

Autumn 2010 Newsletter

Where Next for the CBD? *Laurie Jackson, Sussex Biodiversity Partnership*

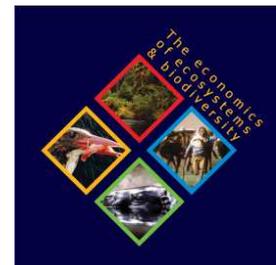
The Biodiversity Action Plan is the response of the UK government to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Convention recognised for the first time in international law that conservation of biodiversity is a common concern of mankind, and in signing, the Parties to the Convention committed themselves to significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.



Life in harmony, into the future

From 18-29 October, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-10) - the governing body of the CBD - will be held in Nagoya, Japan, with officials attending from 193 countries. The CBD COP-10 will be looking to establish new targets for conserving biodiversity over the next ten years, as well as developing a vision for 2050.

Amongst the main areas of agreement identified is the need to put a fair economic value on natural services and resources, which underpin the global economy. Currently, these services such as pollination, fertile soils and flood defences are used freely, resulting in growing costs of ecosystem degradation and biodiversity losses. It is essential the economic benefits of the natural environment are built in to our accounting systems, and The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity study will be used as a basis for this.



A key issue is improving evidence-based policy-making, and to aid this, a new international body, the Intergovernmental science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services is being established. Sharing the benefits of biodiversity is central to the COP-10, in an agenda called Access and Benefits of biodiversity, which is seen as essential to gain the support of developing countries. Other issues identified requiring in-depth consideration are inland waters biodiversity, marine and coastal biodiversity, mountain biodiversity, protected areas, sustainable use of biodiversity, biodiversity and climate change.

The outcomes of Nagoya will be an important milestone for the CBD and will hopefully bring agreements that help develop a more sustainable society and address the urgent need to halt current environmental degradation and biodiversity loss.

Forest-scale Habitat Restoration at Abbot's Wood *Jay Doyle, Forestry Commission England*

Abbot's Wood near Polegate, East Sussex is proving to be an altogether more interesting site for biodiversity and the visitor alike with the restoration of its priority habitats and species now well underway.

The 350 hectare complex is very much mixed-woodland, being dominated by broadleaves which cover close to 50% of the site, with conifer being dominant in just over a third of the woodland by area. 67% of the site is classified as plantation on an ancient woodland site and 29% as ancient semi-natural woodland. The remainder of the site is comprised of a stretch of Common land known as Milton Hide.



Photo: Butterfly Conservation

As the Forestry Commission’s ancient and native woodland restoration programme *Woodscape* has been rolled out over the past decade the woodland complex has been displaying a far more diverse appearance as native vegetation on conifer clearfells and restructured rides and roads responds to the more open conditions and a flush of natural regeneration takes hold. There have been a number of success stories this year for the wood’s resident priority species, much of which comes in response to the dynamic land management at the forest-scale:

- The recently reintroduced Pearl-bordered Fritillary population hit record numbers with close to 250 individuals being recorded during the peak count. The butterfly has expanded across the entire block occupying all recent conifer clearfells. The targeted fine-scale habitat management in and around the core release area can now be relaxed in response to this forest wide recovery.
- Earlier this year Plantlife visited Abbot’s Wood to resurvey for Spiked Rampion, one of the UK’s rarest plants and the site was reaffirmed as a key national site; supporting some 200 plants or two thirds of the UK population.
- Abbot’s Wood is a key site in the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme and the August visit recorded record numbers of Hazel Dormouse, a flagship species of ancient woodland. This allows important inferences to be drawn about the response of the species to forest-scale ancient and native woodland restoration.



Photo: Graeme Lyons



Photo: Alan Novelle

The habitat restoration and successful species recovery work being delivered by the Beat staff at Abbot’s Wood demonstrates the strong commitment of the Forestry Commission to achieving gain for biodiversity on the public forest estate. Rejuvenation of the site’s ancient and native woodland is part of a wider programme of climate change adaptation. Removal of monocultures and their replacement with mixed native woodland stands permeated by a network of wide, structurally diverse road and ride edges will bring a greater degree of resilience to the site. In addition an ongoing pond creation and restoration project is seeking to expand available habitat for a variety of wetland species including Grass Snake, dragonflies and the rare Three-lobed Water-crowfoot. In time this network of wetland stepping stones will function as corridors across the site.

The move away from conifer clearfell that will take place over the next few decades presents a challenge for planning, management and the woods resident biodiversity, much of which is adapted to cyclical conifer production. The solution may be found in a transition to small coupe fellings of native broadleaf stands in order to create a patchwork mosaic of open and closed space with all the phases of forest regeneration in between.

Abbot’s Wood forms a core hub within the Wilmington woodlands and watershed Biodiversity Opportunity Area and is all the more valuable owing to its connectivity to the Cuckmere Valley, itself a focal area for landscape-scale habitat restoration. The Forestry Commission is looking forward to working with the local community and conservation partners to further the rejuvenation of this special site. Abbot’s Wood exists as a jewel amongst the public forest estate and bares testament to our ability to produce sustainable timber in a cost effective manner whilst conserving and enhancing our shared natural heritage.



Local Wildlife Sites - a key part of our ecological network *Laurie Jackson, Sussex Biodiversity Partnership, Ben Rainbow, West Sussex County Council, Tim Smith, East Sussex County Council*

Local Wildlife Sites - or Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) - as they are known in Sussex, have been identified since at least the 1980s. Standing alongside our system of statutorily designated sites, they are an important biodiversity resource and form a crucial part of the ecological network of Sussex.

SNCIs are designated according to strict criteria and are amongst the best sites for wildlife in the county, containing species and habitats that are locally rare or exceptional. It is estimated there are at least 40000 sites across England, covering over half a million hectares. In Sussex there are currently 640 sites identified as SNCI.



Photo: SWT

Unlike the statutory Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which were set up with the purpose of forming a representative national set of sites, SNCIs are more comprehensive and inclusive. They can be considered as complimentary to the statutory system, and in many instances sites are of equivalent quality to SSSIs. Many SNCIs are in private ownership, but others are owned by public bodies, and can be accessed via rights of way.

In West Sussex, 13 new SNCIs have been designated and six existing sites extended this year, including Buchan Country Park, an important heathland site, Chichester Canal, rich in wildlife and Ferring Rife, important for birds and wildflowers. The SNCI Initiative in West Sussex is led by West Sussex County Council in conjunction other organisations. The designation of new sites shows the great effort many conservation organisations and landowners are playing in restoring the countryside.



Photo: Tony Buckwell

In East Sussex, rangers from the Countryside Management Team at East Sussex County Council undertake management at several SNCIs, including West Park situated on the western edge of Uckfield. This site comprises a mosaic of habitats including a diverse grassland community and an extensive system of large sandstone outcrops that provide habitat for a number of lichens and bryophytes.

National planning policy recognises the fundamental role SNCIs have in meeting overall national biodiversity targets such as those on the Biodiversity Action Plan. In addition, SNCIs contribute to maintaining robust and resilient landscapes that are vital in ensuring species are able to survive and migrate in response to the changing climate.

For more information about SNCIs contact:

Brighton and Hove - Matthew Thomas matthew.thomas@brighton-hove.gov.uk

East Sussex - Tim Smith tim.smith@eastsussex.gov.uk

West Sussex - Ben Rainbow ben.rainbow@westsussex.gov.uk

News

In July Defra published a discussion paper, **an invitation to shape the Nature of England** <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/our-responsibilities/nat-environment/>. They are encouraging the contribution of views on the national environment by 30 October, in advance of the publication of the Natural Environment White Paper in spring 2011.

Defra has published its **Structural Reform Plan** laying down the priorities of the department over the next few years. Three priorities have been identified: support and develop British farming and encourage sustainable food production; help to enhance the

environment and biodiversity to improve quality of life; support a strong and sustainable green economy, resilient to climate change. Actions set out for achieving these priorities include reform of the Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies.

Following an **EU audit of England's agri-environment schemes**, Defra will be making changes to the way in which landowners are paid for environmental stewardship. Discussions with the European Commission are still underway and specific details remain undecided. Defra is not expecting to make any changes before 2011 and landowners are encouraged to apply or renew their environmental stewardship agreements as before.

The Association of Local Government Ecologists has launched a pilot online **Biodiversity Planning Toolkit** <http://www.biodiversityplanningtoolkit.com/> containing information on legislation, policy, guidance and good practice, and provides access to information on how to manage development impacts.

Funding Deadlines

- Veolia Environment Trust (average grants of £25000-£40000) **22 October 2010**
- PTES UK Mammals Grant (£250 - £30000) **22 November 2010**
- HLF Landscape Partnerships (£250000 - £2million) **30 November 2010**

Look out for

The Floodplain Meadows Partnership meadow map of floodplain meadow sites <http://www.floodplainmeadows.org.uk/content/meadows>

An exciting habitat creation project by the Environment Agency at Rye Harbour Farm that will re-create large areas of saltmarsh, remove topsoil covering shingle ridges and create many new ponds and scrapes. www.wildrye.info/news/habitat-creation-project

Upcoming Events

- **September 30:** The Southern Marine Planning conference takes place in Southampton.
- **October 12:** GreenSpace South East Open Meeting 2010 is held in East Grinstead.
- **October 15:** The National Biodiversity Network conference is held in London.
- **October 21:** Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management Scottish section conference *Ecological issues in the marine environment* is held in Fife.
- **November 2-4:** Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management conference *Beyond 2010: Missed Opportunities, New Targets* is held in Dublin.
- **November 17:** Geodiversity and Geoconservation - an introduction for non-specialist audiences takes place at Liverpool Hope University.
- **November 26-27:** The Mammal Society Autumn Symposium *New techniques in mammal research* is held in London.

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Is there something we should know about?
Got an article you would like us to include?

Email Laurie with the details if you would like something included in a future newsletter
The deadline for submissions for the next edition is 22 November 2010.