



Chris Brown

The Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership embraces a wide range of organisations - local authorities, statutory conservation agencies, voluntary bodies, representatives of landowners, community groups and others - all working together for biodiversity and nature conservation.

The objectives of the Partnership are:

- ▶ To translate national targets for species and habitats into effective action at the local level.
- ▶ To identify targets for species and habitats important to the local area and reflecting the values of local people.
- ▶ To stimulate effective local partnerships to ensure that programmes for biodiversity conservation are developed and maintained in the long term.
- ▶ To raise awareness of the need for biodiversity conservation and enhancement in the local context.
- ▶ To ensure that opportunities for conservation and enhancement of biodiversity are promoted, understood and rooted in policies and decisions at the local level.
- ▶ To provide a basis for monitoring and evaluating local action for biodiversity priorities, at both national and local levels.

2010 has been another busy year for the Partnership and this report sets out some of the highlights and achievements.



**Tees Valley
Biodiversity
Partnership**

**The Tees Valley Biodiversity
Partnership steering group**
(in alphabetical order):

Darlington Borough Council
Environment Agency
Environmental Records Information Centre North East
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
Hartlepool Borough Council
Industry Nature Conservation Association
Middlesbrough Council
Natural England
Northumbrian Water
Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Teesmouth Bird Club
Tees Valley Wildlife Trust
Tees Valley Unlimited
Wildflower Ark

www.teesvalleybiodiversity.org.uk

The Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan

A cornerstone of the work of the Partnership is the development and review of a series of action plans for priority species and habitats. They provide an effective focus in setting and guiding our joint conservation action for the protection and enhancement of species and habitats that are important in the Tees Valley. Each action plan has been developed by groups comprising members of the biodiversity partnership.

The plans take into account the most current local and national knowledge of the habitat/species, legislation, the political and economic climate and potential funding.

The full versions of these updated plans are published on line. This enables the action plans to be living documents that can be adapted to reflect changing opportunities. The Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan is a living document, which is regularly reviewed and updated, with targets changed and new ones added in response to the reality of changing conditions on the ground.

The action plans are valuable for many aspects of the work of the local authorities and key partners. For example:

- ▶ They can inform the preparation of local development frameworks by helping them to understand what is important in each area and develop appropriate policies and site allocations that protect and enhance local biodiversity.

- ▶ They provide the means by which public bodies can work with private and voluntary sector partners to share objectives and achieve common goals for local biodiversity.

Action Plan	Plan leader	Plan leader organisation
Arable field margins	Currently unassigned	
Barn owl	Vic Fairbrother	Teesmouth Bird Club
Bats	Ian Bond	Hartlepool Borough Council
Broadleaved woodland	Rachel Sparks	Forestry Commission
Brownfields	Robert Woods	INCA
Brownfield butterflies	Robert woods	INCA
Churchyards and cemeteries	Anne Gladwin	Middlesbrough Council
Gardens and allotments	Simon Bleinkinsop	Middlesbrough Council
Grazing marsh	Fiona Morris	Environment Agency
Great crested newt	Jeremy Garside	Tees Valley Wildlife Trust
Harbour seal	Robert Woods	INCA
Harvest mouse	Ian Bond	Hartlepool Borough Council
Hedgerows	Jessica Harrison	Wildflower Ark
Lowland heath	Currently unassigned	
Lowland meadow	Helen Herring	Wildflower Ark
Maritime cliffs and slopes	Currently unassigned	
Moths	Robert Woods	INCA
Mudflats and saltmarsh	Mike Leakey	Natural England
Ponds, lakes and reservoirs	Susan Antrobus	Tees Valley Wildlife Trust
Purple milk vetch	Helen Herring	Wildflower Ark
Reedbeds	Allan Snape	Northumbrian Water
Ringed plover	Currently unassigned	
Rivers and streams	Fiona Morris	Environment Agency
Roadside verges	Andrea Elsworth	Stockton Borough Council
Saline lagoons	Geoff Barber	INCA
Sand dunes	Deborah Jefferson	Hartlepool Council
Water vole	Kenny Crooks	Tees Valley Wildlife Trust



Local Sites

Local Sites reflect the area's most important and distinctive species, habitats and geological features. They establish the basis on which local planning policy can deliver its biodiversity and nature conservation objectives.

The Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership acts at the Local Sites partnership in the Tees Valley. Working to Defra Guidance it manages the Local Sites system, coordinating the process of site identification, survey, selection and management. In 2010 the TVBP continued to refine the guidance for the selection of Local Wildlife Sites, and was able to offer guidance and advice to the local authorities. Using Defra guidelines the Partnership recommended Local Sites for inclusion of the Hartlepool Local Development Plan and worked with Darlington Borough Council to update their Local Sites list against the agreed Tees Valley selection criteria. The Partnership acted to verify the outputs of Local Authorities against National Indicator 197. This indicator demonstrates local authority performance for biodiversity, by recording the positive action that has been implemented on the Local Sites in each Local Authority area.

Geological sites

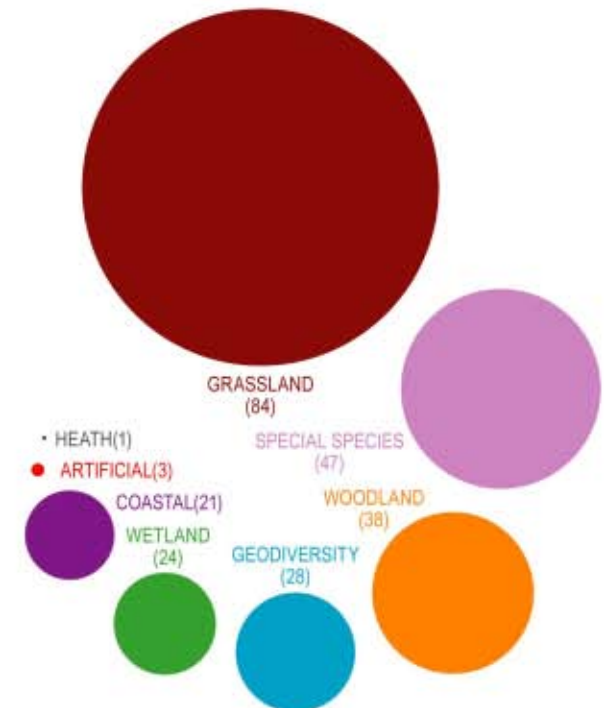
Local Sites designated for their geological interest in the Tees Valley come under the remit of the Tees Valley RIGS Group (Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphologic Sites) which for the purpose of selecting Local Geological Sites, functions as a sub group of the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership. In 2010 TVRIGS completed management plans for eight geological sites across the Tees Valley with funding from Natural England. It also received funding to allow the update of the Geodiversity Action Plan and incorporate new goals which go beyond those achieved by the group. Funding was also received for geological surveys in Darlington, allowing the new GAP to give full coverage of the Tees Valley. www.tvrigs.org.uk.

Number of Local Sites in the Tees Valley by Local Authority boundaries with number where positive management has been achieved and recorded (March 2010)

Note: Darlington is currently in the process of selecting Local Sites. These figures are for their current SNCIs (Sites of Nature Conservation Importance).

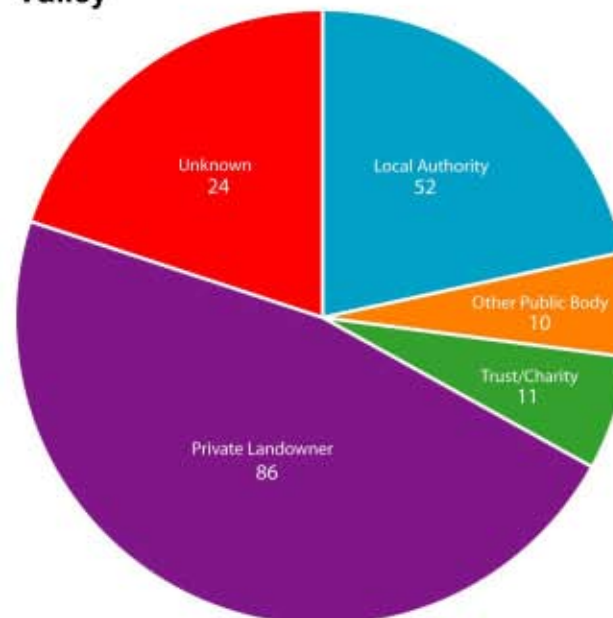


Wildlife interest of Local Sites in the Tees Valley expressed as number of sites



Notes: Expressed in terms of number of sites not area. Sites may be designated under several interest features. Data for Darlington sites not available.

Ownership/management of Local Sites in the Tees Valley



Note: data expressed in terms of number of sites. Data does not include Darlington

Examples of positive management on Local Sites

Redcar and Cleveland

Eston Moor is the only extensive area of lowland heath in the Tees Valley and it is a Local Wildlife Site as well as a Local Nature Reserve. The habitat is actively managed by Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council's Countryside Service to a 10 year conservation management plan to maintain and enhance a mosaic of heathland habitats which is being implemented with support from higher level Countryside Stewardship grants from Defra. During 2010 work continued to restore the heathland with a programme of controlled burning, tree and scrub removal and bracken management.

Stockton-on-Tees

Parts of the Council's Country Parks at Wynyard, Billingham Beck Valley and Cowpen Bewley are also Local Wildlife Sites, each with a comprehensive management plan. Stockton's countryside wardens, assisted by volunteer work teams in 2010 carried out a range of conservation works on grasslands, reedbeds and ponds to maintain wildlife interest as well as making these public sites great places for local people to experience wildlife. All three were awarded Green Flag status by the Civic Trust in 2010.

Darlington

Brankin Moor, near Darlington football stadium, is a Local Site that is valued for its assemblage of dragonfly species and amphibians. However, the ponds are drying out due to natural succession and the grasslands are developing dense scrub. In 2010 Darlington Borough Council's Countryside Service worked to create a mosaic of habitats for these species. This included the creation of a new pond, the re-profiling of an existing pond in order to create shallow water habitat and management of the adjacent scrub and grassland.

Middlesbrough

In 2010 Middlesbrough Council formed a partnership with a local farmer to restore and help manage one of their Local Sites. Bluebell Beck in Acklam is a Local Site with an ancient meadow, now sandwiched between the A19 and housing. In summer there are stunning displays of wildflowers including yellow rattle, common knapweed and common spotted orchid. However, survey work commissioned by the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership has shown that the wildflower abundance of the site is declining. This is because, although the meadow receives a traditional annual summer cut the local authority does not have access to the equipment for removing the cut hay by bailing. Middlesbrough Council has found that by arranging for a local farm contractor to cut and bail the hay, it is a much more cost effective than investing in specialised machinery.

Hartlepool

Greenabella Marsh, nestling amongst industry is a Local Site, owned by chemical company Huntsman Tioxide. A large area of rough grassland and wetland provides a habitat for amphibians and our two Tees Valley brownfield butterflies, dingy skipper and grayling. Huntsman, working in partnership with INCA (Industry Nature Conservation Association) and the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, is implementing an ecological management plan to ensure that wildlife continues to thrive on the site. In 2010, with funding from Impetus landfill tax credits, the Wildlife Trust carried out work to provide habitat for brownfield butterflies and other insects. A large pond has also been restored, in partnership with the Tees Valley Pondscape Project.



Phil Roxby



Phil Roxby

Action Plan highlights

Habitat Action Plan: Hedgerows

In the rural areas of the Tees Valley hedgerows, especially those that are ancient or rich in woody species, provide valuable habitats for wildlife and are a key component of our cultural and landscape heritage. The action plan's vision is to protect and manage our local hedgerows to maximize their value for wildlife and to extend the existing network of hedgerows in keeping with local character.

New hedgerows boost wildlife

In 2010 the TVBP completed a hedgerow project in which over 16,000 hedge saplings and trees were planted to create over 3km of new hedgerows at seven locations across the Tees Valley. The sites for the new hedgerows ranged from rural landscapes to urban green spaces. With grants from the Tree Council, funded by Stella Artois, the projects ranged from gapping up an ancient hedge at Butts Lane in Hartlepool to a new hedgerow at Fairy Dell in Coulby Newham. New wildlife hedgerows at community allotments in Middlesbrough which are run by Middlesbrough Environment City, Coatham Marsh near Redcar, Seaton Common in Hartlepool and West Cemetery in Hartlepool were also planted, as well as a hedgerow at the Redcar Steel plant. The hedge saplings and trees were carefully selected from a local tree nursery, to reflect the natural heritage of the Tees Valley. The trees were planted by volunteers including the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust's midweek team, Hartlepool Countryside Service, students from Houghall College, the Friends of Fairy Dell and green teams from employees at Lucite in Billingham and allotment holders in Middlesbrough.

Hartlepool hedgerows surveyed

In 2010 the Wildflower Ark has carried out surveys of rural hedgerows in Hartlepool following national hedgerow survey guidelines. With grant aid from Defra, the Wildflower Ark to carry out surveys measuring the ecological condition of hedgerows.

Habitat Action Plan: Lowland meadows

Lowland meadows are species rich grasslands on neutral soils. They are characterised by low nutrient inputs and are usually managed either as hay meadows or grazed as permanent pasture. Lowland meadows are still found scattered through the Tees Valley. Most occur as tiny remnants on slopes. In East Cleveland they are located on steep sided beck valleys and associated with ancient woodlands and species rich hedges as part of a connected landscape of semi-natural habitats. The lowland meadows action plan vision is to ensure the survival of remaining examples of species rich lowland meadow and work to restore meadow sites currently in unfavourable condition through appropriate management. It contains targets to restore lowland meadows and to seek opportunities for habitat creation.

Pickard's meadow

Stockton-on-Tees Council's Countryside team has started work on a major project to create 10 ha of lowland meadow habitat from ex arable land at Pickard's meadow in Wynyard Woodland Park. With expertise from the Wildflower Ark, the meadow is being created by sowing a base mix of local provenance grassland seeds. The meadow will be managed by cutting for hay and also by grazing over the winter working in partnership with a local farmer. A grant from the SITA Trust has enabled this project to proceed. It will contribute 20% of the North-east target for the creation of lowland meadows and it should become one of the largest managed areas of this plant community within the Lower Tees Valley.

For all the Tees Valley Habitat and Species Biodiversity Action Plans. Visit www.teesvalleybiodiversity.org

Habitat Action Plan Ponds, lakes and reservoirs

Ponds are a part of our natural and cultural heritage and are a familiar and much loved feature of our Tees Valley landscape. Ponds provide rich and complex habitats for wildlife, supporting a vast array of freshwater plants and animals from mayflies and water beetles to breeding sites for all our amphibian species. Ponds are a threatened habitat- an estimated three quarters of a million have been lost in the past century in Britain and the majority that remain have poor water quality. This picture is reflected in the Tees Valley with neglect, agricultural intensification, water pollution and urban development all playing a role. The vision of the Tees Valley ponds, lakes and reservoirs action plan is to have a dynamic pondscape where sufficient new high quality ponds are created to replace natural successional processes and compensate for other pond losses.

Tees Valley Pondscape project

The Pondscape project is now in third and final year. The £250,000 initiative to restore, recreate and reconnect ponds in the Tees Valley was delivered by the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust and funded by Natural England, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Environment Agency and Northumbrian Water Ltd. Key achievements of the project include:

- ▶ Mapping over 1000 ponds and ecological surveys on over 500 of these to create a comprehensive ecological database.
- ▶ 58 ponds have been created or restored, focusing on those that provide a high quality habitat for rare and threatened wildlife.
- ▶ Information, advice and training for landowners and land managers, including management plans for 41 ponds

Preston Farm

Tees Valley Wildlife Trust has been constructing a new nature reserve on 17.3 hectares of farmland, on the floodplain and valley sides of the River Tees at Preston Farm in Stockton.

The scheme re-establishes the natural characteristics of a floodplain with a breach cut into the flood bank to facilitate seasonal flooding. Extensive works have

included excavation of 2.1 hectares of permanent pools and 1.5 hectares of reedbeds. Land above the floodplain is being planted as new woodland which, when completed, will extend over 7 hectares. Preston Farm is at a key location, connecting a number of natural areas on the course of the River Tees. The work extends the range of habitats currently available at the Wildlife Trust's adjacent Bowesfield Nature Reserve, which is already attracting large numbers of wetland birds. Of prime importance are teal, redshank and curlew. It provides habitat for these species away from the estuary where similar habitats are under threat from sea level rise and coastal squeeze. The Environment Agency has been a key partner (and funder) of the project because of the site's capacity for flood water management upstream of Stockton, as well as its contribution to regional and national biodiversity targets. Other stakeholders include Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Northumbrian Water Ltd and Durham Tees Valley Airport.

Habitat Action Plan: Woodlands

Woodland represents one of the richest wildlife resources in Britain. Ancient woodlands, defined as land that has had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600AD, is considered to be the most valuable and irreplaceable. The Tees Valley has approximately 6-7% of woodland cover, significantly lower than the national average of 11.5%. There is 1,043 ha of ancient woodland in the Tees Valley. A new habitat plan for broadleaved woodland was published in January 2010, with the Forestry Commission acting as a plan lead.

Tees Valley Survey gets underway

In April 2010 the TVBP started a two year project to survey the extent, nature and condition of the ancient woodland resource in the Tees Valley. This work, funded by the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council and Natural England, will provide the TVBP with a better understanding of the characteristics, condition, management and ownership of the resource that will enable the development of woodland management plans and will help direct government agencies in the targeting of grants for woodland restoration.





Jonathan Green

Promoting the Tees Valley as a great place to visit

The Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership has published "North Tees...Naturally", a guide to inspire people to discover the wildlife of the North Tees area. The guide promotes the area as a place where wildlife and industry are working together and provides visitors and local people with ideas and information about the wide variety of places to visit. For the first time, this visitor information guide, brings together information on nature reserves, countryside sites and centres managed by a range of organisations. The publication supports sustainable tourism in the Tees Valley by encouraging the use of greener forms of transport when visiting these sites, by providing comprehensive information on public transport and cycling. The RSPB Wildlife Reserve and Discovery Park at Saltholme, is making a major contribution to tourism by attracting visitors from within the Tees Valley, the wider North East region and from further afield. The North Tees Naturally guide is anticipated to lengthen the stay in the area of those people who visit Saltholme by providing them with more information about other wildlife sites which will complement their visit.

Reflecting biodiversity in local and national policies and plans

In 2010 the TVBP continued to provide advice and comment on key planning and the natural environment. These included:

- ▶ Hartlepool Borough Council's Local Development Framework draft Core Strategy
- ▶ Darlington Borough Council's draft Tree and Woodland Strategy
- ▶ Consultation draft Planning Policy Statement on Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment
- ▶ Defra discussion document "An Invitation to shape the Nature of England"

Contact information

Coordinator: Susan Antrobus, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Margrove Park Heritage Centre, Margrove Park, Boosbeck, TS12 3BZ. Tel: 01287 636382 Email santrobus@teeswildlife.org
The Tees Valley Wildlife Trust is a registered charity. No. 511068

www.teesvalleybiodiversity.org.uk

Wildlife workshops

The International Year of Biodiversity 2010 gave the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership an opportunity to encourage wider public involvement in surveying, recording and caring for wildlife in the Tees Valley. A programme of seven day-long workshops was delivered at Countryside Centres across the Tees Valley. Participants gained species identification skills, discovered local habitats and learnt about the role they could play in schemes that record and survey wildlife. Workshops subjects included waders and wildfowl, mammals, beginners guide to moths, umbrellifer flowers, pond wildlife and dragonflies. There was also a workshop aimed at grandparents entitled "Sharing the natural world with your family".

The workshops were very popular, appealing to a wide range of people of all ages, from beginners to those with some experience and they have been successful in developing a greater involvement in wildlife surveying initiatives.

Sharing best practice

The Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership acts as an active forum for generating environmental initiatives, exchanging ecological data and information, as well as sharing best practice. The ecological, planning and land management expertise of the partner organizations provides an effective basis for joint working to deliver a better natural environment for the Tees Valley.

In 2010 TVBP action group meetings, website, e-newsletters and the annual partnership conference provided mechanisms for local authorities, statutory conservation agencies, voluntary bodies, representatives of landowners, community groups and others to work together to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the Tees Valley.