



Post-industrial Sites Biodiversity Action Plan

A Wildthings 10 year Habitat Action Plan
2006–2016

Introduction

Post-industrial sites are those which were formerly used for industrial activity but are no longer used and have now been reclaimed for other uses. This category includes disused railway lines and associated land, coal spoil tips (known locally as 'batches'), quarries, underground stone mines and above-ground stone-workings, disused canals, and areas previously occupied by buildings. Some sites were only partly developed, with the remaining land being of high nature conservation value. Many such sites are also recognised for their geological interest.

Following their abandonment, plant and animal communities have colonised these sites. Within a few years a surprisingly high species diversity can be supported. With increasing agricultural intensification causing declines in species diversity in the wider countryside, the contribution made to the District's biodiversity by post-industrial sites is considerable. They represent a unique resource in helping to create a fully functioning ecological network and responding to the challenges of climate change.

Species-rich habitats present on post-industrial sites in Bath and North East Somerset include calcareous grassland, acidic grassland, exposed rock, gravel and bare ground, marshes, and scrub. Too many notable species occur on these sites to list here but they include many nationally scarce plant and insect species, several Red Data Book insects, and all four species of reptile found in Bath and North East Somerset. Some post-industrial sites are very important to bats, especially disused mines, for example the Special Area of Conservation based at the stone mines around Bath.

There are UK and South West Regional Habitat Action Plans for Urban Habitats (which includes post-industrial land). One of the Priority Policy Issues identified in the England Biodiversity Strategy (Defra, Working with the Grain of Nature: a biodiversity strategy for England) is recognising the biodiversity value of brownfield land and its potential to contribute towards regeneration. One of the strategy's objectives is to conserve key brownfield species through site protection, mitigation, and habitat creation.



Current distribution of post-industrial sites

At present post-industrial sites have not been comprehensively identified and mapped at a Bath and North East Somerset-wide level. Some are recognised as sites of Nature Conservation Importance or Regionally Important Geological Sites.

Within the district there is a concentration of post-industrial sites in the Midsomer Norton/Radstock area, where historic coal mining activity took place.

Important sites within this area include:

- 1 The network of disused railway lines converging at Radstock, within which the most important site identified so far is Radstock Railway Land, Frome Road
- 2 Several coal spoil tips around Midsomer Norton and Radstock, along the Cam Valley between Dunkerton and High Littleton, and around Clutton and Pensford
- 3 Quarries and disused stone-workings around Clutton and Temple Cloud
- 4 Some parts of the disused Somersetshire Coal Canal

There are also further concentrations of post-industrial sites in the Keynsham area (e.g. at Queen Charlton Concrete Works, Keynsham Humpy Tumps), and within and around the City of Bath (e.g. the Combe Down stone mines, sites along the Lower Bristol Road and other disused factories, disused railway and canal sites).

Current factors causing loss or decline

- Lack of management
- Development pressures
- Lack of awareness of habitat value and importance

Current action in Bath and North East Somerset

- Some site survey and recording by a range of volunteers and organisations
- The identification by Buglife and the Invertebrate Conservation Trust 2004 of a site of national importance at Radstock Railway Land, Frome Road, Norton Radstock
- Identification of valuable sites through consultation on planning applications
- The designation and management of post-industrial site Nature Reserves
- Targeted species conservation work on some sites (e.g. Fine-leaved Sandwort and Blue Carpenter Bee work by CVWG)
- Monitoring of bat populations associated with Combe Down Stone Mines
- On-going identification of new Regionally Important Geological Sites
- Educational work to raise awareness of the value of post-industrial sites.
- Biodiversity Action Grant to support practical conservation projects



Objectives and targets

- 1 Bring about an increased understanding, within the partnership, landowners, and the wider public, of the distribution and relative importance of post-industrial sites within Bath and North East Somerset and the wildlife resource that they support
- 2 Counter immediate threats to key sites
- 3 Identify key post-industrial sites and over time bring these into favourable conservation management
- 4 Promote the value of site management and provide management advice for site owners and community groups
- 5 Change public perceptions of the nature conservation value of post-industrial sites
- 6 Educate decision-makers about the nature conservation value of post-industrial sites
- 7 Identify species from the Bath and North East Somerset priority list which are particularly dependent on post-industrial sites and produce species action plans (as is currently being done with Blue Carpenter Bee)
- 8 Where post-industrial sites are threatened by development, use the planning process to ensure no net loss of biodiversity as a result of this development
- 9 Create new areas of valuable habitat on post-industrial sites
- 10 Integration of post-industrial sites into a wider strategy aimed at responding to the challenge of climate change and the establishment of a fully functioning ecological network



Output and actions

Action	Lead Partners	Measurable Outputs	Relevant Objectives	Target Date
A. Identify and recognise post industrial sites within the SNCI and RIGS classification systems	B&NES AWT / BRERC CVWG Avon RIGS Group	SNCI and RIGS System includes all important post-industrial sites	1	Review June 2006
B. Create a map and inventory of post-industrial land and an at-risk register. Use to rank sites, review management, and identify opportunities for management	B&NES AWT BRERC CVWG Avon RIGS Group	Map and Inventory At-risk register	1,2,3,4	October 2006
C. Commission ecological and geological surveys of key sites. Ecological surveys to be carried out in priority order – invertebrates (particularly aculeates – bees, ants, wasps, reptiles, plants, other groups)	B&NES BRERC Avon RIGS Group Post-industrial Sites Working Group	A programme of ecological and geological surveys taking place	1,3	January 2007 to November 2010
D. Identify sites needing action, identify organisations who manage sites. Produce and secure implementation of specific Action Plans	Post-industrial Sites Working Group	Interventions, actions, or management achieved	2,3,4,5	November 2007 onwards
E. Carry out a study to identify species dependent on post-industrial sites and identify and implement priorities for further action	BRERC AWT B&NES Post-industrial Sites Working Group	Prioritised action	7,10	September 2006 onward
F. Create a Guidance Note on implementation of the Post-industrial Sites Biodiversity Action Plan	B&NES AWT Post-industrial Sites Working Group	Creation of Guidance Note	1,8,9,10	March 2006
G. Achieve effective implementation of Local Plan policies, monitor their effectiveness, and review	B&NES AWT Post-industrial Sites Working Group	Protection of post-industrial land through the planning system. Rate of favourable outcomes on post-industrial sites. Outcome of monitoring and Review	3,4,8,9	Monitoring ongoing, 2006-2015 Reviews August 2008 August 2010 August 2012 August 2014
H. Establish 'Wildthings Post-Industrial Sites Initiative' to achieve the favourable conservation status of key sites	Post Industrial Site Working Group	Working Group established Initiative established	All	April 2006 April 2008
I. Workshop for planning officers and councillors to include the value of post-industrial land to priority and protected species	B&NES AWT CVWG	Workshop held	6,8	July 2007
J. Review implementation and effectiveness of action plan	Wildthings	Effective action plan	All	Annual review

AWT – Avon Wildlife Trust, **B&NES** – Bath & North East Somerset Council, **BRERC** – Bristol Region Environmental Records Centre, **CVWG** – Cam Valley Wildlife Group, **RIGS** – Regionally important geological sites, **SNCI** – Sites of nature conservation importance