

# Biodiversity and Neighbourhood Planning



## The Importance of Biodiversity in local planning

- Biodiversity is all around us and should be taken account of at all levels of planning. It is important to protect biodiversity in its own right. However, biodiversity is also important as an asset for the local community and as a key element of local wellbeing.
- All Local Plans and Local Development Frameworks include policies to protect biodiversity and may include maps showing important biodiversity assets such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and County Wildlife Sites (CWS)<sup>i</sup>. SSSI are sites of national importance for biodiversity. CWS are sites that are important at a county level and many are owned or cared for by town and parish councils.
- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is just as important at the local, as at a county and national level and this should be recognised in Neighbourhood and Parish Plans. Biodiversity should also be recognised as an important component of the green infrastructure of the local area, along with footpaths, allotments and playing fields.
- Every public body including town and parish councils has a duty to conserve biodiversity under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)<sup>ii</sup>. Government Guidance on the NERC Act includes recommendations to identify local sites of importance for biodiversity and to protect and enhance biodiversity within the management of local authority land holdings.

## Taking Action for biodiversity in Neighbourhood and Parish Plans

- Take a strategic look at your district, town, and village. What are its biodiversity assets and what opportunities are there for enhancing biodiversity? What are the threats, i.e. housing developments without enough green infrastructure, buffer zones or wildlife corridors.
- Do you know what the local population want from their green areas; one person's idea of a natural green space may be different from another. Some form of public consultation may be needed.
- Include maps of biodiversity sites and natural green spaces in your plan and include actions to protect and enhance these sites.
- Consider carrying out a Phase I Habitat Survey to provide an evidence base for your plan.



## Finding out about biodiversity in your local area

- The first port of call for anyone wanting information on biodiversity is Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS). NBIS holds a variety of information about the wildlife of Norfolk. If you are doing a survey of your parish, NBIS can provide you with a list of species already recorded, any sites designated for their wildlife interest and if available, maps of habitats. If you want distribution maps of species for the county in order to find out how species found in your area fit into the Norfolk picture, NBIS can provide these. In fact if you want to know about the wildlife of Norfolk then NBIS is a good place to start. [www.nbis.org.uk](http://www.nbis.org.uk)
- For more detailed information on individual County Wildlife Sites in your local area and advice on land management and planning issues relating to County Wildlife Sites contact Norfolk Wildlife Trust on 01603 625540 or email [info@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:info@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)
- For further information on how to carry out local wildlife surveys go to [www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections](http://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections)
- Maps of nationally important wildlife sites and Local Nature Reserves can also be obtained from Natural England at [www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk)
- For information on Biodiversity Action Plans go to [www.norfolkbiodiversity.org](http://www.norfolkbiodiversity.org)
- For information on how to carry out a Phase I Habitat Survey for the parish, see [www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife-in-norfolk/wildlife-surveys/surveying-habitats](http://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife-in-norfolk/wildlife-surveys/surveying-habitats) or contact Norfolk Wildlife Trust [info@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:info@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)

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<sup>i</sup>County Wildlife Sites (known nationally as Local Sites), represent the best wildlife habitat remaining, outside of statutory protected sites and they are often viewed as a 'second tier' of sites below Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). They are therefore essential in providing sustainable biodiversity conservation on a county basis. Along with SSSIs, CWSs form the key elements of green infrastructure within the wider countryside and are recognised as such in the local authority green infrastructure strategies. There are currently over 1300 CWSs in Norfolk.

<sup>ii</sup> The NERC Act (2006): S.40: (1) Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Conserving biodiversity includes restoring and enhancing species populations and habitats as well as protecting them.