



WEST LOTHIAN LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN
HABITAT ACTION PLAN: RIVERS AND STREAMS

2005/06 - 2009/10

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Current Action

Rivers and streams are offered better protection than many natural habitats through legislation (see Appendix), both UK and European. While vast improvements have been made in some aspects of water quality, particularly sewage treatment and industrial effluent discharge, efforts are now turning towards the control of non-point sources such as road runoff, which have the potential to cause 'diffuse pollution'. In parallel with this there is a growing recognition of the importance of river habitats both as the supporting physical structures for wildlife, and as key components conferring resilience of the system as a whole, for example, enabling polluting materials to be processed and rendered harmless.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) is a European legislation that will ensure the achievement and maintenance of good status of all water bodies across Scotland. The Directive requires the production of River Basin Management Plans (RBMP), which will report the Environmental Objectives and the Programmes of Measures set for the water bodies within a River Basin District. The Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003 (WEWS) transposes the WFD into Scots law and will bring a single coherent approach to protecting the whole water environment that incorporates water quality (pollution), water quantity (abstractions and flow regulation) and habitat quality (river engineering and agricultural practices). The WEWS Act will introduce the statutory RBMP's required by the WFD by 2009.

The Rural Stewardship Scheme (RSS) covers the whole of Scotland. It superseded the former Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Countryside Premium Schemes. The RSS is an agri-environment scheme designed to encourage farmers, crofters and common grazings committees to adopt environmentally friendly practices and to maintain and enhance particular habitats and landscape features. In addition, over this plan period the further modification of grant aid to farmers, with the introduction of land management contracts, is anticipated. These schemes, along with others such as the targeted West Lothian Council initiative, Boundaries, Banks and Birds, will also work to improve the status of watercourses and the riparian habitat throughout West Lothian and Scotland. The most effective strategic approach to this will be through a focus on individual catchments and joined-up initiatives.

The River Almond Integrated Catchment Management Plan (CMP) has been developed by a consortium of all parties involved in the management of the land and the water in the catchment. The CMP presents a template for ensuring sensitive integration of all activities within a catchment. Improved techniques and understanding of sensitive river engineering are currently on the agenda of many organisations. This has resulted in better guidance material being available to those involved in such works, and an increased awareness of the issues involved. The WEWS Act will also aid the future management of rivers and streams by the introduction of controls over activities affecting the water environment.

This Habitat Action Plan will assist in the delivery of some of the targets of the River Almond CMP.

Actions

- 1.a Review current water quality and prepare annual report highlighting improvements in water quality throughout the Almond Catchment.
- 1.b Ensure that targets are set, by SEPA, for the achievement and maintenance of good ecological status of all rivers and streams and targets are reported on an annual basis.
- 1.c Draw up improvement plans for addressing poor water quality where identified. Prepare and implement improvement plans in association with appropriate partners and according to priority. Priority watercourse catchments for the new plan period to include Brox Burn, How Burn and Lochshot Burn. Those that feed Linlithgow Loch will be considered in an initiative to tackle the eutrophic condition of this former mestrophic water body.

Appendix

Rivers (Prevention of Pollution) (Scotland) Act 1951
Rivers (Prevention of Pollution) (Scotland) Act 1965
Control of Pollution Act 1974
Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975
EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (Directive 79/409/EEC)
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989
Water Act 1989
Environmental Protection Act 1990
Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991
Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1991
EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna (Directive 92/43/EEC)
Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994
Environment Act 1995
Scottish Office Circular 6/1995, Habitats and Birds Directives
Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003
Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

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