



Local Wildlife Sites – Watercourses Information for Landowners

Pressures on wildlife in town and country continue to grow. Demand for new housing and roads, and the impact of climate change, all contribute to the decline of wildlife and loss of natural habitats. A well managed network of Local Wildlife Sites is vital for sustaining wildlife in Lincolnshire.

What are Local Wildlife Sites?

Local Wildlife Sites are wildlife rich areas that have been identified and selected for their nature conservation value. These sites are amongst the best places for wildlife in the county, and represent the local character and distinctiveness of Lincolnshire.

Local Wildlife Sites may support threatened habitats such as chalk grassland or ancient woodland, or be important for the plants and animals which are present. Many sites contain habitats and species that are priorities under the UK & Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plans: these documents set out strategies for the conservation of our most vulnerable wildlife. Together with statutory protected areas (Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves), Local Wildlife Sites are vital to maintain the current levels of wildlife in Lincolnshire. This network of sites acts as reservoirs from which wildlife can spread – something which will become more important as climate change increases the pressure on wild species and their habitats over the coming years.

What does it mean for landowners?

A Local Wildlife Site notification is a recognition of a site's nature conservation value. The owner is not obliged to carry out work to protect or maintain the land's wildlife interest and the notification does not confer any rights of access. However, it is hoped that owners and managers of Local Wildlife Sites will want to consider wildlife when making their management decisions.

The Value of Watercourses

As a result of major land drainage works in the 17th Century, Lincolnshire is covered by an extensive network of waterways including man-made drains and natural river and stream systems such as the Witham and Bain. These provide natural corridors along which wildlife can travel and forage, replacing hedgerows for this purpose in parts of the county. The richest rivers and streams for wildlife include a mosaic of features which support a diverse range of plants and animals. For example, riffles and pools support numerous aquatic invertebrate and plant species, and exposed sediments such as shingle beds and sand bars are important for a range of specialist invertebrates. Marginal and bankside vegetation supports an array of wild flowers and also provides habitat for water vole, otter and kingfisher.

In Lincolnshire, and throughout the country, rivers and streams are threatened by decreasing water levels caused by water abstraction for public water supply, industrial use and agricultural irrigation. Pollution, such as chemical run-off from adjacent agricultural land and the road network, has a major impact on water quality and hence on aquatic flora and fauna. Grazing of river banks is generally beneficial, but if overdone can destroy the vegetation and make the habitat unsuitable for animals such as the water vole, which lives in burrows in the bankside.

Watercourse Local Wildlife Sites have maintained a value for wildlife. If managed carefully and sympathetically, these wildlife-rich watercourses will continue to provide valuable habitats for a wide range of species including fish, bankside mammals, birds, invertebrates and plants.

Watercourse Biodiversity

- The UK kingfisher population increased by 76% between 1994 and 2002.
- Otters are now confirmed as being present on all of Lincolnshire's river catchments.
- Despite a national decline in water vole numbers, it is thought that Lincolnshire is a stronghold for the species.
- Chalk streams and springs in the UK are of international importance – supporting a rare and unique range of wildlife.



Further information and advice

Conservation organisations have information available on their websites or as factsheets and leaflets that can be posted. However, most of these organisations have limited capacity for visiting sites and offering on the ground advice to landowners and managers.

River & Stream Habitats:

Environment Agency

Advice for landowners adjacent to watercourses.
Tel: 08708 506506
www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service

Offer on site land management advice and assistance on grants within the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
Tel: 01507 609740
aonb@lincswolds.org.uk www.lincswolds.org.uk

River Restoration Centre

Technical advice on river restoration and management.
Tel: 01234 752979
admin@therrc.co.uk www.therrc.co.uk

Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs)

Consent for altering the flow or placing obstructions in water courses. Contact **Association of Drainage Authorities** to find your local IDB.
Tel: 0844 209 0089
www.ada.org.uk

Lincolnshire Chalk Streams Project

Offer on site advice on management and restoration of chalk stream habitats. Factsheets available on website.
Tel: 01507 609740
aonb@lincswolds.org.uk
www.lincswolds.org.uk/chalkstreams.htm

Local Contacts:

Lincolnshire Biodiversity Partnership

Advice on site management and general wildlife.
Tel: 01507 526667
info@lincsbiodiversity.org.uk
www.lincsbiodiversity.org.uk

Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

Advice on site management and general wildlife.
Tel: 01507 526667
info@lincstrust.co.uk www.lincstrust.org.uk

Natural England

Advice and provision of funds through environmental stewardship.
Lincoln Office Tel: 0300 060 6000
Nottingham Tel: 0300 060 6000
eastmidlands@naturalengland.org.uk
Wakefield Office Tel: 0300 060 1863
humber@naturalengland.org.uk
www.naturalengland.org.uk

National Organisations:

The Vincent Wildlife Trust

Information and advice on mammals.
Tel: 01531 636441
vwt@vwt.org.uk www.vwt.org.uk

RSPB

Wide range of habitat and species specific books, advisory sheets and leaflets.
Tel: 01767 680551 www.rspb.org.uk

Lincolnshire County Council

General management advice, grants for tree planting, ponds etc, information on Local Nature Reserves.
Tel: 01522 552222 www.lincolnshire.gov.uk

North Lincolnshire Council

General advice and information (including Local Nature Reserves)
Tel: 01724 296296 www.northlincs.gov.uk

North-East Lincolnshire Council

General advice and information (including Local Nature Reserves)
Tel: 01472 313131 www.nelincs.gov.uk

Buglife

Information on invertebrates and their habitats.
Tel: 01733 201210
info@buglife.org.uk www.buglife.org.uk

Froglife

Advice and sources of funding for amphibians.
Tel: 01733 558960
info@froglife.org www.froglife.org

Further Reading:

- Brooks, A. & Agate, E.** 2001 *Waterways and Wetlands – A Practical Handbook*, BTCV
English Nature 2005 *Getting wetter for wildlife: Guidance on habitat restoration and creation* (free from Natural England publications)
Gilbert, O.L. & Anderson, P. 1998 *Habitat Creation and Repair*, Oxford University Press
Mainstone, C. 1999 *Chalk rivers: nature conservation and management*, English Nature
Sutherland, William J. & Hill, David A. 1995 *Managing Habitats for Conservation*, Cambridge University Press
Ward, D., Holmes, N. & Jose, P. 1994 *The new rivers and wildlife handbook*, RSPB