

Sussex Wildlife Today

A report on how wildlife in Sussex has fared since the publication of *The Vision for Wildlife of Sussex* (1996)

Taking Care of Sussex



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1.	Introduction	
1.1.	Threats and Opportunities in 1995	02
1.2.	Threats and Opportunities in 2006	03
	Achieving The <i>Vision</i>	05
2.	Habitats	
2.1.	Then and Now	06
3.	Achievement of targets	
3.1.	The Farmed Countryside	09
3.2.	Forests and Woodlands	11
3.2.1.	Native broad-leaved woodland	11
3.2.2.	Wood pasture and parkland	15
3.2.3.	Ancient and/or species rich hedgerows	15
3.3.	The Coast	17
3.4.	Chalk Grassland	21
3.5.	Heathland	23
3.6.	Grassland	27
3.7.	Wetlands	29
3.8.	Ponds	33
4.	Conclusions	
4.1.	Has the basic approach, initiated by the <i>Vision</i> , been helpful?	34
4.2.	Take-up of principles and targets detailed in BAPs and the <i>Vision</i>	35
4.3.	Have targets actually been achieved?	36
4.4.	So, is biodiversity in Sussex better or worse overall?	37
5.	What next?	39
	Appendix	40
	Initiatives, directives and policies where BAP delivery is now a requirement.	
	Glossary	44

1. Introduction

Our *Vision for the Wildlife of Sussex*, published in 1996, described itself as a positive environmental agenda for the next 50 years. Just over ten years have now passed, and this is an opportune time to assess what has been achieved so far.

The *Vision* was written shortly after the publication in 1994 of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and at the same time as the Sussex Biodiversity Partnership (SxBP) was starting to prepare Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) and Species Action Plans (SAPs). SWT was central to the formation of the SxBP and hosts the Partnership Officer on behalf of the Partnership. Over the ensuing ten years, 17 HAPs have been produced with five others underway, and 17 SAPs, with four others underway¹. These HAPs and SAPs have played a significant part in the way that SWT has worked to achieve the goals set out in the *Vision*.

However, nothing stands still – changes take place in the way we think about conservation, and this is, in part, driven by changes in the wider issues of economics, politics, demography and agricultural policy. New opportunities to conserve our natural environment arise, as well as new threats. These changes may mean that although the overall mission of the *Vision* will remain the same, ongoing adjustments will be needed to the ways in which we try to fulfil this mission.

1.1. Threats and Opportunities in 1996

In 1996, we identified a number of threats to our environment and also where opportunities might help to lessen their negative impacts.

Threats (quoting from the *Vision*)

- Sussex wildlife is on a downward trend. Habitats are being damaged and many species are reducing in range and numbers.
- Population and economic pressures are likely to be higher in 2045, and thus the temptation to use non-renewable resources, such as minerals, will be greater than they are today.
- Biotechnology will greatly weaken the links between the products of the land and the wild species from which they were historically derived.
- The links between farmers, agribusinesses and consumers have been weakened by the concentration of retail power in supermarkets. Poor labelling means that consumers cannot easily identify and choose products and services which do not harm the environment. The market economy alone is unlikely to deliver a healthy environment through consumer pressure.
- Unforeseen catastrophes may result from the unthinking application of new technologies, from crop and distribution failures, and from resource and species depletions.
- Economic success involves taking risks, but all too frequently it also avoids paying for the consequences of socially or environmentally damaging actions.

Opportunities (quoting from *Vision*)

- New technologies which have moved farming production from shortage to surplus in the last 50 years should release land and other resources and reduce the impact of farming over the next 50. This could provide an opportunity to restore semi-natural habitats and increase the area on which nature has priority.

¹ www.biodiversitysussex.org

- Improvements in information should allow development of a better understanding of the environment.
- Cleaner and more efficient technologies could eliminate or greatly reduce processes which waste resources and directly damage the environment.
- Information technology has the potential to change patterns of work, so reducing the need for the use of personal transport to get to and from work.
- Attitudes are changing: many people are concerned by the loss of habitats and species and would argue that wealth needs to be measured by the quality of our lives as well as by what we own and can buy. Recent reactions to road schemes may herald a more general change in public perceptions of environmental issues.

1.2. Threats and Opportunities in 2006

Have these threats and opportunities changed? In general terms, the threats of 1996 are still valid today, although they could be modified and updated. Although infrastructure, such as new road building, has been limited over the past ten years, the huge number of new houses that are due to be constructed in southeast England by 2026 was not predicted in the *Vision*. One big issue ten years later is the impact of climate change and society's response to it. Global warming is already affecting how we live and affecting our wildlife and its habitats. Changing agriculture, development, infrastructure and other aspects of our lives in response to climate change will have still further impact – both negative and positive.

Linked to climate change might be another major threat to wildlife in the future: a new phase of agricultural intensification. Changes to the global climate (with some previous grain producing areas likely to degrade), the huge increase in demand for food from emerging nations such as China, and a possible demand for agricultural land for the production of biomass crops, could all increase the pressure on land to go into intensive arable production. As in the 1960s, this could result in huge landscape changes towards intensification of existing cropped land, existing habitats being converted into agriculture and less marginal land left for wildlife.

Any short term gains for wildlife over the last few years may be short-lived against this prospect of future major agricultural intensification.

Partly as a reflection of these changes, and partly because of the slow rate of progress towards the 2010 target to halt biodiversity losses, the UKBAP has reset its targets for habitats and redefined some habitats². The Sussex Biodiversity Partnership Newsletter, Winter 2006/7³, acknowledges that these targets are ambitious, especially as population and economic pressures have increased over the past ten years.

The *Vision* was a thought-provoking response by SWT to the challenges facing conservation in Sussex. Its overall aim was to set out what Sussex could be like in 50 years and then set targets designed to achieve this. These targets were then developed further by the Sussex Biodiversity Partnership, so achieving the targets in each Sussex HAP and SAP will also fulfil those identified in *Vision*. The Sussex BAP is now an integral part of regional and local planning policies, with the passing of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act of 2004, and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act of 2006.

Regarding the opportunities identified in 1996, these too are broadly the same. However, there have been advances in some areas, particularly those relating to changes in agricultural policy following the CAP reform of 2003, other EU initiatives such as Water Framework Directive

²These are available online at www.biodiversitysussex.org

³ Available from biodiversity.officer@sussexwt.org.uk

and Natura 2000, changes in UK planning legislation, and the focus of conservation effort due in large part to the Sussex BAP. Continuing changes in ecological opinion, away from the concept of conserving wildlife in protected areas towards a wider landscape approach, have also played their part in informing governments, local authorities and other organisations.

Technological advances have had a very positive impact on the BAP process. No progress could have been made without the sound back-up of the environmental datasets, housed and managed by the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC). This was formally launched as a partnership project hosted by the Sussex Wildlife Trust in April 1997. Its growth over the following ten years has gone hand in hand with the evolution of the technology supporting biological recording. High-powered computers now store the 1.5 million species records held for Sussex and the computerised mapping facility provided by GIS houses thousands of polygons relating to Sussex habitats. This GIS software also possesses powerful data analysis tools. SxBRC's skill base with this software is rapidly evolving towards sophisticated modelling of potential habitat expansion and recreation.

The current work of SxBRC is underpinned by a partnership between the data users and the data providers. The data users keep the development of the Record Centre in line with contemporary requirements for biodiversity information. The data providers continually support the Record Centre not just with their biological records, but also with their trust and enthusiasm. In addition, there is a strong partnership between the SxBRC and SxBP.

SxBRC continually updates the information on habitat extent but has only recently secured funding to collate all known information on habitats, and there is currently no programme or funding in place to measure change over time, or to ground-truth habitats. However, SxBRC holds the most up-to-date habitat information that exists for Sussex and is proactive in its continual improvement, which makes it a key player in measuring the Trust's and other organisations' success against both Vision and BAP targets.

How have these developments and changes affected environmental threats and opportunities today?

Threats 2006

- Much of Sussex wildlife remains on a downward trend. Habitats are still being damaged and many species are reducing in range and numbers.
- We could be on the verge of a new phase of agricultural intensification, due to climate change and changing world demand.
- Non-native species are having a negative effect on native species in some habitats
- The population of the southeast is set to rise disproportionately, with some 96,000 houses planned by 2026.
- Climate change is already causing increasing flooding in winter and decreasing rainfall in summer.
- Carbon emissions are set to rise with no effective strategy for reducing the carbon footprint.
- Government and business are still geared towards year-on-year growth rather than promoting sustainable, steady-state economic performance.
- Changes in Planning policy may mean that major infrastructure projects will be fast-tracked, favouring development at the expense of local opinion.
- Large supermarkets favour cheap, intensively produced imports rather than supporting locally produced products.
- Unresolved issues remain relating to waste disposal and water resources.
- Disparate scale of most threats and opportunities – big threats, small opportunities.

Opportunities 2006

- Public education has brought environmental awareness to a wider audience.
- A move towards Local Authority commitment to Local BAPs in Local Development Frameworks.
- Local Biodiversity Partnerships are working with Local Strategic Partnerships to get biodiversity as a cross cutting theme in other areas, for example in the health agenda.
- Reform of CAP in 2003 may have removed some of the worst negative environmental impacts of agriculture.
- Improvements in IT have meant more people now work from home at least some of the time, instead of driving long distances to workplaces.
- Increasing number of farmers' markets, bringing locally grown produce to more and more consumers. There is an increase in the amount of organically produced food that consumers now buy.
- Conservationists are more aware of the importance of landscape scale ecology.
- An ecosystem services approach to the value of our natural heritage is evolving.
- We now have IT tools that allow us to model the needs of habitats and species, and therefore target areas for land management and restoration.
- Recognition that climate change is a reality and responses will be needed to buffer these changes for species and habitats to move.
- The UK government is moving towards more sustainable development, for example green taxation, eco-homes etc.
- The establishment of a National Park for the South Downs should provide opportunities for environmentally beneficial integrated management across the Downs.

1.3. Achieving the *Vision*

The *Vision* had four elements:

1. A broad vision of the type of environment we would like to see in Sussex in 2045.
2. Specific targets for habitats in 2005.
3. Action plans to identify who needs to do what to achieve the targets.
4. Environmental performance indicators to demonstrate progress towards the targets.

Before we look at what we have achieved in the last ten years, we will summarise how we felt these four elements could be achieved:

The 1996 *Vision* moved away from the defensive approach to conservation, in which the 'best' sites are identified and protected and new developments go ahead only when a compromise is reached with any wildlife interest. But even if the best is saved, compromises relentlessly erode what remains, resulting in a continuing loss of wildlife.

Instead (but alongside the concept of conserving the best), the *Vision* presented proposals for the sort of environment we should like to see in Sussex in 2045. In order to achieve improvements to the quality of our environment and the quality of life for the next generation, realistic targets were set. These targets also estimated the nature and extent of each habitat which might be needed to conserve its biodiversity. The targets were presented in two forms: a broadly drawn vision for a habitat in 2045, and more specific ten-year targets.

The Trust's aim was to promote action. Although Sussex Wildlife Trust was prepared to play a key role, we stressed that voluntary bodies, businesses, authorities and individuals would all need to play their part in achieving this *Vision* for the wildlife of Sussex. Many of the products of the environment, such as wildlife, are free and belong to us all. Thus the primary responsibility for setting the framework rests with public authorities and politicians.

The targets outlined in the Vision would only be delivered if such authorities and politicians adopted them and facilitated their implementation.

Targets are a useful way of assessing whether a goal is being achieved, and are used in commerce and government as well as in conservation. Both broad and precise indicators of environmental performance are needed, and these can be a useful way of involving schools and members of the public, as well as active members of the Trust and other wildlife groups, in the process of conservation. Targets often use indicators. In conservation, these are certain species that respond to improving environmental conditions. The return of the salmon to the Thames and the re-colonisation by lichens as air quality improves, are examples. A number of such indicators were set out in each chapter of the Vision.

So what has happened in practice over the last ten years?

2. Habitats

2.1. Then and Now

In the mid-1990s, one of the first targets for each habitat in both *Vision* and the HAPs was to find out the extent of each particular habitat in Sussex. For some of these habitats a figure was produced, but these figures were often estimates. By early 2007, we still did not have all of this fundamental baseline information, although under the Sussex Priority Habitat Information Project, it should be available for all these habitats by the end of 2007. Quoting from this project:

“In Sussex we presently do not have an accurate picture of the extent or condition of the majority of priority habitats in the county. Without this baseline information it is difficult for habitat action plan leaders to set realistic targets for improvement and expansion or for local authorities to accurately monitor local development frameworks. Sussex Biodiversity Partnership and Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre are undertaking a four-part project to address habitat information issues.”

Why has this taken so long? Information on habitats, where it exists, is held by a number of different organisations in a range of formats and at different scales. Collating such disparate datasets takes time, money and also sophisticated IT software. Funding for such projects has been, and in some cases is still, difficult, but advances in IT over the past ten years have significantly improved data collation. The aim is to have GIS data for each priority habitat, using widely accepted habitat definitions and resolutions. This will significantly advance our ability to put in place monitoring to ensure favourable conditions and to measure whether targets for restoration and habitat creation are being achieved.

Therefore, although ideally we would like to make a strict numerical comparison between the extent of each habitat dealt with in the Vision in 1996 with that of 2006, this is not possible.

Even if we manage to draw up realistic estimates for the extent of each habitat in 1996, and make a comparison of this with today's areas, relating this to actual achievement can be difficult. Comparing the mapped extent of habitats over time is ambiguous, as definitions are improved and the resolution at which they are mapped is refined. Also, 'habitats' take decades to form so achievement in the possible long-term might best be correlated with activity in the short-term.

Nevertheless, extensive information is available, some of it systematic, some observational recording and some anecdotal information. Whilst strict statistical comparison may not always be possible, it is possible to make reasonable judgements about progress that has been made over the last decade.

The next section of this Review deals with each habitat in turn. It will summarise what has been achieved towards Vision and Sussex BAP targets using, selected indicators of success where possible.

3. Achievement of targets

The *Vision* articulated targets and proposed actions for a variety of habitat groups in Sussex. The following sections outline the progress that has, or has not, been made over the last ten years towards these targets for a selection of the major habitat groups. The *Vision* was primarily a SWT document, so the compilation of the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan (SxBAP) was a major step in gaining the adoption of biodiversity targets in organisations and authorities throughout Sussex. Consequently, the following sections also indicate progress made against the targets outlined in the SxBAP.



3.1. The Farmed Countryside

Targets in the SxBAP

UKBAP targets include the expansion of cereal field margins and permanent grass margins, and the Sussex BAP picks up cereal field margins as a priority habitat (this was not specifically mentioned in Vision and no targets were identified). In England, these will now be monitored through the uptake of the Entry Level Scheme (ELS) and Higher Level Scheme (HLS), which have replaced the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) and Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme.

In Sussex, important arable plant areas are being identified in a joint project between Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre and Sussex Biodiversity Partnership. These sites will be available as a GIS layer in spring 2007. Monitoring the extent of cereal field margins will essentially be done by analysing information from agri-environment options. Monitoring conditions will be done through data collected as part of the Countryside Survey⁴.

Report against Vision targets

Vision targets focused largely on the delivery of a more environmentally friendly agricultural system. Consequently, agri-environment schemes, such as ESA and CS, were viewed as having the potential to enhance landscape, wildlife and archaeology, providing financial support for participating farmers.

The specific effects of the possible development of a more environmentally sensitive farming system are difficult to detect after just ten years (e.g. the effect of improved field margins on farmland birds or arable plants), however, the following table gives a subjective outline of some of the changes that have taken place in the farmed countryside over the last ten years.

VISION TARGET	PROGRESS 2006
Develop a commercial farming sector in Sussex on the best land, able to compete on the world market.	This relates to the commercial success of the farming sector and has not been recorded as part of biodiversity recording.
Ensure minimum levels of environmental controls are in place to cover all farming activities.	Minimum requirements are now part of cross compliance for single farm payments for all farms. All farms are now eligible for improved payments under ELS.
About 50,000ha of farmland to be entered in environmentally sensitive schemes, with an increased range of options and greater emphasis on long-term environmental objectives.	Increasing area in ELS and HLS. Probably exceeds target.
Ensure all farms over 25ha in size have an integrated conservation/business plan.	Farm Environment Plan now part of Environmental Stewardship. All farms in HLS have Farm Environment Plans (FEPs).
Encourage 3,000ha of low-value agricultural land to transfer out of production to create large new wildlife reserves in target areas	Overall figures are not available but there are good large examples of land going into more natural schemes, for example our nature reserve at Butcherland (about 80 ha) and a land-owner driven project at the Knepp Estate (about 1,400ha).

⁴ CS2000, funded by Defra, NERC, CCW, NAW, EA, Scottish Executive and SNH

Key successes:

- Improvement and expansion of Countryside Stewardship (CS) and the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) Schemes.
- Development of the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme
- Farmers and landowners are more likely to see environmental improvement as a service they can provide, rather than a restriction to their activities.
- Biodiversity information systems being improved and able to monitor changes in arable plant populations after spring 2007.

Problems:

- Funding problems in Natural England have resulted in a possible shrinkage of land in agri-environment schemes.
- Data and monitoring not able to monitor changes in detail, especially over a small, ten year, period.

General prognosis

CS and ESA schemes were already starting to deliver wildlife benefit in 1996 and this is likely to have continued over the last ten years. The recent change to Environmental Stewardship (including the ELS and HLS), with its management by the new organisation Natural England should further encourage wildlife friendly management. There have, however, been setbacks with budget cuts in Natural England and hence a possible shrinkage of areas in effective schemes, although the situation in this regard has been improving in 2008.

Nevertheless, there has been an overall shift in agricultural incentives from production to delivering environmental gain (as recommended in our Vision) and this will hopefully continue the positive trend. It is thought that this is reflected in the improvement of the situation for some species, such as turtle dove and corn bunting.

In order to be most effective, environmental gain through agri-environment schemes needs to have regard to the landscape context. Individual schemes will be less effective if they are isolated from each other; biodiversity gain is more likely if schemes are focused on areas of greatest opportunity and if they are in close proximity to each other.

3.2. Forests and Woodlands

Estimates for the area of woodland in Sussex vary with small differences in the statistics used. The area covered by all woodland types in the mid-1990s was estimated as 63,000ha in the *Vision* and as 66,258ha in the Sussex HAP (Biodiversity Partnership, 2000). In 1999, the Forestry Commission gave the overall area of woodland as 66,730.6ha.

Nationally, the priority habitats have been grouped as follows and these have been used in the summary of progress since 1996:

1. Native broad-leaved woodland
2. Wood pasture and parkland
3. Ancient and/or species rich hedgerows

3.2.1. Native broad-leaved woodland (Including coppice woodlands)

Targets in the SxBAP

Chief among the targets in the Woodland HAP was to halt losses to ancient woodland, coppice, wood pasture and parkland, and to prevent further degradation of ghyll woodlands.

The Sussex BAP Review 2004 gave the following Summary Statement for this HAP:

“Progress has been good, in general. We presently do not have detailed information about gains and progress, although there are a number of projects and initiatives being progressed. Overall, the impression is that progress is not as advanced as we would have wished.”

There has been progress in two of the seven targets articulated in the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan. These were:

- Achieve favourable conservation status in over 70% of the designated sites and 50% of the total woodland resource by 2010.
- Restore 10% of the former areas of ancient sites that have been substantially replanted with conifers in the last 50 years, or that are currently dominated by other non-native species by 2010.

Progress on the rest of the targets is either unknown or behind schedule.

In Sussex we now have a revised Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) for Wealden and Mid-Sussex areas, with other districts hopefully to follow. SWT is working alongside other agencies towards achieving targets through partnership projects such as the West Weald Landscape Project and the Friston Forest Project.

Report against *Vision* targets

In *Vision*, this included ancient woods, coppice woodland, gills and sandrock outcrops, commercial forestry and near-natural forests. Pasture woodland is considered in the section below.



VISION TARGET	PROGRESS 2006
Ancient and coppice woodland	
No further loss of ancient or coppice woodland	No loss recorded. Attrition though small development loss and "tidying up". Losses continued in ancient woodlands less than 2ha, which were not in AWI; revised inventory aimed at correcting this. There is no statutory protection for ancient woods but there is good policy protection for example in: Structure and Local Plans. Government policy protection in 2005 Protected in PPS9 in 2005. Protection in South East Plan and will be in LDFs.
Ensure that more than half of ancient woodlands (75% by area) are managed to achieve conservation objectives. Ensure that 25% of coppice woodlands are in active coppice management, in particular those sites where coppicing has only lapsed in the last 40 years.	Relatively small areas are managed as coppice with standards but there is an increase in the area managed specifically for conservation. According to NIWT, East Sussex has a total of 2,739ha of coppice and coppice with standards; West Sussex a total of 2,123ha. How much of this is actively coppiced is unknown.
Ensure that about 25% of neglected coppice woods are converted to environmentally beneficial forms of high-forest management.	Unknown – no data available.
Replace non-native tree species on at least 50% of ancient replanted woodland sites to restore them to a semi-natural condition.	The restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) is an aim of the FC, but no reference to a specific area has been identified. There has been some progress, and many owners would be interested but hampered by very little funding available from incentive schemes.
Ensure conservation targets are a feature of all woodland business plans	Forest Enterprise strategy in place for FE woods. Future grants to private woodland owners conditional on delivering targets, including biodiversity targets.
Encourage the sympathetic management of 50% of ancient woodland in Sussex including, in particular, gill and sandrock woods.	Some of this is covered above, and the High Weald AONB project is dealing with this issue in the High Weald.
Gills and sandrock outcrops	
Reverse the trend of degradation in sandrock outcrops and gill woodlands.	SWT has purchased Eridge Rocks, a major sandrock site, now enhanced through sympathetic management. A research project has now examined ghyll woods more closely. Natural England now has produced management guidelines. Many gill and sandrock woods are SSSI, and targets being achieved through Natural England's work programmes.
Recent woodland and commercial forestry	
Target 5,000ha of arable and intensive grassland for the creation of new woodlands, including river valleys and sites to fill gaps between existing woodlands.	Small areas planted, mostly native but untargeted.

VISION TARGET	PROGRESS 2006
Ensure appropriate species composition of new native woodlands.	Significant progress – now a criterion in woodland grant schemes. There are now few new woods dominated by non-native species
Ensure that conservation features are included in all woodland business plans.	Forest Enterprise has a strategy for the whole region aiming to restructure woods towards a more semi-natural condition. Good examples include Friston Forest. Progress in private woods is less clear although a tendency towards mixed and semi-natural woods is apparent.
Ten-year targets for a near-natural forest	
Establish/agree a brief for the creation of a near-natural forest in the Weald of West Sussex.	West Weald Landscape project in place and significant progress.
Add 750ha to existing woodland nature reserves in the Weald of West Sussex	50ha added to Ebernoe, unclear of extent of smaller, private landowner plantings.
Convert 750ha of farmland to native woodland in an area targeted to become a near-natural forest.	Scattered, untargeted planting likely to become near-natural by default, also many neglected existing woods are returning to near-natural condition by default. The target will probably be achieved on the Knepp Estate alone.
Decide on a phased programme for the re-introduction of cattle, ponies and pigs for forest management and take appropriate action.	Much progress with a project at Ebernoe. A new project is getting underway in Friston. Knepp re-wilding project well advanced and becoming a national example. Probably some other private landowners doing likewise
Link fragments of ancient woodland to create a 1,500ha area of forest in the Weald where natural processes such as grazing are the main influence.	De-fragmentation of habitats being pursued in the West Weald but minor progress on the ground.

Key successes

- A major improvement in the level of protection for ancient woodland.
- Delivering BAP targets is a criterion for the award of FC grants.
- Forest Enterprise are undergoing a major strategy of restructuring, converting plantation forests back to semi-natural condition.
- Eridge Rocks brought into conservation management.
- Near-natural forest projects are becoming established with major examples at Knepp, Ebernoe and Friston.

Problems

- Information systems are not of a fine enough resolution to pick up both positive and negative changes in woodlands.
- Whilst targets are well advanced, the commercial viability of woodland management is still in question. This may be improving with the increase in importance of wood fuel.

General prognosis

The situation regarding woodland protection and management is quite good. Ancient woodland has become the best protected habitat outside designated sites. In spite of this losses still occur from development or from over-tidy approaches to management. The situation regarding management has generally improved, with less damage from unsympathetic

management and more beneficial restructuring. However, many woods remain neglected, often causing damage to wildlife interest. The economic viability of woodland management remains poor. There have been major advances in the idea of expanding near-natural woods, however, this is mainly due to one major landowner who has become a champion of the issue. There have been advances on SWT land, but these are small by comparison. Woodland is perhaps one of the best “measured” habitats but it is still difficult to detect changes in area or condition. This is partly because of the general problem of poor information and partly because of the longterm nature of woodland development. Woodland area has probably expanded over the decade yet some species groups (e.g. woodland butterflies) may be in decline. The importance of Sussex to other woodland species (e.g. barbastelle bat) is also greater than realised in 1996. The message from these species groups is that it might be the interconnectivity between woodland as well as the condition of individual woodland patches that is important.

3.2.2 Wood pasture and parkland

The ten-year targets outlined in the *Vision* were to identify all remaining wood-pasture and parklands by 1997, to ensure no further losses after 1997 and to maintain all existing wood pastures and restore degraded examples.

The SxBP and the Forestry Commission have funded the creation of the wood pasture and parkland layer for Sussex, which should be available by late spring 2007. Low-level grazing, where compatible with other conservation interests, has been introduced to a number of SWT Reserves, and the Butcherlands acquisition adjacent to Ebernoe Common will develop into new pasture woodland. Friston Forest will also be grazed under a low intensity, more natural regime. The major expansion of pasture woodland is, however, at the Knepp Estate (reported against near-natural woodland above).

The status of pasture woodland has increased over the last ten years with the realisation, following the work of Vera (2000)⁵, that at least some of the “natural” forest of England might have been more like pasture woodland. One major area of progress, therefore, has been the development of ideas of “naturalistic” or “more natural” grazing regimes. The major areas where this is underway are reported elsewhere (Knepp, Friston, Ebernoe, Butcherland) but a theme behind this is the creation of more expansive areas of dynamic habitat, with grazing being a major driver of habitat diversity.

3.2.3 Ancient and/or species rich hedgerows

Hedgerows were not dealt with in the *Vision*, but there is a Sussex HAP for this habitat. The Sussex BAP review in 2004 gives the following Summary Statement:

“The HAP is progressing well because of the energy and dedication of the Hedgerow Project run by the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre.”

Of the seven targets set in the SxBAP, one has been achieved, another is almost complete:

- Probable extent of hedgerows mapped
- Squares suitable for monitoring identified

Of the rest, three are ongoing or on schedule, progress on one is unknown and no progress has been made on the final target. The Sussex hedgerow project represents eight years of work. It clearly demonstrates what can be achieved with the dedication of a project officer and the commitment of a number of volunteers.

⁵ Vera, F. (2000). *Grazing Ecology and Forest History*. CABI, Wallingford



3.3. The Coast

Priority habitats in the SxBAP are:

- Coastal saltmarsh
- Coastal sand dunes
- Maritime cliff and slope
- Saline lagoons

The figures given in the *Vision* are 815ha for saltmarsh, 72ha for saline lagoons and 3,000ha for intertidal and mudflats. Sussex HAPs give coastal vegetated shingle, 1,000ha and saline lagoons, 70ha (plus another 114.3ha, including pits). The overall target for coastal habitat in *Vision* was the creation of new coastal habitat on former agricultural land to balance the losses due to coastal erosion and development.

Targets in the SxBAP

Coastal saltmarsh

In Sussex, the BRANCH⁶ project is currently (2006/7) undertaking detailed aerial interpretation of the Southeast England coastal strip. Data delivered by this project will identify the position and extent of saltmarsh but not its condition.

Coastal sand dunes

In Sussex, all existing sand dune sites are designated SSSIs, and their condition and extent is monitored by Natural England.

Maritime cliff and slope

In Sussex, the majority of maritime cliff and slope is already designated SSSI or SNCI. A monitoring programme needs to be put in place to assess the condition of non-SSSI sites.

Saline lagoons

In Sussex, the aerial interpretation being undertaken by BRANCH along the southeast coastal strip will identify the position of lagoons but not their quality. Work undertaken by EA and the University of Brighton has looked at the definition of saline lagoons and their indicator species. Most Sussex saline lagoons are designated SSSI and their condition is monitored by Natural England.

The Sussex BAP review of 2004 gave no Summary Statement for this HAP.

Of the six targets, one has been achieved:

- A hydrological survey of Widewater has been completed, and recommendations on appropriate hydrological management have been made and implemented.

There has been some progress on one further target:

- Mapping and surveying of all significant lagoons - all Sussex sites have been mapped.

The status of the remaining targets is unknown, and so the ten-year Vision target must be considered largely unattained.

Coastal vegetated shingle

In Sussex, the condition and extent of designated sites is monitored by Natural England. Non-designated sites in East Sussex are monitored to some extent by the Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Officer (ESCC), and in West Sussex, some non-designated sites were monitored

⁶ Biodiversity Requires Adaptation in Northwest Europe under a Changing Climate – a three-year INTERREG IIIB funded partnership project (www.branchproject.org)

by the Nature Coast Beach Warden Project, the funding for which has now ceased.

The Sussex BAP review in 2004 gave the following Summary Statement for this HAP:

“East/West Sussex – the delivery of targets has been achieved by a funded project officer.”

Of the nine targets in the HAP, three targets have been achieved:

- The EA has purchased Home Farm at Rye Harbour and brought an area of shingle under inappropriate management into conservation management.
- Interpretation has been provided at the most important shingle sites.
- All significant areas of vegetated shingle have been identified for protection.

Three targets are in progress and on schedule:

- Liaise with landowners adjoining or on shingle to foster an appreciation of the shingle habitat.
- Produce a guide for creating and managing shingle habitats for distribution to developers / local authorities / parish councils / schools on the coast / retirement homes etc.
- Identify degraded sites suitable for restoration and undertake positive action.

Progress on the remaining targets is unknown.

Report against Vision targets

VISION TARGET	PROGRESS 2006
Coastal habitats	
Create new coastal habitat on former agricultural land to balance or exceed losses due to coastal erosion and development.	Projects being promoted in the Cuckmere, Ouse, and around the Manhood Peninsula, but little progress on the ground. Major coastal realignment at Rye, coastal habitat formed on old arable land.
Create 100ha of new saltmarsh and 150ha of mudflat on old farmland in the tidal reaches of river valleys, Chichester Harbour and Pagham Harbour.	Being discussed at Chichester Harbour but major progress in Rye as part of the above.
Promote the natural formation of cliff exposures as part of the management of the coastal zone.	A proposal to prevent Burling gap eroding naturally was opposed and won by English Nature (EN). Erosion is being allowed around Hastings Country Park with significant habitat migration planned and in operation. Plans to prevent erosion at Black Rock in Brighton were overturned.
Increase the extent of vegetated shingle by 10% (about 80ha) and protect existing areas.	As noted in the SxBAP report, it is expected that all areas should be identified for protection, and there has been good progress on habitat mapping, but whether they are protected in practice is another question. Major progress in Rye as part of above.
Maintain existing lagoons and protect their water quality.	Probably achieved, most are SSSIs and heading towards favourable condition. Shoreham Beach is now a Local Nature Reserve.
Promote inland migration of dunes at Camber Sands and Climping Beach to balance seaward loss.	Not done but both sites are protected as SSSIs

VISION TARGET	PROGRESS 2006
Reduce pressure on vulnerable dune areas.	Wardens are in post at East Head (National Trust owned), progress at Camber Sands.
Establish key factors pertinent to the survival of dune systems.	Unknown – possible component of SSSI condition assessments.
Marine habitats	
Maintain and enhance fish populations.	Maintain and enhance fish populations.
Improve the information base for the marine ecosystem.	Much progress through southeast wildlife trust's marine programme, nature coast (Arun District Council) and East Sussex Coastal Biodiversity Officer (ESCC).
Reduce the marine pollution load to levels which do not cause damage.	Improvement in progress (probably), detail not known. Implementation of Marine Bill supported by southeast Wildlife Trusts.
Develop an effective information base for the marine environment.	Marine SNCI database now created. Marine species and habitat data from SeaSearch held at the Booth Museum.

Key Successes

- The Environment Agency has delivered a major area of coastal zone expansion in Rye harbour.
- The delivery of targets is proving much more likely where there is a project officer promoting action.
- BRANCH project plans to repeat its coastal habitat survey on a regular basis.

Problems

- Information systems have not been good enough to pick up extent and quality changes. Assessments are therefore subjective.
- Although there may have been some significant areas of gain, it is unlikely that these gains will match the long term loss of habitats due to coastal squeeze.

General prognosis

Overall, some progress has been made in furthering general coastal targets. The Beaches at Risk Project (University of Sussex and ESCC) has established a methodology for condition assessment. Nature Coast and the East Sussex Coastal Biodiversity Project have engaged with the public and carried out surveys. Losses to sea level rise may not have been balanced by new habitat but there have been some major areas of gain, particularly at Rye Harbour.



3.4. Chalk Grassland

Priority habitats:

- Chalk grassland

The area covered by chalk grassland in the mid-1990s was not given either in Vision or in the LHAP (Biodiversity Partnership, 2000). Ten years later, the overall area of chalk grassland has been mapped, but the figure of 6154.9ha was derived from West Sussex 1991 air photo phase1 survey, the ESA data of 1997 and a map of chalk grassland generated by SDCB rangers, so does not strictly show how much habitat there was in 2005.

Targets in the SxBAP

The Sussex BAP Review 2004 gave the following Summary Statement:

“This HAP has been successful because of the partnership working between South Downs Joint Committee, English Nature and Defra. The Lifescapes project has provided baseline data which will inform the next stage of the local HAP.”

Of the 10 targets, 8 have been achieved and 2 are in progress and on schedule. These targets, covering all those in Vision but at a more detailed level, include:

- Site designation for all existing chalk grassland except for a few small sites in East Sussex
- All relevant land-use policies supporting the objectives of the HAP (on-going timescale)
- All chalk grassland sites now managed under appropriate scheme
- Area of chalk grassland increased by 10% through the management of invasive species
- Area of chalk grassland increased by reversion of 750ha arable land
- Effectiveness of agri-environment schemes in achieving HAP objectives increased
- Development of a GIS database to map past and present chalk grassland sites
- Links built between Sussex Chalk Grassland Working Group, the ESA Liaison Group and the potential South Downs National Park Authority, and the establishment of the South Downs Chalk Grassland Forum.

Report against Vision targets

VISION TARGET	PROGRESS 2006
Chalk grassland	
Provide maximum possible protection for all remaining old chalk grassland.	No loss recorded, protection seems better than in past and the majority of chalk grasslands are SSSIs.
Remove encroaching scrub from the richest areas of grassland where appropriate.	<p>Good progress on key sites on SWT land. Malling Down Nature Reserve has more than doubled and the whole area is now grazed by our own sheep.</p> <p>Sales of lamb meat are supporting the Trusts grazing work and we hope it will help to build a market for South Downs lamb. Much expenditure by Natural England on scrub control over the last 5 years. The SDJC South Downs lamb initiative is encouraging people to eat Sussex lamb, so making it more economically sustainable. This is allowing more sheep to be kept on the Downs and so holding scrub in check.</p> <p>Much chalk grassland in old ESA schemes, these should all transfer over to the new HLS scheme with general benefits to the habitat.</p>

VISION TARGET	PROGRESS 2006
Re-create new and permanent chalk grassland on existing arable or temporary leys to cover at least 10% of the Downs.	Good progress on specific sites, for example near Eastbourne. Target might be exceeded but decades needed to see if real chalk grassland created. The best areas to recreate chalk grassland have been identified through a leading habitat modelling project and will be delivered through HLS.
Chalk heath	
Conserve all remaining areas of chalk heath. Carry out habitat restoration at all scrub-covered sites that can be restored.	No loss recorded. Habitat enhancement in progress on key sites such as Levin Down and Lullington Heath, some recreation possible at Friston Forest.

Key Successes

- There are more sheep and more grazing on the Downs. Degradation through neglect has been reversed and more downland is being brought into management.
- Lamb sales by the Trust and the larger SDJC South Downs lamb initiative is helping to build value into the system that conserves downland wildlife.
- Good habitat modelling systems are just being made available, which will greatly assist in the targeting of management for best effect.

Problems

- Information systems are not yet good enough to pick up extent and quality changes. Assessments are therefore subjective.
- Some grassland expansion is temporary, apparent gains can be easily reversed if incentives change.
- There may be more grassland, but this will take decades or centuries to approach the quality of current long established chalk grassland.

General prognosis

Good progress has been made both on the management of existing chalk grassland and on increasing the extent of chalk grassland. Agri-environment schemes are making a significant contribution to the achievement of HAP objectives. The key scheme in the past was the Environmentally Sensitive Areas scheme; this is now being replaced by the Higher Level Scheme. Continuing the funding and a good level of financial incentive to encourage farmers to stay in the scheme is essential to the long term conservation of chalk grassland. A small resurgence in sales of Sussex lamb may help a little in the profitability of sheep grazing and help support the system on which the conservation of the area depends.

3.5. Heathland

Priority habitat:

- Lowland heathland

The area covered by heathland in the mid-1990s was estimated as 2,679ha in Vision and as 2,640ha in the Sussex HAP (Biodiversity Partnership, 2000).

Targets in the SxBAP

The Sussex BAP review of 2004 gave the following Summary Statement:

“Wealden Greensand Project and Weald Heathland Initiative – these projects are successful because there are funded teams who drive forward the objectives of the plan, and report and record progress.”

Of the eleven targets given in the SxBAP, only three have been achieved:

- All actions within the plan relate to national, local and reportable targets.
- An advisory and training service for heathland landowners, land managers and contractors has been put in place. Ongoing.
- Public awareness of the value of heathland has been raised. Ongoing.

Report against Vision targets.

Ten-year targets in Vision are expansion of heathland in Sussex to cover about 3,500ha; to ensure that 80% Sussex heathlands are regularly grazed by deer, cattle and ponies; to create a new heathland block of about 500ha in the Iping/Stedham Common area and to return Ashdown forest to an extensive grazed heathland system designed to maintain the current 60/40% ratio of woodland to heathland.

VISION TARGET	PROGRESS 2006
Expand the area of heathland to cover about 3,500 ha including restored heathland on sites where it once occurred.	Slow expansion being recorded, some due to better survey, some real changes, mostly from removal of conifers, but expansion is nowhere near the 3,500ha target. Key successes by the RSPB at Pulborough (West Sussex), and in progress at Broadwater Forest (East Sussex), and by National Trust at Blackdown Forest
Ensure that 80% of Sussex heathlands are regularly grazed by deer, cattle and ponies.	Good grazing regimes in place on specific sites including Stedham, Ashdown Forest, Coates. A pony grazing project is providing the facility to deliver grazing.
Create a New Heathland block of about 500ha in extent in the Iping / Stedham Common area.	Not yet done, but SWT now owns a large part of Iping and Trotton Commons (HLF) and Fitzhall Heath. However, a large new heathland block is about to be created in Broadwater Forest, East Sussex.
Return Ashdown Forest to an extensive grazed heathland system designed to maintain the 60/40% ratio of woodland to heathland.	Good progress. There is a shepherded grazing project on site allowing this to be achieved.



VISION TARGET	PROGRESS 2006
Restore grazing management to 80% of existing Sussex heathland and re-create a further 800ha.	Not all is done by grazing but major projects (including Broadwater, Pulborough, Stedham/Iping and Blackdown) have delivered major long term gain in designated and undesignated heathland. These have not all yet delivered favourable condition but they have reversed the trend of loss that was present before 1996. Mapping of heathland is also now well advanced, producing clear figures, and we should be able to get quantitative information on condition shortly.

Key Successes

- The Wealden Greensand project and the Weald Heathland Initiative.
- SWT now owns a greater part of Iping Common and the adjacent Fitzhall Heath.
- Projects by RSPB at Pulborough and Broadwater Forest, and by National Trust at Blackdown, have delivered major gain.
- Ashdown Forest is now improving as a result of an effective grazing regime.

Problems

- Information systems are not good enough to pick up extent and quality changes. Assessments are therefore subjective.
- Mapping the habitat is seen as a major constraint to achieving progress on the remaining targets; however, a GIS data layer should be available by spring 2007.
- Lottery funding for the High and Low Weald Project finished in 2006; and will finish for the Wealden Greensand Project in 2007. Subsequent to that, there will be no funded coordination for Sussex heathlands.
- The demand for housing development, with pressure for mineral extraction, could place heathland sites that lie on commercially viable sand deposits at risk.

General prognosis

The ten-year targets identified in *Vision* have not been achieved. However, the trend in 1996 was very negative with some commentators predicting major losses within five years. Effective action prevented this prediction coming true. There has now been some increase in heathland, with considerably more planned by the RSPB. SWT has increased its land ownership at Iping Common and Fitzhall Heath and this will enable the area to be managed as a unit. Ashdown Forest (the largest block of heathland in the South East) is being grazed effectively. The biggest worry is that large amounts of money have been spent on two very effective projects, but these have now come to an end.



3.6. Grassland

Priority habitats:

- Neutral grassland
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Lowland meadows

Neutral grassland

The area covered by neutral grassland in the mid-1990s was estimated as 690ha in Vision but not given in the Sussex BAP (Biodiversity Partnership, 2000).

Lowland dry acid grassland

In Sussex there is currently no separate, accurate GIS layer for this habitat, which is recorded within the heathland habitat information layer that will be completed in Spring 2007.

Lowland meadows

Although a UK Priority habitat, Lowland meadow was not a Vision category, it being incorporated within the Neutral and Dry acid grassland categories. However, some work on the location and condition of this habitat has been done in the High Weald by the WMI. This is a data collation project funded by Defra and includes limited ground survey.

Targets in the SxBAP

In the Sussex BAP review 2004, the following summary statement was given for the unimproved neutral and dry acid grassland HAP:

“The Weald Meadows Initiative has been successful and made good progress on all targets in the project area within the constraints of resources. Future funding is being bid for presently to continue the project. Other areas of Sussex have not had the resources to achieve this progress.”

Recent work by the Weald Meadows Initiative has yielded some shocking statistics regarding loss of neutral meadows over the last decade. Of 85 meadows previously known to be species rich wildflower grasslands that were surveyed in the Heathfield area in 2007, only 45 remained that could be recorded as unimproved. This represents a loss of nearly 50% in little over 10 years – and this in a habitat that had already suffered a 97% reduction in the previous 50 years.

Seventeen targets were identified in the HAP. Of these, one has been achieved:

- Continued encouragement for higher levels of funding for long-term species-rich grassland management, creation and enhancement.

Progress is on schedule for three targets:

- Ensure a minimum of 20 habitat blocks of over 5ha – several sites have been identified and seeded.
- Identify and develop the economic opportunities, markets and viability of unimproved grassland – the Weald Meadows Initiative (WMI) has undertaken marketing of hay and is gathering evidence about the advantages of local products.
- Raise the profile of unimproved grasslands amongst residents and visitors and their involvement in protection where appropriate.

Progress on the rest of the targets is behind schedule. More could be achieved over a wider area with better funding and resources.

Report against *Vision* targets

VISION TARGET	PROGRESS 2006
Identify all remaining old neutral / acidic grasslands.	Partly achieved by High Weald AONB Unit. More work required elsewhere.
No further loss of long-established, neutral grassland through improvement or development.	No loss reported to development but there may have been some loss due to neglect and slow attrition by small development. Significant loss is still occurring due to agricultural change.
Manage all neutral grassland and ensure that they retain their interest.	Good progress through the work of the High Weald Meadows Initiative.
Recreate large areas of new grassland with native, non-aggressive, local species, to cover at least four times the area currently covered by unimproved and semi-improved grassland.	Good progress at Knepp, recorded under pasture woodland and near-natural woodland. Progress likely but unclear elsewhere, however mostly on small sites.

Key Successes

- The work of the High Weald Meadows Initiative.
- Major neutral grassland re-creation at the Knepp estate.

Problems

- Information systems are not good enough to pick up extent and quality changes. Assessments are therefore subjective.
- This ambitious target was not achieved, most sites are small and it is unlikely that large new areas will be created.
- Neutral meadows are of little value in modern agriculture. Consequently major losses still occur and there is little evidence that the good work of the initiatives to conserve this habitat have had sufficient effect.

General prognosis

A good start has been made by the High Weald Meadows Initiative but more work is needed across East and West Sussex. The changes following the extensive arable/improved pasture reversion at Knepp should provide useful information that may be relevant to other areas of improved or semi-improved grassland. Neutral grasslands are only likely to be either conserved or created in small patches. Exceptions may be in relation to large scale naturalistic grazing projects associated with pasture woodland, as at Knepp estate.

Neutral grasslands have little place in modern agriculture so there is little ability to provide incentives to conserve them within the agricultural system. As a result rates of loss are still high. This still remains one of the most threatened habitats in lowland England.

3.7. Wetlands

The area covered by all freshwater wetland habitats in the mid-1990s was estimated as 25,000ha in *Vision* but was not stated in the Sussex BAP (Biodiversity Partnership, 2000). However, the area of ponds and other water bodies in *Vision* is given as 2,200ha; but in the Standing Waters HAP, 2,200ha, excluding ponds, is the estimated area.

Priority habitats:

- Chalk rivers
- Reedbeds
- Fens
- Grazing marshes, coastal and floodplain

Targets in the SxBAP

Chalk rivers

This priority habitat was not included in *Vision*. In Sussex, the Environment Agency (EA) hopes to fund the collation of information to create a GIS layer and database of chalk rivers in Sussex. This should be available by Summer 2007.

Reedbeds

The 2004 BAP review gives the following Summary Statement for this HAP:

“Some progress on this plan, however, this plan is due for revision.”

Of the eight targets, some progress has been made on three and none on the other five. Therefore the ten-year target outlined in *Vision* is essentially behind schedule.

The RSPB and EA have jointly funded a Reedbed Project Officer who took up post in 2006. One of the functions of this post, with the support of SxBRC, is to create a ground-truthed GIS layer of the extent and condition of reedbeds in Sussex. In addition to this, two new reedbed sites are under consideration.

Fens

This is not a specific *Vision* habitat. Many fens in Sussex are within the Wealden Greensand and High Weald heathland areas. The EA has funded a project to collate all existing data about fens into one GIS layer. Once this is available, a condition monitoring programme will be needed.

Grazing marsh, coastal and floodplain

The 2004 BAP review gave the following Summary Statement:

“Some progress towards the targets of this plan have been made.”

Of the five targets, only one has been achieved, with progress on the remaining four behind schedule.

- The remaining areas of floodplain grassland in the major river valleys to be subject to management agreements under CSS, WES or ESA.

In Sussex, the EA commissioned a GIS layer of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh in 1999. There is no condition assessment programme in place to determine the condition of this habitat. It is anticipated that information from the BRANCH project will enhance our knowledge on the extent of this habitat.



Report against *Vision* targets

VISION TARGET	PROGRESS 2006
No further loss of grazing marsh	No loss recorded, most notified as SSSI.
Enhance the wildlife value of existing lowland wet grassland to ensure that at least half the 11,400 ha is restored to semi-natural condition.	Good progress but not a large enough area. SWT has recently purchased about 9ha of grazing marsh adjacent to its Pevensy Marshes reserve.
Re-create 2000ha of grazing marsh from cultivated land, in the vicinity of existing high quality wetland.	Pulborough, West Sussex and Langley Level, Eastbourne are good examples. Creation underway in the lower Ouse. Others are possible but there are no figures available.
Create a riparian habitat zone at least 10m wide along 25% of all Sussex main rivers.	Sussex Otters and Rivers project very successful in encouraging small but cumulative areas of enhancement along many river valleys. A great deal of preparatory work has been done and some progress achieved on small areas. This is, however, being slowly achieved. Some restoration of floodplain grassland at Shopham Loop on the Rother.
Create at least four new reedbeds, each at least 10ha in size, in wetland areas of low current wildlife value.	Expansion at Filsham and Langley. Two new reedbeds planned by the Sussex Reedbed Officer 2007.
Improve the wildlife content of river catchment plans.	Good progress. Biodiversity objectives incorporated in Local EA Plans. Included in EA Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMS) and Catchment Flood Management Plans (CFMPs). Will form a major part of Water Framework Directive Implementation.
Create at least two 50ha of riparian woodlands.	Small black poplar plantings including a moderate block at Knepp. Opportunities being examined. Sussex Floodplain Woodland working group established. The profile of this habitat has been raised; the character of existing floodplain woodlands is under investigation and new sites being actively sought.
Identify target areas for the re-creation of two large near-natural wetlands, totalling 1,000 ha.	Not done, small black poplar plantings only. Some opportunities being examined.
Restore 7,700ha of currently ploughed or drained wetland and create two major wetland nature reserves totalling 1000ha in extent.	Not achieved but good progress in some areas. Major new wetlands at Pulborough Brooks, the upper Adur, the Lower Ouse, the Panel and the Brede, with a smaller area at Butcherland. Major projects for wetland enhancement in progress in the Chichester harbour area and at Pett. These alone have probably prevented the water vole from sliding towards extinction in Sussex.

Key Successes

- New wetland areas being created.
- Projects around Chichester Harbour and Pett Levels have been a major factor in preventing the water vole from heading towards local extinction.
- Wetland buffer strips along some water courses.
- Agri-environment schemes support targets.
- Reedbed Officer appointed.

Problems

- Information systems are not yet good enough to pick up extent and quality changes. Assessments are therefore subjective.
- The definition of grazing marsh is especially problematic, meaning different things in different places. This is only recently being standardised, making comparisons with the past difficult.

General prognosis

The ten-year targets in *Vision* and in the Sussex BAP are behind schedule, although the targets were very ambitious. There seems to have been a reduction in losses and many good individual projects. With some exceptions, most projects are small and almost unrecorded. Significant areas of enhancement include Pulborough Brooks, the Upper Adur, Langley Levels, the Brede, and the Panel. Authorities were including biodiversity into catchment plans more than ten years ago and these are starting to drive biodiversity improvements.



3.8 Ponds

Priority habitats:

- Eutrophic standing waters

Targets in the SxBAP: Eutrophic standing waters

The BAP review 2004 gave the following Summary Statement for this HAP:

“Some progress on this plan.”

Of the seven targets in the HAP, two have been achieved:

- At least 20 ponds are now protected by buffer zones.
- Five dewponds have been created / restored.

Progress is being made on three targets on schedule:

- Prevention of damage to standing fresh waters through development and agricultural / industrial activity.
- Monitoring, control and eradication of invasive species.
- Creation of 30 new great crested newt ponds.

Another three targets given in the SxBAP are, however, behind schedule.

Report against *Vision* targets

VISION TARGET	PROGRESS 2006
Compile a database of all ponds in Sussex	The Sussex Pond Inventory was created in 2001, identifying 17,000 ponds in Sussex. The use of MasterMap attributes are set to take this work further.
Prevent degradation of existing ponds.	Some progress – see BAP report above.
Increase the number and area of ponds by at least 25% in the next ten years.	Not fully achieved but some new ponds created for great crested newts and some dew ponds restored (see BAP report above).

Key Successes

- Some good individual action with ponds created and some restored.

Problems

- Even with good information on extent of ponds, the levels of eutrophication are still unknown.
- Progress has not achieved the target, indeed it may be that pond creation has not kept pace with pond loss, but we do not have the information to make this judgement.

General prognosis

There is some good work going on to protect and recreate ponds in specific areas and this targeted work has probably helped to maintain the conservation status of species such as great crested newts. It is unlikely, however, that the delivery so far is enough to secure the long term future of species associated with ponds and standing waters in Sussex.

4 Conclusions

4.1 Has the basic approach, initiated by the *Vision*, been helpful?

The *Vision* received warm support when it was published and it continues to be relevant today. The Sussex BAP has strengthened the concerns and opportunities outlined in *Vision* and the targets set out in it. Both share a target-led approach and this has many advantages. It provides a strong lead to conservation across the UK and has done much to coordinate, focus and motivate conservation effort over the last ten years. With the weight of the 1992 Rio Convention on Biodiversity behind it, the subsequent production of local BAPs meant that conservationists were united in their efforts to achieve comparable targets. In Sussex, the aims encapsulated in *Vision* ran hand-in-hand with the development of the Sussex BAP.

This approach helped drive a requirement for biodiversity reporting. Therefore it needs support from, and has contributed to the development of, the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre. The BAP framework has also led to a coordinated web-based reporting system for changes in biodiversity – the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS).

A major benefit is that the approach in the *Vision* provides a sound framework for initiatives, action and funding, including funding from large organisations, charitable trusts and the HLF. So focused projects have attracted significant funding that would probably not have been achieved in the past.

However, there could be disadvantages. The highly prescribed, target-led rationale could limit natural dynamics and shifting habitat mosaics resulting in a desire to ‘fossilise’ habitats rather than allow evolution – an ever more important consideration with respect to climate change. Some feel that the BAP approach presents too tight a definition of habitats which could result in a lowered appreciation of the boundaries between habitats.

The target-led approach also risks missing the unpredictable. Against defined targets the unpredictable may appear as ‘degraded’ habitat whereas it may have become important for entirely new reasons. These unpredictable new attributes are now often referred to as “emergent properties” – new habitats or species that have come into an area as a result of changing conditions. For example, rising sea levels will change freshwater marshes into saltmarsh marsh and mudflat, with likely knock-on benefits to a wide range of migrating birds. Strict, target-led management can also incur conflicts over apparently incompatible habitats, for example between flooded woodland and grazing marsh; high forest and wood pasture; woodland and open heath, etc. This might lead to a lack of flexibility regarding the wider issues of landscape-scale ecology in a changing climate. Although designation should protect individual important sites, a site-based approach alone is unlikely to work in the wider landscape. Defining every patch of the landscape as an individual site and prescribing biodiversity targets and management accordingly will soon become overly resource intensive.

Evaluating the status of selected species is seen as a good way of assessing the health or extent of a habitat, so indicator species were suggested in monitoring for the *Vision* and the Sussex BAP. Problems associated with this approach have been addressed in a report produced on behalf of the Sussex Downs Conservation Board⁷. For instance, some species may not show an obvious change in distribution even when they have reached the brink of extinction. There may also be multiple and interacting causes of population change such as climatic/weather conditions, predator-prey dynamics, habitat loss and fragmentation, as well as habitat improvement. This makes interpretation difficult – a population may change

but it may not be clear as to whether this is in response to conservation action or as a result of some other factor.

Nevertheless, the 'environment performance indicators' listed in the *Vision* have been useful. They have helped promote biodiversity issues and given public meaning to nature conservation in a number of situations (the otter provides an example of raising wetland habitat issues on the back of a popular species). They have also helped drive actions to achieve nature conservation targets (the avoidance of the extinction of the water vole is probably entirely because of actions targeted at this one species). They have also informed the success of actions to deliver habitat improvements (for example studies of the silver-studded blue butterfly population on Stedham and Iping SWT Reserve have indicated the success of heathland management). Overall, therefore, the use of indicators has been very helpful but their use has not given the scientific certainty that might once have been

We can summarise, therefore, that the approach used in the *Vision* has been extremely helpful. It helped co-ordinate nature conservation and mainstreamed it into decision making. There have been problems, predicted when the *Vision* was written, regarding the over-heavy reliance on a target-led approach and regarding the way measures, such as indicator species, can be used to measure progress. Nevertheless, the basic approach was extremely positive and did help maintain the momentum for nature conservation in Sussex.

desired.

4.2 Take-up of principles and targets detailed in BAPs and the *Vision*

A major achievement since the publication of the *Vision* has been the uptake of biodiversity targets, both in principle and in detail, within a variety of national, regional and local government policy documents, mainstreaming nature conservation in policy decisions. For an outline of some key examples where biodiversity targets have been incorporated into plans and strategies, see the appendix at the end of this report. Examples include agri-environment and woodland grant schemes where biodiversity actions are implicit in the application criterion and the requirement for planning authorities to consider biodiversity objectives when planning for the future (as set out, for example, in policy guidance statement 12 on Creating Local Development Frameworks, PPS9 on Nature Conservation, and policy NRM4 of the South East Plan).

However, in spite of the need for sustainable development, biodiversity and the environment are still often seen merely as constraints. The recent changes in planning seem to entrench this view rather than overcome it. It is also the case that in practice, most development plans will have a negative effect on wildlife, and not all local authorities effectively incorporate biodiversity objectives into their plans.

At one level, the take up of biodiversity principles has therefore been excellent. Biodiversity principles are now expected in numerous policy documents, grant schemes, development plans and so on. Nevertheless, there is a real concern that nature conservation remains marginal, with changes on the ground either short-term, limited or negative.

4.3 Have targets actually been achieved?

The *Vision* hoped that “*The environmental balance sheet for Sussex should begin to show net gains by 2005*”, so we now need to assess how wildlife in Sussex has fared since 1996. Below are some subjective but informed conclusions:

The most significant positive changes include:

- Chalk Grassland has performed best, high quality sites have been designated and are under appropriate management, and the area of chalk grassland has increased.
- There have been specific areas of gain for vegetated shingle, due largely to the purchase of land in Rye Harbour by EA. However, it is not possible to say whether this has achieved the target.
- In woodland, favourable status has been achieved in over 70% of the designated sites and some plantations have been restored to semi-natural woodland. The development of near-natural or pasture woodland has progressed greatly due to work on nature reserves and, particularly, as a result of one forward-looking landowner.
- Saline lagoons have now been mapped in West Sussex and Widewater Lagoon has been hydrologically surveyed
- Heathland has expanded with some 91ha created and a larger area in favourable management. There is also now an advisory and training service for heathland owners and managers.
- Unimproved neutral grassland is now supported by the High Weald Meadows Initiative and a number of new sites have been identified and reseeded.
- Some eutrophic standing waters have improved, five new dewponds have been created and 20 ponds are now protected by buffer zones.
- Floodplain grassland and other wetland has increased in association with the restoration at Shopham Loop, enlargement of SWT's Pevensy Marshes Reserve and major improvements at Pulborough Brooks (RSPB)
- Improvement of hedgerows mainly relates to the information base, the extent of Sussex hedgerows has been mapped and suitable monitoring sites identified.
- Some habitats may still be in decline but the rate of decline is thought to be slowing.
- Actions underway now will reverse this decline but will take time, maybe many years, to be effective.

BUT

- In spite of improvements, progress towards many targets is slow.
- Habitat restoration and creation will rarely deliver habitats as good as long-established habitats. This is a key issue for habitat expansion. Even if statistics show an increase, it may be a larger area of lower quality habitat, the actual trend in terms of biodiversity may still be downward.
- There have been major losses in some habitats. For example:
 - Meadows are suffering a major decline with perhaps 50% lost in the last ten years, and this is on top of a 97% loss in the previous 50 years.
 - There is a slow attrition of ancient woodland under development pressure and as a result of “tidying up” after incorporation into gardens.
 - Coastal habitats are still being eroded as sea level changes and habitat creation does not match the loss from coastal squeeze.
 - Some species groups (for example woodland butterflies) are still in decline.
- Target achievement after ten years may not be sufficient to secure long-term conservation.
- Species changes could be positive or negative. If the extent of a habitat goes up but indicator species decline, this could point to fragmentation or other unidentified factors.

- Habitat mapping may help to identify fragmentation but not necessarily lead to its prevention or cure.
- The HLS agri-environment scheme is currently under-funded.
- Increasing pressure on habitats and species may mean targets have to change, either they may not be ambitious enough or they may not be achievable.
- The present system – both the distribution of habitats and species on the ground and our current system of conserving them - may not have the flexibility to adapt to climate change.
- Even if habitat expansion is achieved, this may still be in isolated patches so that improvements in individual sites still yield poor results:
 - species assemblages are unable to move between sites or interact
 - habitats are unable to adapt to changing conditions
 - ecological processes (eg hydrology) determining a site's condition may function poorly.
 - disturbance (eg from storm damage) to an isolated site may be damaging, whereas within a larger, contiguous habitat matrix it would be a beneficial driving force behind ecology.
- Habitats where progress towards targets is going well are those that have had the most funding. Unfortunately, projects tend to attract funding for a limited number of years – when the funding ceases, the HAP suffers. The lack of guaranteed long-term funding is a serious impediment to achieving biodiversity objectives.

4.4 So, is biodiversity in Sussex better or worse overall?

On the one hand there have been huge increases in activity by conservation organisations with many projects delivering positive benefits on the ground. Nature conservation has been “mainstreamed” in policy and support for nature conservation has increased significantly. Yet, on the other hand the causes of damage remain (and are probably set to get worse), nature conservation is still side-lined by many interest groups and authorities (in spite of policy support), and the basic link between economic growth and environmental damage has not been broken.

This is reflected in wildlife losses and, whilst there may have been progress, targets in our *Vision* have generally not been achieved. For example:

- Our target was for no more loss of herb-rich meadows, in fact they have declined by about 50%.
- Our target was for no more loss of ancient woodland; yet there has been a slow ongoing loss.
- Our target was for 500ha of new heathland, yet only 91ha has been achieved.
- We wanted 80% of the heathland to be sympathetically managed but, whilst progress has been good, this has not been achieved.
- Our target was for 2000ha of new grazing marsh in our river valleys, there have been some significant gains but nothing of this magnitude has been achieved.
- Our target was for 10% more ponds in Sussex, there has been some improvement but data is poor and it is unlikely that this has been achieved.
- Our target was for loss of coastal habitats from sea level change to be balanced by newly created areas but, in spite of some good projects this has not been achieved.
- Our target was for no more loss of wildlife sites of county or national importance to development and, whilst loss may have slowed, this has not been achieved.
- We also held that, in order for development to be truly sustainable, there should have been no further net loss of rural land to development, a reduction in the need to travel, a reduction in the use of non-renewable resources and a reduction of the emission of carbon

dioxide to below levels produced in 1980. None of this has happened; indeed the situation with all these parameters has got worse.

Although losses may have slowed down, we are generally losing irreplaceable habitats and gaining lower quality habitats, rare and sensitive species are in decline, whilst the more common-place or generalist species might be increasing. In spite of efforts to the contrary, habitats are still isolated (and probably becoming even more fragmented) and the general landscape / townscape is still inhospitable to wildlife (and likely to become more so).

Of course, it could be argued that the targets in the *Vision* were over ambitious, and we always maintained that they were bound to be challenging. Nevertheless, the limited gains in some habitats, against the continual erosion of others and no end in sight for the factors that cause damage to our environment is not a good basis for maintaining the long term health of our environment.

Furthermore, there are some large dark clouds on the horizon. We may be entering a phase of agricultural intensification, with agricultural productivity favoured over nature conservation. Development pressure seems even higher than in the past and climate change, or rather the human response to climate change, could have a devastating effect on wildlife. Overall we still live in a society that sees the environment as something that must be compromised in order to deliver the other trappings of modern life.

Bearing in mind the above the overall conclusion is that progress regarding nature conservation in Sussex over the last ten years has been poor.

As a society we must all try very much harder. The current trend of increasing pressure on nature, loss of the irreplaceable and reduction of the many benefits that nature provides to people, at a time when these benefits are increasingly required is simply untenable. This is not a job for nature conservationists alone. We all require a healthy environment for our own health, well-being and ultimately for our very survival. Poor stewardship of this most important asset is simply not an option.

5 What next?

What do we hope to have achieved in ten years time?

- A more “robust” environment consisting of larger, interconnected blocks of viable habitat surrounded by a countryside and townscape that is more hospitable to wildlife.
- Significant advances in the use of nature and the recognition of natural processes in the provision of ecosystem services.
- Realistic funding to drive biodiversity enhancement forward, especially at a landscape scale.
- Completion of baseline habitat data plus rigorous but pragmatic and achievable biodiversity monitoring strategies.
- Appropriate selection of indicators and measures of success.

A great strength of the *Vision* was its positive nature. It focused on creating a better world rather than being a depressing attempt to slow down losses. It is easy to criticise such a positive approach, but we believe that much has been achieved over the past decade directly because of this positive agenda. We should aim for an equally positive approach for biodiversity for the next decade. Indeed with the threats from increasing consumption, higher population, more development, more resource use and the likely effects on biodiversity, there is an even greater urgency to produce biodiversity gains now than there was ten years ago.

An approach that is likely to be promoted over the next ten years will be that of increasing the scale and complexity of wildlife habitats, extending them as an interconnected matrix throughout the county. Maintaining and enhancing individual habitat patches is essential but, in order to maintain the nature conservation value of the county as a whole, we will need to improve the way that wildlife habitats function within the wider landscape. This is not a new subject; habitat isolation and fragmentation have been seen as major causes of habitat degradation and local species loss for many years. Furthermore, the threat of climate change has driven conservationists to think more about developing an adaptable environment where habitats might move and adapt in response to such change.

This principle of considering nature conservation in the context of the wider landscape is stimulating the idea of an ecological network for Sussex. More a concept than a definable map, this aims to encourage greater consideration of how larger blocks of habitat can be formed with better linkages, in a landscape permeable to wildlife. This could provide the best insurance policy for biodiversity in the future.

The ecological network approach to rebuilding biodiversity has already been taken forward in the “Living Landscape for the South East” produced by the Wildlife Trusts in the south east. This builds on, rather than replaces, the approach promoted in the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plans and in our *Vision*.

Ten years ago the *Vision* for the Wildlife of Sussex was an imaginative and positive document. Whilst there has been no revolutionary change, we consider that this document helped drive a process that has made Sussex a richer county than would otherwise have been the case. The next phase should now be to move this positive approach forward and work on an agenda that gives wildlife the best chance on a landscape scale - a Living Landscape for Sussex.

Appendix. Initiatives, directives and policies where BAP delivery is now a requirement.

A major achievement since the publication of the *Vision* has been the uptake of biodiversity targets, both in principle and in detail, at a variety of levels from local government to international resolutions. Below are a few of the key examples of how biodiversity targets have been incorporated into plans and strategies:

Agri-environment schemes

Environmental Stewardship has replaced the Countryside Stewardship system as a means of ensuring environmental protection while rewarding participating farmers. It is delivered by Natural England, and comprises the Entry Level Scheme (ELS), Organic Entry Level Scheme (OELS) and Higher Level Scheme (HLS). Both the ELS and the HLS aim to improve conditions for farmland wildlife, including BAP species and priority habitats. The HLS will also pay for the restoration and recreation of BAP habitats, for example wood pasture and parkland. At present, SSSIs and those under former agri-environment schemes such as Environmentally Sensitive Area are being given priority. Outside designated sites, specific areas are not being targeted for BAP expansion.

Woodland schemes

The English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS), delivered by the Forestry Commission, has now replaced the Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) and the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS). Delivery of BAP targets is a criterion on the EWGS grant application that helps build up points towards a successful application. Owners are therefore encouraged to see biodiversity as a positive aspect that will enable them to secure grant support. In practice EWGS delivers BAP targets by improving conditions in existing woodland by supporting appropriate management. The scheme also grant-aids the expansion of woodland. However, funding from this scheme is very limited in the south east and therefore, the potential for it to deliver BAP targets is limited.

Strategic planning

When *Vision* was written and the Sussex BAP was beginning to get underway, English national planning policy and guidance were issued by the then Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) in the form of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs)⁸. These PPGs set the national and regional framework for development plans, covering issues such as sustainability, housing, environmental quality, economic and social development and nature conservation. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 changed the planning system and planning guidance. Prior to this biodiversity conservation was based on a suite of policies for nature conservation in structure and local development plans and in supplementary planning guidance. The new legislation provides greater flexibility and more options for the way in which biodiversity can be considered in local development documents. It requires that planning authorities consider all the needs of a geographical area when planning for the future, including environmental features, particularly BAP habitats and some BAP species. Under the 2004 Act, the PPGs were replaced by Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). Chief among these changes was the new PPS12 '*Creating Local Development Frameworks (LDFs)*'.

PPS12 (Creating Local Development Frameworks) states that each local authority is required to ensure that its LDF conforms to government policy, including UK BAP targets, and, furthermore, that each local authority is required to assess BAP habitats annually.

⁸ Oxford, M. (2000) *Developing naturally – a handbook for incorporating the natural environment into planning and development*. English Nature and Association of Local Government Ecologists.

PPS9 (Nature Conservation) requires local authorities to give due consideration to the presence of certain BAP species and BAP habitats when making decisions. There has also been a move away from a requirement of no net loss of biodiversity to a requirement for net gain. Thus, spatial planning in its deliverance of new development should also work towards delivering BAP targets.

PPS1 (Delivery Sustainable Development) requires that policies and planning decisions should be based on up-to-date information on the environmental characteristics of the area and a recognition of the limits of the environment to accept further development without irreversible damage. It states that planning should seek to maintain and improve the local environment, that significant adverse impacts on the environment should be avoided and alternative options which might reduce or eliminate those impacts pursued. The use of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (Directive 2001/42/EC) in the assessment of the environmental effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment and Sustainability Appraisals of plans, policies and projects should ensure that the environment is taken into account alongside the economy and social issues.

The South East Plan is the key strategic document guiding development in the south east. This incorporates regional BAP targets and requires the regional assembly to monitor BAP habitats on an annual basis. Policies in the plan also promote the need for major habitat expansion and re-creation, giving an outline map of strategic opportunities for biodiversity improvement to guide major environmental enhancement.

At a national level, large-scale projects are required to have Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) before planning approval can be obtained. European EIA procedures have been transposed into UK legislation under Council Directive 85/337/EEC as amended.

Public Service Agreement target in Sussex

The Public Service Agreement (PSA) has sustainable development at its core and aims for a better environment at home and internationally, economic prosperity and thriving rural economies and communities. Defra is responsible for its delivery. It has stated objectives, specifically regarding UK biodiversity, notably with respect to achieving a favourable condition of nationally and internationally important wildlife sites, the achievement of which, though broad, will be in line with and relevant to the Sussex BAP and also to the objectives of *Vision*.

Water resources

Water Framework Directive

The WFD (2000/60/EC) provides the major driver for achieving sustainable management of water across the EU and was adopted into UK law in 2003. It requires that all inland and coastal waters within defined river basins must attain 'good' ecological status by 2015. The achievement of this major objective will fulfil a number of Vision and Sussex BAP targets.

Flood defence and flood management

PPS25 strengthens and clarifies the role of the planning system in flood management and in adapting to the impacts of climate change. It will take into account increases in frequency and intensity of flooding as a result of climate changes, and forms part of the Government's Making Space for Water strategy. It encompasses scope for the creation of new habitats on land that is left aside for flooding.

In Sussex, although BAP targets are not the primary focus, managed realignment schemes, such as that proposed for the Cuckmere estuary, have the potential to deliver multiple coastal BAP targets.

AONB and National Park Management

The South Downs were designated as an AONB in 1966. Together with East Hampshire AONB, the South Downs are now currently waiting to hear whether National Park status is to be granted. As either AONB or National Park, the conservation of wildlife and landscape is, and will continue, to be an integral part of management plans. These plans, both implicitly and directly incorporate biodiversity objectives and BAP targets. These are closely aligned with *Vision* targets. The two other AONBs in Sussex – the High Weald and Chichester Harbour – also have such management plans.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act

This Act came into force in October 2006, and Section 40 replaces the CROW Act 2000 Section 74. As a result, local authorities and all other public bodies have a new duty to have regard for the conservation of biodiversity in exercising their functions. This affects all public authorities and aims to clarify existing requirements and to raise the profile of biodiversity so that it becomes a natural part of policy making.

Countdown 2010 Biodiversity Action Fund (2006-2008)

The Countdown 2010 Biodiversity Action Fund supports projects that will help achieve the UK Government's commitment to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010, through delivering the objectives of the England Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plans. Nearly £4 million has been allocated to 34 projects across England. Project aims cover the direct enhancement of biodiversity, engaging people in conservation work and raising awareness among key stakeholders, schools, community groups and the general public.

The Sussex Countdown 2010 project is entitled "Promoting Biodiversity Action in Sussex". It covers strategic influence of engaging with local authorities and Econet, as well as education and understanding and enhancing biodiversity in school grounds. It is also funding a project officer for the Brighton and Hove Schools BAP project.

Initiatives and projects whose prime aim is BAP targets

Since *Vision* and the Sussex BAP were launched, a number of projects and initiatives have made significant contributions to some HAPs and SAPs. In almost all cases, these initiatives are partnership projects, where a number of organisations have contributed time, money, staff or office resources. All these resources are limited, and these projects could not have been supported by any one organisation acting alone. Many of these partnerships were formed or progressed because of the coordinated approach to biodiversity that resulted from the *Vision* and the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan. Furthermore, the value and strength of partnerships is also vital to the achievement of *Vision* and Sussex BAP targets.

On the negative side

- In spite of the growing push for sustainable development, with its theme of achieving multiple objectives together (economic, environmental and societal), progressing biodiversity is still all too often seen as a constraint on the economy. There are concerns that the Barker Report and recent planning white paper will reduce consultation and allow the pushing through of large scale developments, including housing, with less consideration of the effect on biodiversity.

- Not all local districts are integrating the LBAP into LDFs. They are committed under planning policy to measure their success by change in BAP habitats and to ensure that they are compliant with government policy, but to date there is little evidence of this in LDF documents. Again recent changes in the planning system may break from sustainable development and promote economic growth with little consideration for its effect on the environment.
- The strength of these policies is undermined by the lack of baseline priority habitat information. For instance, a key BAP target is to increase the extent of lowland meadows by 10% by 2010 but the current extent and condition of the habitat is unknown and therefore, the target cannot be addressed at a local level. The situation is improving but the level of investment put in to biodiversity information – on which all of our targets, strategies, plans actions and achievements can be based – is pitifully small.

Glossary

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AWI	Ancient Woodland Inventory
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BRANCH	Biodiversity Requires Adaptation in Northwest Europe under a Changing climate
CAMS	Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CFMP	Catchment Flood Management Plan
CROW Act	Countryside and Rights of Way Act
CSS	Countryside Stewardship Scheme
DEFRA	Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
EA	Environment Agency
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ELS	Entry Level Scheme
EN	English Nature
EWGS	English Woodland Grant Scheme
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area
ESCC	East Sussex County Council
EU	European Union
FC	Forestry Commission
FE	Forest Enterprise
FEP	Farm Environment Plan
FWPS	Farm Woodland Premium Scheme
GIS	Geographical Information System
HAPs	Habitat Action Plans
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
HLS	Higher Level Scheme
IT	Information Technology
LDF	Local Development Framework
NIWT	National Inventory of Woodland and Trees
OELS	Organic Entry Level Scheme
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance note
PPS	Policy Planning Statement
PSA	Public Service Agreement
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAPs	Species Action Plans
SDCB	Sussex Downs Conservation Board

SDJC	South Downs Joint Committee
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SWT	Sussex Wildlife Trust
SxBP	Sussex Biodiversity Partnership
SxBRC	Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre
UKBAP	UK Biodiversity Action Plan
WES	Wildlife Enhancement Scheme
WGS	Woodland Grant Scheme
WMI	Weald Meadows Initiative



The aim of the Sussex Wildlife Trust is to conserve the Sussex landscape, wildlife and its habitats, and to use its knowledge and expertise to help the people of Sussex to enjoy, understand and take action to this end.

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