

BUILT ENVIRONMENT HABITAT ACTION PLAN

Plan Co-ordinator	Urban Habitat Group
Plan Author	Gary Murphy
Plan Lead	
Latest version	May 2007



Working with Wildlife

Description

This action plan covers the following:

- Buildings
- Structures such as: walls / bridges / tunnels / pylons / underground sites.
- Hard surfacing such as: unit paving/ bound materials / hardcore / tarmac / concrete / railway ballast.

Historic buildings are often important for plants such as lichens, and modern buildings can be important to animals such as pipistrelle bats and their roosts. Birds such as the peregrine, kestrel and the feral pigeon may use buildings for roosting and nesting.

Canal, road and rail infrastructure can also form an important part of this habitat. Utilities such as sewage works, and structures relating to the supply of electricity and gas and communication facilities may also be used by birds and bats.

Plants and animals which use buildings and structures can be very common (e.g. brown rats, feral pigeons), or uncommon such as bats and barn owls. Some may spend all of their life-cycle living on/in a structure (e.g. lichens or ferns), or use the structure for part of their life-cycle, i.e. for nesting, and utilising local habitats for feeding.

Conservation Status

Specific legislation for the built environment relates to the species that utilise its structures for roosting and nesting, such as birds and bats.

Current Extent in Northumberland

Little is known about the built environment as a habitat type compared with the more natural habitat types. The ecological requirements of many 'urban' species are poorly understood and options for management are often unclear. Without site specific knowledge, species cannot be protected even if they are covered by European law (for example bats). A lack of information about the habitat and the species which use it is the most important factor affecting this habitat.

Associated Action Plans

Bats
Barn owl
Garden birds
Brownfield land
Transport corridors

Current factors causing loss or decline

- Lack of information
- Disturbance, destruction and fragmentation of the habitat
- Lack of framework for assessing the value and importance of the habitat
- Impractical to protect the habitat sometimes e.g. where maintenance of a structure for health and safety is required
- Lack of awareness of the importance of this habitat

Further Information

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment website - <http://www.cabe.org.uk>

This built environment action plan links to the UK BAP built up areas and gardens action plan.

Targets

Maintain the current extent of built environment sites containing legally protected species in Northumberland by 2010 (no net loss).

Priority Actions	Date
Scope out the key types of structures that may be important for BAP priority species	2007
Survey the structures for priority species	2010
Ensure that local wildlife site criteria include built structures as well as 'typical' habitats	2007
Classify the best sites based upon the local wildlife site criteria	2010
Develop and incorporate biodiversity design into new/converted structures through development plan and other policies	2008
Provide guidelines for developers, local authorities and landowners about the importance of the built environment and how to manage and retain key features	2008
Develop campaigns linking local communities and businesses to their local environment	Ongoing