



West Lothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan
Farmland Action Plan 2007 - 12

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WEST LOTHIAN LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN FARMLAND ACTION PLAN 2007 - 2012

INTRODUCTION

Over 64% of the area of West Lothian is farmed, mostly as grassland but also as arable land or heather moorland. (Source West Lothian Phase 1 Habitat Survey). Key habitats such as wetlands, watercourses, peat bogs and woodlands are an integral part of the farmed landscape. Farming therefore has a vital role to play in protecting and enhancing the greater part of the Biodiversity in West Lothian.

The aim of this plan is to provide help for farmers and land managers to keep and enhance the diversity, quality and quantity of wildlife in West Lothian. Through the themes of raising awareness, improving communications and promoting good practice the plan enables farmers and land managers to deliver focussed biodiversity action. The plan relates directly to the Local Priority Habitats and Species identified within the framework document 'Planning for Biodiversity Action in West Lothian. It also links into the Habitat Action Plans created in West Lothian for Watercourses, Woodlands and Raised Bogs.

Over recent years there has been a broad-based change in culture regarding agricultural production and the environment. Recent influences on the farming industry have placed greater emphasis on the management of land for the environment, biodiversity and recreation as well as for agricultural production. These changes include a reduction in production based subsidies, increased

awareness of social goods, greater public consciousness of agricultural and environmental issues, and increases in both political and financial pressures.

It is important that the farming community embraces and is fully involved in the changes that affect it and the countryside. To this end the plan has been drawn-up by representatives of the farming community (The National Farmers' Union of Scotland) advisory bodies (FWAG & SAC) and the local government body (WLC).

Because of the changing nature of farming and Agri-environment policy the plan aims to be flexible, and regularly reviewed. Its purpose, however, is to assist in the adaptations necessary by the industry to accommodate change.

West Lothian Biodiversity Farmland Action Plan: REVIEWED Feb 2007

Aim

The aim of the Farmland Action Plan is to help farmers and land managers maintain, enhance and increase the diversity, quality and quantity of wildlife in West Lothian.

Objectives

1. Raise awareness amongst the wider community of the positive work of farmers and promote the benefits of good environmental practice amongst all countryside users.
2. Encourage farmers and land managers to embrace Biodiversity Action as an essential element of good practice.
3. Assist farm businesses by promoting, identifying and improving the availability of resources to farmers and land managers.

	Action Objective		Action		07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12
1	Communication and Dialogue	1.1	Use partner organisation newsletters, bulletins and local press/media to raise awareness of how landowners do, and can, protect and enhance biodiversity, including project work, training and linked development of good agricultural practice.	All	■	■	■	■	■
		1.2	Raise awareness of good practice and linked biodiversity benefits through farmer groups and training courses	FWAG/ SAC/NFU	■	■	■	■	■
		1.3	Carry out a farm demonstration event focussing on how landowners can enhance biodiversity and satisfy GAEC requirements	FWAG/ NFU/ SAC/ WLC/ SRPBA			■		
2	Apply range of grant sources to project work for the benefit key habitat and species	2.1	Keep under review potential grant sources, publicise these as appropriate, and apply to proposed projects.	All	■	■	■	■	■
		2.2	Black grouse - develop Pentland Hills cross boundary project, including assessment of populations and conservation enhancement.	FWAG/ SAC/PHRP	■				
		2.3	Water voles - undertake survey work in Bathgate Hills to assess population and conservation management needs. Implement through neighbour co-operation.	FWAG/SAC		■			
		2.4	Great crested newts - develop implementation project from FWAG farm pond survey	FWAG	■				
		2.5	Bring species rich grass land, previously identified through FWAG's "Assessment of the Wildflower Grassland Resource of the Lothians" under appropriate management	FWAG/SAC		■			

	Action Objective		Action		07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12
		2.6	Identify and bring under appropriate management further areas of species rich grassland	FWAG				■	
		2.7	Organise questionnaire and survey of Barn owls in West Lothian and provide advice on habitat requirements and appropriate management	FWAG	■				
3	Carbon off-set and bio-fuel production	3.1	Join with Woodland HAP Group to hold workshop(s) and keep under review good design and biodiversity enhancement opportunities/needs	FWAG/ CSFT/SAC	■	■	■	■	■
4	Agri-environment schemes	4.1	Review schemes as announced and consider action that may arise. Arrange farmer meetings when Tier 3 schemes are announced	FWAG/ SAC	■	■	■	■	■
		4.2	Promote Natural Care schemes on West Lothian SSSIs	FWAG/ SAC/ SNH	■	■	■	■	■
5	Political initiative	5.1	Review initiatives as announced and consider supportive and development actions that may arise.	FWAG/SAC	■	■	■	■	■
6	Review action plan	6.1	Hold an annual review of the action plan in the context of 4.1 and 5.1	FWAG	■	■	■	■	■
		6.2	Amend and introduce actions as appropriate.	ALL	■	■	■	■	■

Abbreviations

- CSFT - Central Scotland Forest Trust
- FWAG - Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
- NFU - National Farmers Union
- PHRP - Pentland Hills Regional Park
- SAC - Scottish Agricultural College
- SNH - Scottish Natural Heritage
- SRPBA - Scottish Rural Property and Business Association
- WLC - West Lothian Council