

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	15 th May 2008
Subject:	Harrow Biodiversity Action Plan
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Andrew Trehern
Portfolio Holder:	Planning, Development and Enterprise (to be confirmed at Annual Council on 8 May 2008)
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix 1: Harrow Biodiversity Action Plan Appendix 2 – recommendation from the Local Development Framework Panel

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

The Harrow Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is to be implemented over the next 5 years, via the delivery of action plans specific to habitats and species of importance within Harrow, plus a generic action plan covering wider issues.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to formally adopt the Harrow BAP following the recommendation of the Local Development Framework Panel of 9th April 2008

Reason:

- To enable the Harrow BAP to be formally implemented.
- To enable the Harrow BAP to be formally recognised within the planning process, and to have greater weight when the BAP is used as a material consideration in determining planning applications.
- To enable the Harrow BAP to formally influence the development of the Harrow Local Development Framework.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

2.1 By adopting and implementing a BAP, Harrow Council is formally recognising the importance biodiversity has within the borough, and the role it plays in the well being of residents. The implementation of the BAP will contribute towards the Council's vision to be recognised as one of the best London Councils by 2012, in a borough that is cosmopolitan, confident and cohesive. It will also assist the Council in achieving its vision of creating a place with quality neighbourhoods, with clean and safe streets and a place which promotes the well-being of its communities.

The Mayor of London's Biodiversity Strategy states that 'It is essential for the effective implementation of this strategy, and of the London BAP, that all borough councils establish partnerships to produce and implement local BAP'. Harrow Council is one of four London Boroughs currently without a BAP.

Options considered

2.2 BAPs are considered to be the only appropriate document for local authorities to adopt in order to conserve and enhance locally important wildlife.

2.3 BAPs are also recognised within the planning system, whereby habitat and species listed within the action plans of a local BAP are classed as 'priority' habitats and species and local authorities are required to have regard to local "priority habitats and species" identified within the BAP when determining planning applications. Accordingly, by adopting a BAP, locally important habitats and species are given additional protection in the planning process.

Background

2.4 The Green Belt Management Strategy, which was adopted by Cabinet on 16th March 2006, included actions requiring the drafting of a BAP.

2.5 The Harrow BAP provides a framework for the protection, enhancement and management of nature conservation features considered important and unique to the Borough. A BAP is not a management plan; it looks broadly at habitats and species across the local area.

2.6 Action plans for each locally important habitat and species, plus a generic action plan dealing with wider issues are contained within the BAP. These action plans include: the overall aims of the action plan, details of the current factors affecting the habitat or species, their current status and any legal protection afforded to the relevant species. A series of targets and actions are then listed, which collectively achieve the overall aims of the

action plans. These targets are devised around 5 themes: policy and strategy, habitat management and creation, advisory, research and raising awareness.

2.7 Based on good practice guidance for the drafting of BAPs, Harrow set up a Harrow Biodiversity Partnership in August 2006. The partnership comprises local voluntary organisations interested in wildlife, land owners, some schools and the London Wildlife Trust. A full list is contained within Appendix 1. The partnership has highlighted the wealth of knowledge held by local wildlife enthusiasts and this has been invaluable in producing the Harrow Biodiversity Action Plan. Indeed members of the Partnership have been involved in drafting the action plans. After the adoption of the BAP the Partnership's role will evolve and members will become involved in delivering the BAP. The partnership is not a static group and will continuously aim to recruit additional members, when appropriate.

2.8 The BAP was subject to a public consultation between 4th February 2008 and 3rd March 2008, during which the draft BAP could be viewed on the council's website. The following parties were invited to comment upon the draft BAP:

- All Schools
- Greater London Authority
- Greener Harrow
- Individuals who have recently contributed to consultations relating to the Green Belt Management Strategy
- Lead persons from action plans within the London BAP
- Members of the Harrow Biodiversity Partnership
- Natural England
- Private land owners (of larger holdings)
- The Environment Agency
- The London Biodiversity Partnership

2.9 In addition posters were displayed in all libraries and articles appeared in the Harrow Observer and the Evening Standard. Each member office was provided with a copy of the draft BAP.

2.10 In total 21 people made comments about the draft BAP, all of which were positive about the aims of the Harrow BAP. A number of suggestions were made, mainly relating to how the actions could be made more specific and measurable. Where appropriate these comments have been incorporated into the final draft. A detailed summary of comments received was presented to the Local Development Framework Panel on 9th April 2008.

Current situation

2.11 The BAP will clarify and amplify HUDP policies EP26, 27 and 28, and is referred to in those policies. When adopted the habitats and species, which have action plans, are referred to as being 'priority' habitats and species. EP27 (Species Protection) states that 'protected species' in Harrow include priority species in national, London and local biodiversity action plans.' This means that once the BAP is adopted, greater weight will

be given to it as a material consideration when considering applications which have a bearing on locally important habitats and species.

2.12 It is not intended that the BAP will be a formal Supplementary Planning Document in itself. Nonetheless as well as supporting the existing policies, it will form an important part of the evidence base which will in due course inform relevant local development documents in the Council's local development framework process.

Why a change is needed

2.13 Currently within the borough, work is performed by the council, the voluntary sector and private land owners to conserve and enhance wildlife. However this work is not formally documented and therefore cannot be easily monitored. The BAP therefore allows conservation work within the borough to be co-ordinated and effectively monitored.

2.14 The BAP sets out a series of actions to be performed over the next five years. This includes ongoing work as well as a number of new projects. The BAP will be monitored annually using the Biodiversity Action Recording System. When the London BAP and the UK Action Plan are monitored, the achievements of the Harrow BAP will be fed into these higher level BAPs via the Biodiversity Action Recording System. This will ensure that work within Harrow is recognised regionally and nationally.

Financial Implications

2.15 Due to the diverse range of projects involved in implementing the BAP, it is not possible at this stage to quantify, the overall costs of implementing the BAP.

2.16 Developing a funding strategy is listed as an action within the BAP. It is envisaged that the implementation will be funded in a number of ways:

- **External grant funding:** It is envisaged that many of the actions within the BAP can be delivered through gaining external funding. Indeed, many external funding bodies that provide grants for projects that aim to improve local areas for wildlife, require the project to demonstrate a link to the local BAP. Therefore by adopting the BAP, external funding opportunities will be strengthened.
- **Planning gain funding:** Use of funds from the BAE S106 agreement, and future agreements such as that for RAF Bentley Priory will allow specific actions to be undertaken.
- **Section 106 Supplementary Planning Document.** This document will set out a protocol for requesting planning contribution to a number of planning projects within Harrow including the implementation of the BAP. Work on the protocol is progressing..
- **External partners:** Many of the actions in the Harrow BAP would be undertaken by external partners, such as volunteers, or by the landowners to which the plans relate.
- **Existing budgets:** There are actions which will involve a change in management practices undertaken by the Public Realm Department.

Some of these changes are likely to result in a saving to the Public Realm Department.

Performance Issues

- 2.17 The BAP will directly influence the achievement of the LAA Indicator Target 197 (Improved local biodiversity – active management of local sites).
- 2.18 Key lines of enquiry which will be impacted upon will be Environment: Natural Environment. The BAP is particularly relevant to the following point from the service inspection. ‘The council recognises biodiversity as an issue that is important at all levels of the authority (including elected members) and affects all areas of its work. The council has corporate-wide policies and practices that promote the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. The council has a clear understanding of how it is helping deliver the UK biodiversity strategy targets. A Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) has been adopted and incorporated into the community strategy.’
- 2.19 Indicator Target 197 was introduced in 2007 and therefore has not been reported upon to date and it is not possible to give statistics for other London borough’s performance. This target has been selected as a designated indicator within the forthcoming Harrow Local Area Agreement.
- 2.20 The baseline data for this target, for council managed sites, is 17 sites under active management. Despite a number of council owned sites being managed for biodiversity benefit, this low baseline figure is due to the majority of this management not being documented. Documentation is needed in order to qualify as active management. This means that currently the Council’s good performance in managing open spaces for biodiversity is not being recognised.
- 2.21 The BAP contains a number of actions which relate to developing management plans and providing private landowners with advice about effective wildlife management. This is classed as documentation in the National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions.
- 2.22 The implementation of the BAP will improve performance, as it will provide Public Realm with a framework to help deliver additional or new management for biodiversity within Council managed open spaces, thus contributing to achieving targets set for Indicator 197. The BAP will also enable current management to be documented, allowing this management to contribute towards achieving targets set for Indicator 197.
- 2.23 Currently negotiations with Government Office for London regarding the targets to be agreed for Indicator 197 are ongoing. However it is thought that achieving the following targets is possible, for council managed sites: 2008/9 -72 sites in active management, 2009/10 - 86 sites in active management and 2010/11- 100 sites in active management.

2.24 The adoption and implementation of the BAP will also impact upon CAA performance, directly relating to the Environment: Natural Environment key lines of enquiry. When the BAP is implemented Harrow Council will be able to provide a 'service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users, is cost-effective and makes contributions to wider outcomes for the community'.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name:Sheela Thakrar Date: 22/04/08..	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Name: Adekunle Amisu Date: 21/04/08	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Tom Whiting Date: 17/04/08	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact Anna Cohen, Biodiversity Action Plan Officer, 020 8736 6080 ext 6080

Background Papers

LocalDevelopment Framework Panel Committee Report 9th April 2008
Local Development Framework Panel Committee Report 12th December 2007