

Wetlands Biodiversity Delivery Group

Work Programme

2009- 2012

Last updated 30th March 2009

Introduction

The Wetlands Biodiversity Delivery Group (BDG) is one of five Biodiversity Delivery Groups that were established to help deliver the commitments for priority habitats and species within the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy. Each Biodiversity Delivery Group is a partnership of key stakeholders working together towards the biodiversity targets for habitats and species. Further details for this and other BDGs can be found at:

http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/conserving-biodiversity/habitats-2/habitat_delivery_groups/freshwater_and_wetlands_biodiversity_delivery-group.htm

The Wetlands Biodiversity Delivery Group addresses the following priority habitats in Northern Ireland which are the subject of Habitat Action Plans (HAPs); Fens, Reedbeds, Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh, Aquifer fed naturally fluctuating water bodies, Eutrophic Standing Waters, Mesotrophic Lakes, and Marl Lakes. Additional HAPs are being drawn up for Ponds, Rivers and Oligotrophic lakes.

This work programme sets out the work that the Wetlands BDG members will carry out over the next three years. It is reviewed annually.

Work Programme structure

The 'key tasks' have been derived from a collation exercise carried out in 2006 to bring together 'actions' from individual habitat action plans into this higher level, integrated, work programme for the BDG. Many of these key tasks are ongoing, such as 2.1. *Monitoring designated SACs/ASSIs* or 3.1.2 *Monitor and control the impact of invasive species*. These are included in the work programme as they are important but are not always given a SMART timeframe because there are other systems in place to take these forward. Other key tasks are very broadly expressed for example 3.1.5. *Ensure that recreational activities...take into account wetland habitats or species* or 3.2.1. *Develop an inventory of extent, location and condition of wetland habitats*. In some cases sub-tasks have been added in the second column where there is a measurable output. Some of the sub-tasks draw together elements of a range of key tasks. A 'comment' has been added to some key tasks to outline the context or state of progress.

CONTENTS

Section	Page
Introduction	i
Site designation	1
Management of designated sites	2
Management of designated sites, priority habitats and species	3
River Basin Management Planning	7
Research	8
Education and Awareness	9
Implementation	11

Site designation

Objective 1: Ensure that all priority wetland habitats that meet the scientific criteria required for ASSI designation are designated by 2015 and that all locally important sites are identified and protected.

Key Action 1.1: Designate all priority wetland habitats that meet the scientific criteria required for ASSI designation, by 2015.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
1.1.1	Review the coverage of wetland habitats within the SAC/ASSI/NNR series and initiate a programme for designating additional wetland sites.	NIEA	Ongoing	
1.1.2	Produce conservation objectives for all designated sites.	NIEA	Ongoing	

Key Action 1.2: Protect locally important sites by identifying them in Area Plans and in Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
1.2.1	Identify wetland SLNCIs in Development Plans and in Local Biodiversity Action Plans.	Planning Service NIEA NGOs District Councils	Ongoing in line with Area Plans	
1.2.2	Develop a Local Wildlife Sites Database	NIEA		

Management of designated sites

Objective 2: Work to maintain favourable condition or improve the conservation condition towards favourable, of 95% of the features underlying the designation of internationally important wildlife sites and Areas of Special Scientific Interest by 2013.

Key Action 2.1: Monitor and report on the condition of designated freshwater and wetland sites and associated species.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
2.1	Monitor and report on the condition of freshwater and wetland SACs/ASSIs	NIEA, DCAL, Loughs Agency, Rivers Agency.	Ongoing	
	2.1.1 Publish an ASSI condition report	NIEA	2012	

Key Action 2.2: Identify ASSI/SAC in unfavourable condition and initiate and implement site management plans for restoration for identified sites by 2010.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
2.2.1	Identify and Initiate a programme to restore wetland SACs/ASSIs which are not in favourable condition.	NIEA, FCB, Loughs Agency, Rivers Agency, Water Service, DCAL		
	2.2.1.1. Produce a restoration plan for fens	NIEA	2010	
	2.2.1.2. Investigate the feasibility of using a 'Remedies' type approach as used by Natural England	NIEA	2010	
2.2.2	Ensure that agri-environment schemes and MOSS are used effectively to deliver wetland management and restoration.	NIEA, DARD	Ongoing	
2.2.3	Fisheries to continue to carry out monitoring and restoration work.	DCAL	Ongoing	

Management of designated sites, priority habitats and species.

Objective 3: Maintain the current extent and overall distribution of wetlands currently in favourable condition and improve the condition of those areas, which are degraded but readily restorable by 2010 and introduce management regimes to improve the condition of the remaining areas by 2015.

Key Action 3.1: Maintain the extent and condition of wetland sites and the distribution and population of key species.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
3.1.1	Collectively ensure that PPS2 adequately protects wetland habitats and species.	ALL	2009	
3.1.2	Through Invasive Species Ireland carry out risk assessments and prepare further contingency plans, management plans and Codes of Good Practice for high risk species.	NIEA	2012	
	3.1.2.1. – Let a new three year All-Ireland invasive species in Ireland contract.	NIEA, NPWS	2010	
3.1.3	Ensure that wetland management and restoration plans are incorporated into Local Biodiversity Action Plans.	NIEA, District Councils	2007	
3.1.4	Ensure that the agricultural related grant schemes are used effectively to positively deliver wetland management.	DARD, NIEA		
3.1.5	Ensure that recreational activities, for example, boating, fishing or water sports take account of wetland habitats or species.	DCAL, NIEA, Waterways Ireland, District Councils, Loughs Agency	Ongoing	

Key Action 3.2: Compile an inventory on priority wetlands habitats in Northern Ireland.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
3.2.1	Develop an inventory of the extent, location and condition of wetland habitats.	NIEA	2009	
3.2.2	Establish a method to collate all freshwater monitoring data into the existing GB lake inventory, identifying Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 sites.	NIEA	2009	
3.2.3	Collect information on salmonid habitats.	DCAL	Ongoing	
3.2.4	Produce habitat classifications, definitions and indicators for wetland habitats.	NIEA	2012	
3.2.5	Carry out a study to identify Important Areas for Ponds in Northern Ireland (IAPs)	NIEA	2009	

Key Action 3.3: Monitor the condition of wetland habitats and species in the wider countryside.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
3.3.1	Review the current monitoring of priority habitats in the wider countryside and identify gaps.	NIEA, DCAL.	2010	
	3.3.1.1 Produce a 'gap analysis' through the 2010 Biodiversity Report contract	NIEA	2012	
3.3.2	Develop a programme for monitoring the condition of priority wetland habitats and species in the wider countryside.	NIEA	2010	
3.3.3	Produce definitions for "favourable condition", "unfavourable condition" and "unfavourable recovering" for wetland habitats in the wider countryside.	NIEA	2010	
	3.3.3.1 Include clear definitions within the new Pond and River HAPs	NIEA	2010	
3.3.4	Monitor the distribution and population of priority species.	NIEA	Ongoing	

	3.3.4.1 Carry out an otter survey	NIEA	2010	
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Key Action 3.4: Carry out a strategic review of restoration opportunities for wetland habitats.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
3.4.1	Produce a Restoration Strategy for the prioritisation of wetland restoration in Northern Ireland.	NIEA , DARD, NGOs, Rivers Agency, DCAL	2009	
	3.4.1.1 Publish a study on Landscape Scale Restoration opportunities.	NIEA	2011	
3.4.2	Promote and develop demonstration sites for the management and restoration of wetlands.	NIEA Rivers Agency	2010	
	3.4.2.1 Produce a list of demonstration sites covering a range of wetland habitats with details			
3.4.3	Initiate restoration of the priority sites identified in the Restoration Strategy.	NIEA, Forest Service, District Councils, Rivers Agency	2010	
3.4.4	Ensure an integrated and effective approach to funding for management of wetland habitats.	NIEA District Councils	2009	

River Basin Management Planning

Objective 4: Ensure that all wetlands are fully incorporated into River Basin Management Plans by 2009.

Key Action 4.1: Ensure that wetlands are properly recognised and managed through River Basin Management Plans.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
4.1.1	Ensure that all Natura 2000 sites with water dependant features are included in River Basin Management Plans	NIEA	2009	
	4.1.1.1 Ensure that Programmes of Measures (POMs) to protect water dependant features in Natura 2000 sites are identified and in place.	NIEA Rivers Agency	2012	
4.1.3	Ensure that wetlands that are appropriately classified as Groundwater Dependant Terrestrial Ecosystems in RBMPs, are adequately monitored and have appropriate programmes of measures.	NIEA	2012	
4.1.4	Review how wetlands are dealt with in River Basin Management Plans and make recommendations for consideration in the second round of River Basin Management Plans due in 2015.	ALL	2012	

Research

Objective 5: Initiate and support research to advance the implementation of this work programme.

Key Action 5.1: Continue to carry out research as necessary to improve our understanding of wetland distribution, function, management and associated species.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
5.1	Continue to carry out and support research to help develop our understanding and management of wetland habitats e.g. inventory work, definitions.	NIEA DCAL	Ongoing	

Education and Awareness

Objective 6: Encourage active participation and increase the awareness and understanding of wetland issues amongst the public, landowners and stakeholders.

Key Action 6.1: Promote access to wetlands and raise awareness of wetland habitats and species.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
6.1.1	Develop a wetland awareness programme.	NIEA , DENI Forest Service DARD, L.A, BREA.	2007	
	6.1.1.1 – Co-ordinate a World Wetlands Day awareness programme.	NIEA, ALL	Annually	
6.1.2	Provide appropriate access, interpretation and educational provision on key wetland sites.	NIEA, Forest Service, District Councils, Loughs Agency	Ongoing	

Key Action 6.2: Develop good practice for wetland management.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
6.2.1.	Review relevant guidelines and materials on wetland management and produce a directory of best examples.	NIEA DARD Rivers Agency	Ongoing	
6.2.2	Ensure that those providing wetland management advice to landowners are consistent and fully informed.	DARD NIEA Rivers Agency	Ongoing	
6.2.3	Provide management advice to wetland landowners and managers.	NIEA, DARD, Rivers Agency, DCAL	Ongoing	
6.2.4	Publish the Fen Management Handbook with other UK agencies and NGOs.	NIEA	2010	
6.2.5	Arrange workshops / conferences	ALL	At least one annually	
	6.2.5.1 – Arrange a Freshwater Pearl Mussel workshop	NIEA	2009	
	6.2.5.2 – Arrange a Lowland Wetland workshop	NIEA	2009	

Implementation

Objective 7: Ensure that this work programme is implemented and review progress by 2010.

Key Action 7.1: A Wetland Biodiversity Delivery Group, led by NIEA including Government, NGOs and businesses, will help implement this work programme.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
7.1.1	Review work programme and progress on an annual basis.	ALL	Annually	
7.1.2	Publish work programme report	NIEA	2011	
7.1.3	Review terms of reference on an annual basis.	ALL	Annually	
7.1.4	Establish a Lowlands Wetland Group as a sub-group of the Wetlands BDG and Peatlands and Upland BDG	NIEA	2009	
7.1.5	Seek to secure funding for a fish conservation officer's post with AFBI	NIEA, DCAL, AFBI	2009	

Key Action 7.2: Further develop links with Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
7.2.1	Further develop links with the UK, the Republic of Ireland and International organisations on wetland and species management.	ALL	Ongoing	
	7.2.1.1 Provide representation from the Wetland BDG on the UK Wetland Habitat Group	NIEA plus one other	Ongoing	
	7.2.1.2. Provide representation from the Wetland BDG on the UK Freshwater Habitat Group	NIEA plus one other	Ongoing	
	7.2.1.3 Provide representation on the UK Lakes HAP Group	NIEA	Ongoing	
	7.2.1.4 Provide representation on the UK Pond HAP Group	NIEA	Ongoing	
	7.2.1.5 Provide representation on the UK River HAP Group	NIEA	Ongoing	
	7.2.1.6 Maintain membership of the River Restoration Centre	NIEA, RA	Ongoing	
	7.2.1.7 Maintain links with NPWS for All-Ireland Species Action Plans (Pollan, Lady's Tresses Orchid etc).	NIEA	Ongoing	
	7.2.1.8. Maintain links on Natura 2000 site management through the Cross-border Liaison Group	NIEA	Ongoing	
	7.2.1.8 Provide representation on the Freshwater Lead Co-ordination network Group	NIEA	Ongoing	
	7.2.1.9 Initiate the setting up of a White-clawed Crayfish Species Group.	NIEA	2010	

Key Action 7.3: Incorporate new Habitat Action Plans and priority species into this work programme.

Key Tasks		Partners - Lead Partner(s) in bold	Timeframe	Comments/Update
7.3.1.	Incorporate new Habitat Action Plans to this work programme	NIEA	Ongoing.	
	7.3.1.1 – Agree a new River HAP for NI	NIEA	2011	
	7.3.1.2 – Agree a new Pond HAP for NI	NIEA	2011	
7.3.2.	Incorporate relevant priority species to this work programme	NIEA		
	7.3.2.1 – Complete the priority species signposting exercise.	NIEA	2010	
	7.3.2.2. – Add priority species to this work programme	NIEA	2010	