

THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL: FROM RIO TO TAYSIDE

Global

Britain was one of the 153 countries to sign the 'Convention on Biological Diversity' at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. The international document requires each signatory to "develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity".

U. K.

Arising from the Earth Summit pledge, the British Government published its UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) in 1994. A total of 391 of the rarest species and 45 of the most threatened habitats within the UK now have a UK Biodiversity Action Plan outlining national conservation targets and the actions required to meet them. These are now being implemented country-wide; throughout the UK approximately 170 biodiversity partnerships have been set up in recent years.

Scotland

During 1996 the Scottish Biodiversity Group was formed to oversee the implementation of the relevant UK BAPs in Scotland. Now the Scottish Biodiversity Forum, its membership includes statutory and non-statutory organisations from a very wide range of sectors. It gives a strategic overview of the habitats and species under threat in Scotland and provides a central liaison point for everyone involved in the biodiversity process.

All Scottish local authority areas are now committed to preparing a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP). Some are county-based; others - including Highland and Tayside - cover a much wider area. A few local authorities are integrating the process into an existing service such as Planning and Development or Community Planning. Other partnerships are being co-ordinated by a Biodiversity Project Officer who may or may not be local authority based. In some areas the LBAP Officer is based in different partners' offices such as North-East Scotland which is SWT-based, or in the Cairngorms which is within the Cairngorms Partnership.

Tayside

The national action required is ambitious and to be successfully put into practice must be assimilated into work already being undertaken by statutory and non-statutory bodies alike. National targets need to be translated into focussed local action and consideration given to those threatened or highly valued species and habitats important to the region but not listed as nationally or internationally important in the UK BAP.

The Tayside Biodiversity Partnership first met in 1998 and within a year had prepared its audit of species and habitats. Six sub-groups with members drawn from as broad an audience as possible developed the first tranche of Habitat Action Plans (HAPs). Each Plan identifies the local action needed to safeguard the habitat, together with named Lead Partners and Partners responsible for taking the work forward.

With a 15 year lifespan the Plans will need to be regularly checked - a key part of the biodiversity process has to be the monitoring and review of agreed actions. The successful implementation of these will require a working partnership of local communities, industry, commerce and individuals. Several HAPs may well have to be completely updated as more information becomes available or the actions are achieved and new targets set.

Biodiversity conservation is an extremely dynamic process involving a vast range of people who can all make an individual difference. Tayside is already preparing its second tranche of both Habitat and Species Action Plans and by remaining flexible can respond to changes in local policy and the environment itself.

The most important word in the whole process is 'action'. Without a concerted effort from everyone to conserve our local biodiversity nothing will be achieved and the LBAP will be just another document left in pristine condition on numerous bookshelves.

Tayside Biodiversity Partnership



BIODIVERSITY
THE VARIETY OF LIFE