

Part B Action Plans**Table of Contents**

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Habitat Action Plans

H-1 SPECIES-RICH GRASSLANDS AND FLOODPLAIN PASTURES

Species Action Plans

Birds

B-A1 LAPWING *VANELLUS VANELLUS*

Invertebrates

I-A1 SILVER-WASHED FRITILLARY BUTTERFLY *ARGYNNIS PAPHIA*

Mammals

M-A1 HAZEL DORMOUSE *MUSCARDINUS AVELLANARIUS*

Vascular plants

VP-A1 GREATER BUTTERFLY ORCHID *PLATANThERA CHLORANTHA*

Appendix Part B

B-1 Grassland types in Monmouthshire as described by the National Vegetation Classification

B-2 Scientific names of species mentioned in the text

1. Introduction to habitat and species action plans

The UK Government, in order to fulfil its commitments under the Biodiversity Convention, has prepared national **Habitat Action Plans (HAPs)** and **Species Action Plans (SAPs)** for nationally scarce or declining habitats and species. Plans are very much a first step. After the plans must come the actions and the UK Government has committed itself and others to ensuring that the plans are implemented and the necessary actions carried out.

These plans, the HAPs and SAPs, outline the extent and distribution of the resource whether it is heathland or reedbed, dormouse or stag beetle. The plans also outline the threats facing Priority habitats and species, the objectives and most importantly, the actions needed to halt the decline of the resource and to set in place recovery programmes. The organisations, whether statutory or voluntary, that must play a role in these actions are identified, and importantly, time-scales are set in which the actions should be completed.

Local HAPs and SAPs make the plans relevant at a county level. They identify what is important locally and what must be done locally to fulfil commitments made through national plans. They also cover species, which are rare or important locally, even if not nationally. The plans and implementation of the plans are vital if we are to safeguard Biodiversity (the range of wildlife) that already exists in Monmouthshire, and to try to reverse the all too frequent declines in so many species of plant and animal.

1.1 Generic Objectives and Targets for Habitats and Species

1. Maintain the existing Priority habitats and populations of Priority species
2. Enhance Priority habitats or populations of Priority species
3. Expand the area of suitable habitat for Priority species
4. Link isolated habitats and populations of Priority species.
5. Secure appropriate management at known sites with Priority habitats or species
6. Establish the distribution and extent of Priority species or habitats in Monmouthshire, which will be important in determining future action and integral as information for Development Planning and Development Control decisions.

1.2 Generic Actions for Habitats and Species

1. Ensure policies and strategies do not adversely affect existing Priority habitats or populations of Priority species
2. Consider the requirements of Priority species and habitats when reviewing agri-environment schemes (Tir Gofal) and Woodland Grant Schemes / Woodland Improvement Grants
3. Seek to designate important sites as SSSI, SINCR or LNR

4. Ensure Priority Species and Habitats are fully considered when assessing any development, which may impact upon the species, paying particular attention to its protection under UK and European legislation
5. Ensure opportunities for appropriate mitigation during development are used when avoidance is not an option
6. Ensure opportunities for enhancing Priority habitat and habitat for Priority species are utilised during the planning process

2. Tranche 1

2.1 Tranche 1 Habitats

Monmouthshire supports many important habitats and species (Appendix A-1 and Appendix A-2). Among the nationally scarce and declining habitats, perhaps one of the most important and most threatened in Monmouthshire is the scattering of remnant **species-rich grasslands**.

Habitats are only associations of species, each habitat having a different set of species. Because of the local and national importance of species-rich grasslands a Habitat Action Plan has been prepared for all types of species-rich grasslands occurring in Monmouthshire, whether on limestone in the south of the county, on neutral or acid soils in the north and east or on poorly-drained, sometimes waterlogged soils throughout the county.

The benefits of safeguarding, improving management and restoring species rich grasslands will also be important for many species comprising the habitat and utilising it. Plants such as green-winged orchids, butterflies such as marbled whites and common blues and a wide range of other insects, and birds will also be conserved.

Maps are included to indicate the distribution, by tetrad (2km x 2km square), of the various grassland types found in the county, based on the current available information. The dots on these maps should not be taken as an indication of the extent of the habitat however, details of which are contained within the text of the statement.

2.2 Tranche 1 Species

Although by looking after habitats, we will be looking after a multitude of species associated with each habitat, there are some plants or animals where looking after the habitat is not enough. Specific actions are needed to ensure the species' survival.

In Tranche 1 Species action plans are provided here for just four species, although many more warrant plans of their own. In total over 470 species have been identified, so far, which are important in Monmouthshire (Appendix A-2). The four species chosen for this first stage were selected to be representative of the range of species groupings present in Monmouthshire - a mammal, a bird, an invertebrate and a plant.

Dormouse was chosen for the mammal SAP because not only is the dormouse a Priority species in the UK but also parts of Monmouthshire are important strongholds for this attractive and rare small mammal.

Many birds, especially farmland species, are declining nationally. In Monmouthshire we have all but lost several species, notably breeding **lapwing** and

tree sparrows. Because the lapwing is known to all farmers and many members of the public and is a beautiful and evocative species that typifies farmland, it was chosen as the bird for which a SAP would be prepared. Relatively simple measures could arrest its decline and restore its former numbers.

Butterflies have suffered greatly from intensive agriculture and from unsympathetic management of woodlands nationally and locally. Sadly the BAP priority species identified as most at threat in the UK, namely high brown, pearl-bordered and marsh fritillaries, probably no longer occur in Monmouthshire. Action Plans have already been prepared for some of these in neighbouring counties where there are still important strongholds.

In Monmouthshire the **silver-washed fritillary**, a species identified as being of conservation concern but not a national priority species, was selected for a local action plan. The silver-washed fritillary still occurs in many Monmouthshire woodlands especially in the east of the county, but is uncommon and declining. The status of this attractive butterfly could be enhanced if woodlands were managed in a way sympathetic to its needs. We do not want to lose it from the county as could well be the case if current trends continue. It is sobering to read in Neil Horton's monumental work on the butterflies and moths of Monmouthshire of the massive losses over the last 50-60 years. **"During the 1950s and early 1960s at a wood in the Angiddy Valley six species of fritillary were to be found including the high brown, dark green and the marsh fritillary but sadly now, in the early 1990s, only the silver-washed fritillary remains and that in very reduced numbers"** (Horton 2000).

The choice of one plant species for an Action Plan was more difficult because in Monmouthshire more than 150 are now considered rare and many of these declining (Evans 2002). Few nationally rare plants still survive in the county. Some of our most beautiful and rarest species, such as green-winged orchid, still occur in a few old hay meadows and will be safeguarded if actions are taken to safeguard our species-rich grasslands. One orchid, the **greater butterfly orchid**, occurs in grassland and in woodland glades over a wide area of the county but many of its known populations are disappearing through lack of management. To highlight the actions needed to safeguard this beautiful orchid a SAP has been prepared for the greater butterfly orchid. Many other species warrant their own plans if they are to be safeguarded for future generations to enjoy.

Through carrying out the actions identified in the species action plans, many other plants and animals will also be better safeguarded. Managing woodlands and grasslands for dormice, silver-washed fritillaries and greater butterfly orchids will bring huge benefits to a wide range of plants and butterflies, whilst sympathetic farming practices will benefit not only lapwings but other declining farmland birds such as grey partridge, tree sparrow, linnets and yellowhammers.

Maps are included to indicate the distribution of the four species in the county, based on the current available information. The dots on these maps indicate the presence of the species within a tetrad (2km x 2km square). Each dot may only indicate a single record and gives no indication of the abundance of the species, details of which are contained within the text of each plan where this is available.

3. Future Habitat and Species Action Plans

Prior to the publication and adoption of the Monmouthshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan it was decided that clear priorities for future habitat and species action plans needed to be set.

The Monmouthshire Biodiversity Partnership was asked to decide on the future mechanism for writing Action Plans and to suggest any habitats or species that they thought should be included in any further tranche of the Monmouthshire LBAP.

3.1 Future Priority Habitats

Habitat Action Plans for habitats important in Monmouthshire that already exist on a *Greater Gwent* level will be adapted for use in the Monmouthshire LBAP. Some exceptions will occur where less technical habitat types are required such as one woodland habitat action plan instead of the four technical types written at a *Greater Gwent* level.

The habitats to be included are those that are most important due to their rarity and are at most risk of being degraded or lost. The chosen habitats should have lots of potential for many actions that will contribute to an overall gain for Biodiversity in the county.

3.2 Future Priority Species

The partnership also decided, where possible, to contribute to the conservation of individual species through the inclusion of the species' habitat in any future tranche of the action plan. It may be appropriate for some species to write a short **Species Statement** associated with a particular habitat with one or more specific actions.

Where species are closely associated with one or more habitat and inclusion of just the habitat is not sufficient, a separate action plan is to be written. Where an action plan already exists in another area this plan can be adapted for Monmouthshire.

Other species to be included are those that as well as being locally important are useful for increasing public awareness about Biodiversity e.g. slow worm.

The lists below are the result of meetings and consultation that will be subject to change pending research and development of the plans. It will be possible to complete some action plans relatively quickly, whereas others may take considerably longer because of their scope and in some cases the need to gain wide agreement for the proposed actions. Therefore, the timing for the completion of each tranche of plans is only indicative.

3.3 Future Tranche Summary

Tranche 1 (July 2005)

- **Species rich grasslands and floodplain pastures:** lowland neutral grassland, lowland dry acidic grassland, lowland calcareous grassland, marshy grassland or rhos pasture, seasonally flooded pasture, road verges.
- **Lapwing**
- **Silver washed fritillary**
- **Dormouse**
- **Greater butterfly orchid**

Tranche 2 (2005/2006 onwards)

- **Linear features:** hedgerows, verges, green lanes, riparian fringe, forest rides, railways, cereal field margins
- **The built environment:** traditional buildings, new housing estates, cemeteries, other built features. **Species Statement:** barn owl
- **Ancient veteran trees and traditional orchards.** **Species Statements:** ivy, mistletoe
- **Heathland and moorland.** **Species Statement:** nightjar
- **Woodland.** **Species statement:** yellow necked mouse, red wood ant
- **Ponds and marshy habitat**
- **Great crested newt**
- **Turtle dove**
- **Bumblebees**
- **Selected butterfly species.** **Species Statement:** Selected butterfly species
- **Selected moth species.** **Species Statement:** Selected moth species
- **Lesser horseshoe bat**
- **Greater horseshoe bat**
- **Spreading bellflower**
- **Slow worm**
- **Problematic species:** giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, winter heliotrope, American mink.

Other species statements

- **Natterer's bat**
- **Brown long eared bat**
- **Whiskered/ Brandt's bats**
- **Lesser butterfly orchid**

Tranche 3 (2006/2007 onwards)

- **Otter**
- **White-clawed crayfish**
- **Selected grasshoppers and cricket species**
- **Farmland birds:** tree sparrow, grey partridge, woodlark, linnet, skylark, reed bunting, yellowhammer
- **Glow worm**
- **Selected butterfly species. Species Statement: Selected butterfly species**
- **Selected moth species. Species Statement: Selected moth species**

Other species statements

- **Water vole**
- **Brown hare**