

Barnsley Biodiversity Trust

Annual General Meeting, 28 January 2015

Trustees Report for 2014



The Barnsley Biodiversity Trust is a voluntary body of individuals and representatives of organisations with an interest in promoting Barnsley's biodiversity - its landscapes, habitats, sites and wildlife. Together we raise public awareness of biodiversity issues and take action to conserve and enhance Barnsley's biodiversity. This benefits all those who live in and visit Barnsley.

The Trust prepares the local biodiversity action plan which highlights species and habitats in Barnsley that warrant conservation; it gives a basis for individuals and organisations to work to promote biodiversity.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans offer a recognised framework for public bodies to undertake their duty to conserve biodiversity; this goes beyond just conserving what is already there to carrying out, supporting, and requiring actions that may also restore or enhance biodiversity.

Work promoting biodiversity is taking place through the actions of partners including the RSPB, Wildlife Trusts, the Woodland Trust, Groundwork, Voluntary Action Barnsley and other voluntary groups, and statutory bodies such as Barnsley Council, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency and Natural England.

Two workshops have now been held to bring partners together to help in revising the local biodiversity action plan. The comments made and ideas suggested have been incorporated in the plan and have been made available on line for comment. The intention is that the plan is completed in the next few months: it is anticipated that the revised version will be adopted by Barnsley council this year.

The activities within the **Dearne Valley Green Heart Nature Improvement Area (NIA)**, now in its third and last year, bring a number of these partners together in projects in the lower Dearne Valley to link people better to the landscape they live in, create new green infrastructure, undertake education outreach, and improve and create new habitats across the area including wetland, woodland and farmland. The Barnsley Biodiversity Trust is a partner in NIA developments. Sustaining the good practice developed in the NIA and developing it further is an important issue for all partners to address.

Barnsley Council has submitted a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund **Landscape Partnership** scheme for activities over the next five years in approximately the same area as the NIA with an emphasis on issues including natural heritage as well as archaeology, the built heritage, and wide community involvement. Although the BBT would have wished for an even stronger emphasis on biodiversity and natural heritage within the proposals, we realise that a balance needed to be struck between the different aspects of heritage.

Records: The *Barnsley Biological Records Centre* is now in its third year of development by Sheffield Council Ecology Unit in a contract funded by Barnsley council, with now over 150,000 records. Its records are increasingly in demand for planning policy and planning application decisions. Although we can be pleased with the progress achieved there is still more to do in extending the range of species covered and the coverage of habitats and sites.

Sites: The BBT supports the work of the *Sites Partnership* which designates sites for the area and seeks to bring them into positive conservation management. Barnsley council has reported that although the proportion of the Local Wildlife Sites reported as having positive management had risen from 2011, there is

some way to go to reach a satisfactory position. As stated in last year's report, the BBT and partners can be more proactive in promoting conservation management of sites and identifying new sites that are valuable as habitats.

Planning and development. The potential effects of development on habitats or species listed as priorities by Local Biodiversity Partnerships as well as national policies and legislation are a material consideration in planning policy and planning decisions.

The Trust responded to the consultation on Barnsley council's Local Plan. We were pleased that following ecological assessments for the proposed development sites, the Local Plan now includes some site mitigation measures. We recommended that the approach proposed in the Local Plan is rigorously applied to both planning policy and planning decisions, namely: will the proposals: enhance or protect designated sites? enhance and protect the biodiversity of the Borough? contribute to greater connectivity in the biodiversity network? support existing green infrastructure and ecosystem service, and provide opportunities to enhance or create new features?

We would urge the council to insist that developers aim higher than simply striving for no net biodiversity loss: mitigation (avoidance, reduction and repair) and compensatory measures should aim to enhance biodiversity and produce biodiversity gains.

Projects: Biodiversity in Schools project. The Barnsley Biodiversity Trust has been successful in a bid for funding to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a biodiversity in schools project, starting with a volunteers' event in September 2013. The project is now in its second year. The project is intended to work with 18 schools and 48 volunteers over its three year life.

In its first year the project worked with ten schools in addition to 12 schools it was already working with, this has increased in the second year to # schools, well on the way to the target 18 schools in the bid.

The project held a training event for 20 volunteers in October 2013. 13 volunteers helped during the school year 2013 to 2014 to wards the target of 48 volunteers over the three years of the project. A second training day was held in September 2014 for which a training manual was produced. This is also being made available for each of the schools involved.

Overall schools have been provided with 144 bird boxes, 87 bat boxes, 117 bee boxes, and 26 hedgehog boxes. In addition two ponds and two wild flower areas have been constructed and three nest boxes with cameras provided.

A number of schools have also been supported by the BBT in the Barnsley Bioblitz, organised by Sorby Natural History society, the RSPB, and the BBT.

Hogwatch. Friends of the Earth Penistone and the Barnsley Biodiversity Trust have been successful in a bid for funding from the Co-operative Membership Community Fund, South Yorkshire Community Foundation and Penistone Round Table to promote more being done to find out the numbers of hedgehogs seen in the area west of the M1 in Barnsley and the conditions that suit them, and to promote making our gardens, parks, fields and verges better for hedgehogs.

This report, together with any additional information coming from this meeting, will be available on the Trust's website, which also includes the revisions to the local biodiversity action plan.

Peter Roberts, Chair, Barnsley Biodiversity Trust, 28 January 2015

Barnsley Biodiversity Trust is registered as a company limited by guarantee (ref. 04944176) and as a charity (ref. 1111905).