

A LOCAL PLAN FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND EDUCATION

For a document which could be looked upon primarily as a management tool for Tayside's diverse habitats, the Plan could easily be perceived as something outwith most people's interests. But for the area's biodiversity to be safeguarded and enhanced, it is hoped everyone – residents and visitors alike - can become involved and take an active role. With this in mind, demonstration sites and practical case studies will be encouraged to show good practice and highlight different sectors' achievements in biodiversity conservation.

There is massive scope to include biodiversity in both formal and informal learning – from nursery schools to higher education and out into our communities. Tayside has one of the best concentrations of eco-schools in Scotland and many more schools are looking to improve their environmental credentials. Nationally, links are being made with the 5 –14 curriculum which provides innovative opportunities for learning through academic and practical projects. Lifelong learning is an excellent opportunity to involve people in their local biodiversity and to show its relevance to them.

The Tayside Biodiversity Partnership has linked with the Scottish Biodiversity Week celebrations in 2001 and 2002 and produced a variety of leaflets and articles to ensure that the biodiversity process is an inclusive one. A colourful set of display boards is already circulating throughout the area's libraries and colleges and participation in events and talks continue apace. Tayside's Local Patch Project (Discover the Wildlife on your Doorstep) was launched during early 2002 and will have a minimum three year lifespan. The project's aim is to encourage people from all walks of life to participate in surveying both commonplace and rarer species anywhere outdoors, be it their garden, local park or golf course.

Local involvement is vital for the success of the Plan and its first tranche of Action Plans. On-going commitment will be essential to the successful protection of our priority habitats and species and the long-term conservation of our local biodiversity. We all rely on biodiversity, so everyone has a role to play in looking after it for this generation and the many generations to come.

“Diversity is the characteristic of nature and the basis of ecological stability. Diverse ecosystems give rise to diverse life forms and to diverse cultures. The co-evolution of culture, life forms and habitats has conserved the biological diversity of this planet. Cultural diversity and biodiversity go hand in hand.”

Vandana Shiva

THE BUSINESS OF BIODIVERSITY

Much of Scotland's economy depends directly, or indirectly, on our natural resources. The local farming industry has a particularly important role to play in biodiversity issues. By considering 'low cost, no cost' environmental management options, direct savings can be made that benefit wildlife at the same time. Our whisky industry relies on the provision of pure water, natural yeasts and good quality barley. Many of our medicines originate from plants and we are discovering effective new plant-based treatments for cancer and other disease.

In today's competitive market we need to offer a very high quality landscape to modern, forward-looking companies moving to the area. The Tayside LBAP aims to involve and assist the local business community in planning for biodiversity and developing sustainable ways of working.

The Tayside LBAP is working with a number of business sectors to introduce the biodiversity conservation concept. Already there are Best Practice Case Studies available, including

- a supermarket which is enhancing its car park for wildlife – and its customers
- a business park planning comprehensive wildlife corridors
- a family joinery company encouraging wildlife to utilise its car park and buildings – and benefiting its customers and staff with visually-improved surroundings
- industrial estates incorporating Sustainable Urban Drainage systems to the benefit of all concerned
- minerals companies restoring areas to include increasingly rare habitats such as ponds and wet grassland.

Tayside Biodiversity Partnership



Nationally, the quarrying industry plants more native trees than any other commercial sector. It may also be in a position to play host to species such as lizards and colonies of sand martins which are under increasing breeding pressure from loss of habitat.

Businesses elsewhere in Scotland are already involving staff and local schoolchildren in species audits so that management decisions concerning their surrounding land can be jointly made. Some companies are becoming involved in championing specific species such as the rare Sticky Catchfly plant or wading birds such as Redshank and Curlew.

By taking specific action for biodiversity, the business community can gain satisfaction from involving its staff, customers and suppliers in the local environment. There are a myriad number of opportunities to improve working conditions across the workforce and to make a positive environmental impact on the local community. Not only can businesses ensure they are meeting their legal obligations by protecting their immediate environment, but they also have the opportunity to engage a variety of people who may not otherwise realise that local biodiversity issues directly involve them.

ECO-TOURISM

Ask any visitor to Scotland in general, or Tayside in particular, what they enjoy about the area and they are likely to highlight stunning scenery, its wildlife and the unique historical heritage.

Wildlife tourism itself contributes an annual income of at least £57 million to the Scottish economy, plus 2,000 jobs. It is the only sector of Scottish tourism that is steadily increasing and forecast to grow in the years ahead. Many of the visitors' souvenirs will include locally produced items endorsing our pure water, sustainable farming or timber practices. Furthermore, local people and tourists alike enjoy Tayside's diverse landscapes – from Highland Perthshire, its hills, lochs and forests, to Angus, its glens, beaches and sea cliffs.

Green tourism, or 'eco-tourism' as it is increasingly known, involves people visiting areas to see and enjoy the wide variety of species and habitats in a particular area, at the same time as ensuring that such visits are sustainable, non-disturbing to the wildlife, and generating significant rural employment with local economic gain.

The management of our biodiversity to attract both visitors and local people must be sympathetic to meet the needs of nature and what visitors come to see. Eco-tourism is a relatively new concept, but it offers exciting opportunities to benefit the local community, safeguard wildlife and still allow visitors to experience some of the most varied landscapes in Scotland, often during the 'shoulder months' of the main tourism season when many species are easier to see.



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