby; tree work at St Michael's in Burwell; reed bed construction at Belchford; assisting Lincolnshire County Council with a footbridge replacement at Biscathorpe; and supplying survey equipment for the Lincolnshire Bat Group. The LGS will continue to operate during 2007-08.

Project type	Number of sites	Length/area
Hedge planting	3	750 metres
Ponds and wetlands	2	
Access, fencing and path improvements	4	
Tree works, including planting, hedgerow tree planting and surgery	4	300 trees planted
Projects with community involvement	7	

FINANCIAL REPORT

BAP funding to March 2007

Funder	£	Expenditure	£
Balance of funds brought forward	24027	BIM salary and on costs	20595
Boston Borough Council	2360	Travel costs	554
East Lindsey District Council	2370	Reports and website	2675
English Nature	15000	Conference, events and review costs	5828
Lincolnshire IDBs	2250	Admin costs	2920
North East Lincolnshire Council	1500	Sundry costs	270
South Holland District Council	1300		
South Kesteven District Council	2840		
West Lindsey District Council	2280		
LWT admin contribution	2920		
Other	80		
Total Income	56927	Total Expenditure	32842
Funds carried forward 31st March 2007			24085

PARTNERS

<p>Ancholme IDB Anglian Water Black Sluice IDB Boston Borough Council British Waterways BTCV Country Land and Business Association Defra East Lindsey District Council Environment Agency Forestry Commission Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Grantham Angling Association Fly Fishing Section Inland Waterways Association Lincoln City Council Lincolnshire Bat Group Lincolnshire County Council Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union Lincolnshire Police Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service</p>	<p>Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board MoD (Defence Estates) National Farmers Union National Trust Natural England North East Lincolnshire Council North East Lindsey IDB North Kesteven District Council North Lincolnshire Council RSPB South Holland District Council South Holland IDB South Kesteven District Council Upper Witham IDB Wash Estuary Strategy Group Welland and Deepings IDB West Lindsey District Council Witham 1st District IDB Witham 3rd District IDB Witham 4th District IDB</p>
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge with thanks all partners who have contributed information for this report and apologise for the delay in its publication.