



Local Government Association

# biodiversity

greening communities: ideas into action





### **Biodiversity – top 8 ideas**

These ideas are based on existing good practice. Case studies can be found on the LGA's website at [www.lga.gov.uk/greeningcommunities](http://www.lga.gov.uk/greeningcommunities)

#### **1. Create wildlife havens**

Set aside an area of every park with the aim of maximising natural habitats. By not cutting the grass and by planting native species of plants you can encourage many more species of butterflies, insects, birds and small mammals than you would in neatly manicured parks. Your transport department can also adopt this approach by not cutting some hedgerows and footpaths to ensure that habitats for small mammals and birds are not destroyed. Encourage your housing department to promote nest boxes on all the council's housing stock.

#### **2. Put bird boxes on all your buildings**

Ensure that your council is doing all it can; eg by putting bird and bat boxes on every building it owns, or planting local native flowers in planting schemes. Do this in a strategic way by conducting regular biodiversity audits and establishing management plans for the authority-owned buildings and land.

#### **3. Design greenways around your towns and villages**

Build green walkways around your towns and villages. These greenways could be lined by trees and native planting, and avoid, where possible, the need to cross busy roads. While the priority is providing safe and convenient walk ways for humans, they also provide a transport network for the birds, mammals and insects of the town.

#### **4. Get Wet!**

Find suitable new sites for ponds and enhance existing ponds for biodiversity gains, using the planning system if appropriate. Perhaps have an aim of at least one pond in every park? Water bodies (ponds, lakes, streams, and the sea) are vital for supporting a huge variety of native plant and animal life and should be enhanced where possible. Ponds are a great way for children to start learning about nature.

#### **5. Strengthen Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)**

Ensure that all local authority owned SSSIs are in a good or recovering condition. As the best example of a particular wildlife habitat, geological feature or landform, an SSSI is worth protecting and maintaining to a good standard for future generations to enjoy.

#### **6. Work together!**

In every community there will be a vast array of individuals and organisations who are working to improve local biodiversity. Be they the Bat Conservation Trust, an interested teacher or the local park's Friends Group, they will all be pleased for support and for the opportunity to work together in your Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership.

#### **7. Support your Local Record Centre.**

The planning department has the potential to be an ecologist's best friend and planners need to have access to the best possible information to protect natural habitats and shape developments to the advantage of local biodiversity. Local Record Centres are a very good way of ensuring this.



## 8. Get noticed!

Wildlife-rich areas improve the quality of life and psychological well being of people: if the council has had a part to play in that, don't be afraid to tell people about it! For greater recognition try to tie your work in with the council's top priorities. For example, if the issue of the day is childhood obesity perhaps a nature trail around the park would help?

### Why is biodiversity important?

- Trees ensure that we can breathe by taking CO2 out of our air.
- Biodiversity encourages physical activity and therefore improves health.
- Biodiversity encourages relaxation and a sense of well being and leads to a decrease in graffiti and vandalism.
- Biodiversity can encourage social interaction between children and different communities.
- Protecting and enhancing wildlife and natural habitats is important for its own sake.

### What do we need from central government?

- Government should work with English Nature and local authorities to increase the coverage of local record centres, so that every local authority has access to high quality information.
- Government should support local authorities to take a lead and join-up with other related aspects of environmental management locally.

### Where can I find out more?

- Case studies can be found on the LGA website in a new biodiversity vision document giving more details, background information and good practice. See the *greening communities* campaign pages.
- The Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE) represents professional ecologists working in local government in the UK. In partnership with others, ALGE supports and develops the nature conservation work of local authorities [www.alge.org.uk](http://www.alge.org.uk)
- For more information on Defra's work on the conservation of wildlife, landscape and countryside recreation visit [www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/biodiversity](http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/biodiversity)
- English Nature champions the conservation of wildlife, geology and wild places in England. These pages give you more information on local biodiversity action plans and details of the Wildspace grant scheme for local nature reserves [www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)



#### **More information and background legislation**

- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill is likely to give all public bodies a duty to consider biodiversity in everything they do from summer 2006.
- Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation requires planners to not only protect biodiversity, but where possible to positively enhance it. Please also see the ODPM Circular 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and Their Impact within the Planning System
- The Town and Country Planning Regulations 1999 require an Environmental Impact Assessment to be carried out for certain types of major project which are judged likely to have significant environmental effects, before planning permission is granted.
- The Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities to produce a community strategy for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area and DETR circular 04/2001 says that local biodiversity action plans are among the elements local authorities should build upon when preparing community strategies.