



Rivers and streams Habitat Action Plan 2009-2013

Plan Lead Organisation	Environment Agency
Plan Coordinator	Fiona Morris
Action Group	Wetland and coastal
Associated Plans	Water vole, ponds, lakes and reservoirs, grazing marsh
Latest version	Published June 2009

Description

Rivers and streams are dynamic systems that provide a wide variety of habitats to support a diverse range of plants and animals. A variety of water depths and flow types support a wide range of aquatic species, including invertebrates, fish and plants. Exposed shingle is particularly important for a range of invertebrate species whilst bankside vegetation supports an array of wildflowers and animals.

Rivers and streams form important habitat corridors that provide safe routes for species and links to other wildlife sites. They also provide a recreational resource to a variety of users including fishing and canoeing.

Few rivers and streams in the UK have not been modified by man, many being heavily managed in both rural and urban environments. Such works include the straightening of river channels and the construction of flood walls and banks. This has resulted in less diverse river habitats and rivers becoming detached from their adjacent floodplains, and the loss of associated habitats.

Current factors causing loss and decline

- ◆ Point source and diffuse pollution resulting in eutrophication and acidification.
- ◆ Excessive groundwater and surface water abstraction.
- ◆ Construction of weirs, dams and reservoirs.
- ◆ Water transfer schemes between rivers.
- ◆ Land drainage and flood defence works.
- ◆ Inappropriate bank management including overgrazing.
- ◆ Introduction of invasive plant and animal species.
- ◆ Industrial, housing and hydro-electric power scheme development within the floodplain.

Conservation Status

UK Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat – ‘Rivers and streams’.

The Water Framework Directive became part of UK law in 2003. The directive will help to protect and enhance the quality of our surface, ground and coastal waters. An important part of the requirements of the directive is to ensure the structure and function of an aquatic ecosystem that is the whole functioning of the habitat, rather than focusing on specific species and water quality parameters.

The Habitat in the Tees Valley

The river habitat in the Tees Valley BAP area has been heavily modified. In urban areas watercourses have been altered to reduce the risk of flooding. The barrage upstream of the A19 has impounded the river as far upstream as Low Worsall, resulting in changes to flow and water levels.

The water quality in this reach is generally good; increased phosphorus levels are recorded at the upstream limit of the Tees Valley area whilst the impoundment by the barrage can lead to depleted oxygen levels at times.

This reach of the river supports migratory salmon and has excellent coarse fisheries habitat. Otters are making a return to the river and many tributaries of the Tees are inhabited by water voles.

Current Activity in the Tees Valley

There are a number of partnership projects working along rivers and streams in the Tees Valley BAP area. These include:

- ◆ The Environment Agency's Tees Valley Project is improving flood risk management whilst delivering environmental improvements for people and wildlife. This wider project includes the Middlesbrough Becks partnership project which has included community engagement and habitat enhancement work. Similar projects are being developed in Stockton and Hartlepool.
- ◆ The Environment Agency and Tees Valley Wildlife Trust are looking for opportunities to create floodplain habitat and promote sustainable flood risk management in the area.

Further Information

The New Rivers and Wildlife Handbook: RSPB, National Rivers Authority and Wildlife Trusts (1994).

A 50-year vision for wetlands: England's Wetland Landscape: Securing a future for nature, people and the historic environment. Website: www.wetlandvision.org.uk

Vision Statement

To promote sustainable management of the River Tees and its tributaries ensuring that their value as wildlife corridors and amenity resources are protected and enhanced.

Targets

RS.T1 Implement requirements of Water Framework Directive in BAP area
Goal: 100% RBMP (River Basin Management Plan) targets by 2010.

RS.T2: Increase the length of river habitat in improved management.
Goal: 5km of river length under improved management by 2010.

Actions

Code	Action	Organisational lead	Action contact	Partners	End date
RS.A1	Achieve Water Framework Directive target of good ecological potential.	Environment Agency	Fiona Morris	NWL, TERT	2010
RS.A2	Support and encourage the use of buffer strips along watercourses to improve riparian habitat and water quality.	Environment Agency	Fiona Morris	TVWT, NWT, Wetland and Coastal Action Group(TVBP) Natural England	Ongoing
RS.A3	Identify opportunities for reconnection of watercourses to their floodplains through sustainable flood risk management.	Environment Agency	Fiona Morris	NWT	Ongoing
RS.A4	Increase and promote understanding of wider functions of watercourses and their catchments among all relevant sectors.	Environment Agency	Fiona Morris	Wetland and Coastal Action Group (TVBP) Natural England	2010
RS.A5	Ensure river and stream corridors are identified for protection and improvement within the strategic development plans relevant to the Tees Valley.	Joint Strategy Unit	Malcolm Steele	Hartlepool Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council, Stockton Borough Council, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council	Ongoing
RS.A6	Apply Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) wherever possible through the planning process to reduce flood risk and prevent deterioration to water quality.	Middlesbrough Council	Martin Coleclough	Hartlepool Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council, Stockton Borough Council, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council	Ongoing
RS.A7	Identify opportunities to restore engineered and culverted watercourses, particularly in urban areas. Also to prevent further deterioration to existing rivers and streams.	Environment Agency	Fiona Morris	Environment Agency	Ongoing
RS.A8	Obtain funding and deliver a "Boro Becks Project" in Middlesbrough covering some beck biodiversity projects and involvement of local communities in enjoying and caring for becks in Middlesbrough.	Middlesbrough Council	Anne Gladwin	Environment Agency Tees Valley Wildlife Trust	2012
RS.A9	Develop a Lustrum Beck project to provide a co-ordinated and multi-agency approach to beck maintenance, environmental enhancement and community involvement.	Groundwork South Tees	Anne-Louise Orange	Stockton Borough Council Environment Agency	2013
RS.A10	Develop Tees Heritage park to involve a wide range of riverside habitat improvements, access and interpretation.	Groundwork South Tees	Anne-Louise Orange	Stockton Borough Council Environment Agency	2013