

## ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

**Date:** Wednesday 9 January 2002  
**Time:** 2.00 to 5.00 pm  
**Venue:** Committee Room , National Assembly Building

### ADVICE FROM THE WALES BIODIVERSITY GROUP ON THE UK MILLENNIUM BIODIVERSITY REPORT

#### PURPOSE

The Committee is invited to note the advice prepared by the Wales Biodiversity Group (WBG) on the UK Millennium Biodiversity Report, which was commissioned by the Minister for Environment. This paper is submitted by the WBG.

#### SUMMARY

The UK Biodiversity Group's Millennium Biodiversity Report (MBR) provides the first comprehensive stock-take of progress in implementing the 1994 UK Biodiversity Action Plan, and sets the framework for taking forward biodiversity action following devolution. The Wales Biodiversity Group has prepared advice (at Annex 1) to highlight the significance of the MBR's findings for Wales, and to identify action that should be taken to build upon the strong foundation established over the past seven years.

#### BACKGROUND

For its size, Wales has an exceptional richness of biodiversity. A relatively high proportion of its land area (about 30%) comprises habitats of wildlife value, and the conservation importance of its coastal and marine environment is illustrated by the high proportion (some 70%) that is proposed for designation at the European level. Wales also has particular responsibility for certain rare or threatened species, including horseshoe bats, horse mussel beds and the once widespread marsh fritillary butterfly.

Consistent with the principles of sustainable development, the Group believes that Wales' biodiversity should be conserved in ways that reflect its potential to contribute to our social and economic objectives. Our conclusions and proposed actions to promote biodiversity conservation in Wales are summarised in the following themes:

**Greater responsibilities and opportunities** to shape our implementation of the UK Biodiversity

Action Plan so as to reflect Wales' distinctive conservation priorities while fulfilling international obligations;

**The importance of local action**, which helps to integrate biodiversity needs into local services, enhance the wildlife valued by local communities as well as that identified as nationally or internationally important, and engage local people in conservation;

**Enhancing policy integration** – long-term benefits in the wider countryside will require biodiversity considerations to be mainstreamed into policy making and implementation, as part of sustainable development;

**Extending access to biodiversity information and expertise** to improve action on the ground, particularly through the use of information and communication technologies (ICT);

**Building broader support for biodiversity**, by helping decision-makers and local communities understand how biodiversity action can provide solutions to their problems.

## **COMPLIANCE**

S.74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places certain duties on the National Assembly for Wales in respect of biodiversity. These include a duty on the Assembly, in exercising its functions, to have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biological diversity in accordance with the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity.

## **CONTACT POINT**

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## **ANNEX 1:**

### **FUTURE BIODIVERSITY ACTION IN WALES:**

### **ADVICE FROM THE WALES BIODIVERSITY GROUP TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES ON THE UK MILLENNIUM BIODIVERSITY REPORT**

#### **Summary**

The UK Biodiversity Group's Millennium Biodiversity Report (MBR) provides the first comprehensive stock-take of progress in implementing the 1994 UK Biodiversity Action Plan. At the request of the Minister for Environment, the Wales Biodiversity Group has produced this report to highlight the

significance of the MBR's findings for Wales, and to identify action that should be taken here to build upon the strong foundation established over the past seven years. This advice has been prepared on behalf of a wide membership actively engaged in the conservation of biodiversity in Wales.

Biodiversity is, simply, the variety of living things on Earth. It influences every aspect of our lives, be it through the production of food and other materials for use in everyday life, or in shaping the environment in which we live, work and take time out to refresh our spirits. Biodiversity is part of our natural heritage, and we have an obligation to hand it on in good condition to future generations to come.

For its size, Wales includes an exceptional diversity of habitats. A relatively high proportion of its land area (about 30%) comprises habitats of particular wildlife value, and the conservation importance of its coastal and marine environment is illustrated by the high proportion (some 70%) that is proposed for designation at the European level. Wales also has particular responsibility for certain species, including horseshoe bats, horse mussel beds and the once widespread marsh fritillary butterfly. Biodiversity is not just found in rural areas. Urban spaces, woods, commons and other habitats, such as railway line sides and wastelands, can also support unique and important biodiversity communities. Overall, the Welsh natural environment is of enormous economic significance; recent research suggests that over £6 billion of annual business turnover in Wales can be directly attributed to the management and use of the Welsh environment.

In other words, Wales has a special asset that we must cherish; but, consistent with the principles of sustainable development, we should do so in ways that reflect its potential to contribute to our social and economic objectives and strengthen public support for further action.

Our conclusions and proposed actions for Wales in the light of the UK Biodiversity Group's report are summarised in the following themes:

**Greater responsibilities and opportunities for Wales** - to shape our implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan so as to reflect Wales' distinctive conservation priorities while fulfilling international obligations;

**The importance of local action**, which helps to integrate biodiversity needs into local services, enhance the wildlife valued by local communities as well as that identified as nationally or internationally important, and engage local people in conservation;

**Enhancing policy integration** – long-term benefits in the wider countryside will require biodiversity considerations to be mainstreamed into policy making and implementation, as part of sustainable development;

**Extending access to biodiversity information and expertise** to improve action on the ground, particularly through the use of information and communication technologies (ICT);

**Building broader support for biodiversity**, by helping decision-makers and local communities understand how biodiversity action can provide solutions to their problems.

## **1. Introduction**

### *1.1 Purpose of this document*

The UK Biodiversity Group's Millennium Biodiversity Report (MBR), published in March 2001, provides the first comprehensive stock-take of progress in implementing the 1994 UK Biodiversity Action Plan. At the request of the Environment Minister, Sue Essex AM, the Wales Biodiversity Group has produced this report to highlight the significance of the MBR's findings for Wales, and to identify action that should be taken here to build upon the strong foundation established over the past seven years.

This advice has been prepared on behalf of a wide membership actively engaged in the conservation of biodiversity in Wales and is presented to the Assembly as the suggested basis for a response to the Millennium Biodiversity Report. Some of our recommendations are ambitious in their nature and scope and set aspirational goals for the future; but the Group believes that these are essential if we are to sustain and enhance the special character of the natural environment of Wales.

### *1.2 What is biodiversity?*

Biodiversity – or biological diversity – simply describes the variety of life on earth. It encompasses not only all kinds of plants, animals and micro-organisms, but also the variety that exists between individuals at the genetic level, and the complex ecological systems (habitats) of which they are a part.

### *1.3 Why is biodiversity important?*

In the widest context, global biodiversity provides the planetary life support system on which we all depend, and its prudent and sustainable use has become an issue of mainstream international policy. But biodiversity is not divisible by administrative or political boundaries and change to any element of it has knock-on and potentially far reaching consequences. This means that the effective conservation and wise use of biodiversity on a global scale depends on concerted action at every level, with Wales playing a distinctive and influential role within a UK and wider European context.

Biodiversity influences every aspect of our lives. It provides clean air and water; food production depends upon the successful and continued manipulation of natural systems; we derive some construction materials and the active ingredients for many modern medicines from plants. The very environment in which we live is defined by biodiversity in the form of familiar and highly valued landscapes and habitats. These include features such as the dramatic sea cliffs of the Gower and

Lleyn peninsulas, or the patchworks of grassland, woodland and heath that comprise the fringed zone of the upland/lowland divide. Cultural associations with biodiversity often reflect the past or contemporary economic value of particular plants and animals. For example, the extensive populations of marram grass found on the coastal dunes of south-west Anglesey once supported a thriving cottage industry focussed on the production of mats and ropes woven from its leaves, while the long-established use of oak from sustainably managed Welsh forests has enjoyed a commercial renaissance in recent years. New and important applications for specific elements of the biodiversity of Wales continue to be found; for example, the potentially far-reaching pharmaceutical value of the familiar bog myrtle of Welsh lowland mires is only just being realised.

Landscape and its component habitats and species define the high quality of the Welsh natural environment as a place in which to live and work. The Welsh environment is of enormous economic significance; recent research suggests that over £6 billion of annual business turnover in Wales can be directly attributed to the management and use of the Welsh environment, with environment-linked tourism alone yielding £821 million of spending in 1999. This equates to £1 in every £11 pounds of Welsh GDP being dependent on the environment. The management of the environment and its sustainable use has been found to contribute to around £1.8 billion in salaries in Wales and account for 1 in 6 jobs. The sustainable management of our greatest natural assets for the benefit of all the communities of Wales is enshrined in the Sustainable Development Scheme of the National Assembly for Wales, and effective biodiversity conservation will be a key measure of its success.

#### *1.4 Wales' biodiversity in a UK & European context*

For its size, Wales includes an exceptional diversity of habitats, with marine, coastal, lowland and upland environments all well-represented, and a relatively high proportion of its land area (about 30%) comprises semi-natural habitats of wildlife value. The most important areas on land are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, which are protected by law from damaging activity, and in many cases are also internationally recognised as Natura 2000 or Ramsar sites. In comparison with most other parts of the UK, Wales has an oceanic climate with high rainfall and mild winters, so that certain habitats such as upland oakwoods and lowland purple moor-grass pastures are better represented here than elsewhere. Other habitats, such as limestone grassland and lowland raised bog, occupy relatively small areas against the backdrop of the UK as a whole; but the examples found here are still among the best in north-west Europe, often being at the edge of the distribution range with an accordingly distinct complement of species.

Wales' marine environment covers an area equivalent to three-quarters of its land surface. The combination of factors such as Wales' geographical position, the diverse nature of its surrounding coastline and seabed, and the nature of tidal conditions, creates in a great variety of habitats for animals and plants on or near the seabed, in the water column, and at the sea surface. The result is that Wales has an exceptional marine biodiversity, reflected in the designation of some 70% of its coastline as being of European importance. Some of the richest habitats, in terms of the numbers of animals, are found in the Severn and Dee Estuaries. Over 100 species of fish have been recorded in the Severn Estuary, including seven rare migratory species.

The flora and fauna of Wales also includes many distinctive species. Wales is particularly important

for plants with an Atlantic (westerly) distribution in Europe, including many species of moss, liverwort and lichen as well as various ferns and flowering plants. Some of these species, such as bluebell and whorled caraway, are still relatively easily found in parts of Wales, while others, such as the shore dock and western clover, comprise a few, critically small populations at the very edge of their European range. Among the rarest species, wild cotoneaster and Ley's whitebeam are found nowhere else in the world, while the Snowdon lily is internationally widespread but occurs nowhere else in UK. There are parallel Welsh highlights among our bird and animal species. For example, Llyn Tegid is home to the gwyniad, a genetically unique form of the powan or freshwater herring; and Wales has nationally important populations of chough and lapwing and the only remaining native British genotypes of red kite. Among our internationally important species are the lesser and greater horseshoe bats, horse mussel beds, the marsh fritillary butterfly, which is a distinctive species of purple moorgrass pastures, and lichens requiring warm oceanic conditions. Fifteen cetacean and five turtle species have been recorded in Welsh waters; the bottlenose dolphins of Cardigan Bay are one of only two resident populations in the UK.

Biodiversity is not just found in rural areas. Urban spaces, gardens, woods, commons and other habitats, such as railway line sides and wastelands, can all support unique and important biodiversity communities that are appreciated by those who live and work around them.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan programme has resulted in more research and survey work being undertaken on Wales' fauna and flora, which is increasing our knowledge of how to sustain Wales' natural environment. For example, important breeding areas for grey seals are currently being discovered on the Llyn Peninsula, Bardsey and Anglesey. Recent studies of grassland fungi, including the attractive waxcap, have revealed sites in Wales so extensive and rich in species as to be of international significance.

The discovery of new populations of many conservation priority species is one of the most tangible outcomes of the BAP research. Nevertheless, we have much more to learn. Local partnerships are seeking a better understanding of exactly what occurs in specific localities to guide their biodiversity conservation work. At a broader level, our understanding of the processes that drive ecological change, and the impacts of large-scale influences such as global warming, is still growing.

### *1.5 Opportunities and threats*

The 1999 State of the Environment report highlighted extensive habitat and species losses in Wales in the last century. A more recent stock-take by the Countryside Council for Wales illustrates the scale and importance of the task we face in conserving Wales' biodiversity. Of 123 UK BAP priority habitats and species reviewed, 58 were found to need fundamental conservation work to halt overall declines in extent and condition across their range in Wales, while another 62 were considered to need further significant conservation effort. Threats to Welsh biodiversity include inappropriate land management (which can often result simply from a lack of awareness), development pressure, commercial forestry, resource exploitation and pollution, as well as the potentially all-pervasive effects of climate change. The severity and nature of these factors vary between the major environmental zones of Wales. In the uplands, heavy grazing pressure is one of the major factors restricting the extent and condition of woodland, scrub, heathland, blanket bog and cliff ledge

vegetation; but appropriate levels of grazing are also vital to maintain many aspects of wildlife that are the result of human interaction with nature over many generations. In the lowlands, habitat loss and fragmentation through agricultural intensification and linear development remains the single most important conservation issue. On the coast, the lack of grazing of sand dunes, agricultural improvement of cliff-top habitats and development of artificial sea defences have all had major impacts. At sea, the most significant threats are from over-fishing and pollution, as well as developments for oil and gas exploitation, aggregate extraction and other purposes.

There are also many opportunities to safeguard and enhance Wales' biodiversity. Wales is a predominantly rural country, and some of the most important areas for biodiversity also support the traditional way of life and livelihood of Welsh communities. Ignorance of the importance of biodiversity and how it could be promoted through simple changes is often the root cause of biodiversity loss, and could be addressed through awareness and information programmes. As the Assembly develops new policies, there are opportunities to encourage and reward more sustainable ways of using our environment that will also support local cultural, social and economic objectives.

### *1.6 Responsibility for biodiversity action*

The 1994 UK Biodiversity Action Plan was published by the UK Government in response to the 1992 United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. A unique feature of the plan is that it identifies actions to be taken by a wide range of statutory and non-statutory bodies working in partnership. Some actions are taken forward geographically by local biodiversity action plan partnerships; others on a UK-basis for particular habitats and species; and others by bodies with particular responsibilities, such as the Forestry Commission or Environment Agency. The spirit of the plan is very much one of co-operation and concerted action, with players at all levels being called upon to participate in the development of policies and strategies for biodiversity conservation.

Within Wales, responsibility for the Plan's implementation rests with many different players, with the overall steer and coordination provided by the Wales Biodiversity Group. This Group brings together all sectors in partnership and is supported by the work of people, groups and organisations locally and nationally. The National Assembly for Wales contributes to this Group and to a broad canvas of biodiversity action through the work of its departments and funded bodies. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a new overarching duty upon the Assembly in relation to the conservation of biological diversity, which provides the statutory underpinning to implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

### *1.7 Future direction*

A firm foundation has been established for biodiversity conservation in Wales. This report advises on the next steps that should be taken to build on that success. **We strongly endorse the future direction laid out by the UK Biodiversity Group's recommendations in the Millennium Biodiversity Report.** We have drawn on the MBR to make our own recommendations on the priorities for future action in Wales, which set the overall framework in which a comprehensive programme of biodiversity action can be developed. More work needs to be done to fill out the details of particular actions, or to explore how best to tackle particular issues. As a partnership of

the main players in biodiversity, the Wales Biodiversity Group is well placed to take forward that work.

## **2. Biodiversity policy: origins and aims**

[Relevant MBR recommendations: 1, 2, 5-7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 20, 21]

### *2.1 The policy context*

The origins of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan lie in the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, which places an obligation on each contracting party to put in place national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. A World Summit on Sustainable Development will be held in 2002 to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Earth Summit at which the Biodiversity Convention was agreed. The adoption of a Wales action plan this year would be a timely symbol of the Assembly's commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan, published in 1994, established the principles and aims of biodiversity policy that continue to underpin action today. It launched the concept of UK-wide action plans for the habitats and species that are the highest priorities for conservation, the first of which were published by the UK Steering Group in 1995. Action Plans represent a distinctive approach to conservation in that they aim to achieve specific targets for maintaining and restoring threatened species and habitats. Each Action Plan is agreed through a consultative process involving the organisations whose actions and policies could influence the status of the species or habitat concerned. Actions are assigned to members of the partnership who are principally responsible for delivery. Experience shows that the partnership approach to delivering Action Plans is producing benefits. For example, it has encouraged experts and users of the marine environment to come together to help resolve difficult 'user' versus 'conservationist' issues via practical action on the ground, such as the recent CCW Fisheries Seminar.

Action Plans are now in place for the 45 habitats and some 400 species or species-groups prioritised by the UK Steering Group in 1995, of which some 37 and 184 respectively are relevant to Wales. Recognising conservation priorities in this way was intended to serve as a focus for policy change and resource allocation, as well as enabling trends and achievements to be identified. The UK Steering Group also set out a wider programme of change, covering issues such as public awareness and involvement, local biodiversity action and access to biodiversity information.

The process established under the UK BAP has been enshrined in statute by the duties placed on the National Assembly under s.74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. These duties require the Assembly to have regard to the purpose of biodiversity conservation in exercising its functions; and to take steps, and promote the taking of such steps by others, to further the conservation of habitats and 'living organisms' (species) that are of principal importance for biodiversity conservation. These habitats and species are to be identified in lists published by the Assembly.

We support the UK Biodiversity Group's view that priority should be given to implementing the existing action plans over considering new plans; but action under the CROW Act must be focused on the right priorities for Wales. **We believe that the Assembly's CROW list of habitats and species of principal importance for biodiversity conservation should include those habitats and species from the UK's priority list that are relevant to Wales, but should also aim to reflect Wales' distinctive conservation priorities through the inclusion of additional species that would most benefit from the action plan approach.** This principle has underpinned the Assembly's proposals for the CROW list, based on advice from the Countryside Council for Wales and voluntary sector partners, which are currently out to consultation.

At the European level, the Birds and Habitats Directives provide for the protection of internationally important species and habitats through specific measures, including the designation of the Natura 2000 network of sites. The EU's policies in other areas, such as the Common Fisheries and Agricultural Policies, have profound implications for biodiversity. The EU Biodiversity Strategy sets the framework for the development of integrated biodiversity action plans for particular sectors, which are expected to contribute to the process of adjusting EU policies to take account of biodiversity as an element of sustainable development. These measures will contribute to fulfilling the objectives of the proposed EU 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme, which include halting biodiversity decline by 2010.

**As well as fulfilling its international biodiversity obligations at home, Wales should continue to contribute to biodiversity action at the international level,** in the form of:

- Developing a better understanding of biodiversity, through such initiatives as the IREG proposal on the Irish Sea
- Policy development, by leading the way on sustainable development and contributing to the debate on international measures such as the Common Agriculture and Fisheries Policies
- Practical action on the ground, by sharing expertise with others.

We support the UK Biodiversity Group's recommendation that the National Assembly should explicitly support the continuation of the UK BAP process. To this end, **we propose that the National Assembly should endorse the following over-arching aims and principles for biodiversity action in Wales,** which are adapted from the MBR to fit the Welsh context:

## **BOX 1: PRINCIPLES AND AIMS OF BIODIVERSITY ACTION IN WALES**

### **PRINCIPLES:**

**Partnership** – involving the range of public, voluntary, academic and business sectors

**Actions and targets** – addressing the priorities for biodiversity conservation by establishing clear actions, measurable outcomes and accountability

**Policy integration** – mainstreaming a concern for the variety of life into the development of integrated policies, to reverse declining trends in biodiversity as part of a commitment to sustainable development

**Information** – underpinning decisions with sound science and knowledge and working in innovative ways to fill information gaps and understanding

**Public awareness** – emphasising the need to capture the public imagination and secure an appreciation of the natural assets of Wales, which affects the choices people make in their everyday life

## **AIMS:**

To maintain and enhance biological diversity within Wales, paying particular regard to:

- Overall populations and natural ranges of native species and the quality and ranges of wildlife habitats and systems
- Internationally important and threatened species, habitats and ecosystems
- Species, habitats and natural and managed ecosystems characteristic of local areas
- Biodiversity of natural and semi-natural habitats where they have been diminished over recent decades

To contribute to the conservation of global biodiversity

To increase public appreciation and enjoyment of biodiversity and recognition of its value wherever it occurs

To integrate biodiversity fully into policies and programmes as part of sustainable development

### **3. Habitats and Species Action Plans: progress so far**

[Relevant MBR recommendations: 18, 22, 23]

A highlight of the MBR is the survey of progress made so far in implementing the 436 individual habitats and species action plans across the UK. This information was collected in 1999 and so does not represent an up-to-date report of progress at the time of writing (November 2001). It is also important to remember that, at the time the reporting was undertaken, over 170 Action Plans had been published for only a few months, while plans for another 62 habitats and species or species-groups were completed during the reporting period itself. However, the information does give us important early indications of how action plans are working, and can therefore provide a basis for planning future priorities.

The UKBG's analysis of the 358 reports received in 1999 revealed some encouraging trends, with 54% of Plans overall showing some progress towards their targets. There was also some evidence that Action Plans are working; species with fuller Plan implementation were more likely to show signs of stability or recovery. The biological status of 17 habitats (71%) and 185 species (55%) could not be assessed because, at the time of reporting, insufficient information existed to establish current status and whether any change had occurred. Surveys are now underway to cover many of those gaps. For those for which information was available, five habitats (including cereal field margins and upland oakwoods) and 33 species (including the otter, lesser and greater horseshoe bats and shore dock) were already showing signs of recovery. One habitat (limestone pavements) and 44 species (including water vole, bullfinch, great crested newt and marsh fritillary butterfly) were still in decline; one habitat and 58 species were thought to be stable. The reports revealed that widespread species are more likely to be declining than those with restricted ranges. This is a sign of a continued decline in biodiversity in the wider countryside and of the need for sustainable policies in all areas, not just specific nature conservation measures.

The reporting process also gathered information about the factors that were seen as constraints to progress, and where change would facilitate implementation. The UK Biodiversity Group found that many of the constraints identified were common to a substantial number of Action Plans, and would benefit from pooled effort and common approaches. By far the most frequently cited requirement was additional research and survey to improve understanding of the conservation needs of the habitat or species concerned. Other needs commonly identified by those leading action plans included: extra resources; better access to existing biological information; improved habitat and species management; and improved public awareness and wider support. Finding ways to address these common problems is an important future role of the Wales Biodiversity Group, to which we turn in the next section.

## **4. Delivering action at the national level**

[Relevant MBR recommendations: 17, 18, 20, 21]

### *4.1 A new role for the Wales Biodiversity Group*

The 1995 UK Steering Group Report led to the creation of the Wales Biodiversity Group (and parallel groups in other parts of the UK) to co-ordinate and advise on implementation in Wales, under the umbrella of the UK Biodiversity Group. The MBR recognises that devolution has strengthened the role played by the WBG in providing direction and taking decisions on targets and the means of delivering them, but that there is a continuing role for UK coordination and action on some matters. The WBG has already experienced some consequences of the changes envisaged within the MBR. There have been greater opportunities to influence the Welsh and overall UK programme; and also greater expectations of the Group in terms of giving direction and addressing barriers to implementation in Wales. Preparing this advice to the Assembly has prompted us to review our current role, activities and membership, and consider how these should change in future

to reflect the new context.

#### *4.2 Relationship with the UK programme*

An important element of the WBG's future role concerns our relationship with the UK processes and national groups. We share the UK Biodiversity Group's view that there are good practical and policy reasons for co-ordinating efforts in some areas at the UK level, not least because biodiversity does not recognise administrative boundaries. There are advantages in adopting common standards for some issues, such as the development of biodiversity information systems; and the interplay of international, non-devolved and devolved responsibilities for issues such as climate change supports the case for liaison at the UK level. **The Wales Biodiversity Group will be responsible for ensuring that Wales' distinctive priorities and concerns are heard and addressed within the UK Groups responsible for this coordination.**

Similarly, we need to strengthen our links with the steering groups and Lead Partner organisations that guide the implementation of the UK Habitat and Species Action Plans. The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) fulfils the lead UK coordinating role for 22 published UK Action Plans, most of which cover characteristic Welsh habitats and species such as purple moor-grass and rush pastures, maritime cliffs and slopes, the rare red bearded algae and the hornet robberfly. CCW is also represented on the vast majority of the UK-level action plan steering groups for habitats and species that occur in Wales, but contact between these UK fora and other players in Wales is often relatively poor. **This emphasises the need for improved communication between WBG and the UK steering groups and Lead Partners through a variety of mechanisms, including the regional structures of UK-wide organisations and the new UK biodiversity web-site.**

#### *4.3 Promoting biodiversity action in Wales*

Our new role also brings a greater responsibility for influencing and promoting the implementation of the UK Habitat and Species Action Plans within Wales. **The WBG should take the lead in assessing the actions that are assigned to partners in Wales; advising on priorities for implementation, and identifying gaps in work underway; and promoting ways to address common constraints to progress, such as access to biological information.** As a first step, WBG is commissioning an analysis of Wales' responsibilities under the UK Action Plans, to enable us to shape a distinctive programme of conservation action in Wales.

While the national context is important, a particular strength of biodiversity action in Wales is the extent of work being undertaken at the local level. We see it as a continuing priority to build on that advantage by encouraging and supporting local action (see section 5).

Successful biodiversity conservation will require action on a broad front: not just hands-on restoration projects, but the integration of biodiversity considerations into a wide range of policies and programmes. We believe that, in future, the WBG must help different sectors find ways in which biodiversity action can also deliver solutions to their problems. **We recognise that this will require the WBG itself to develop a broader base of membership,** with better representation of the land and marine use, business, education and tourism sectors, so that we can improve our

understanding of each other's objectives and constraints.

All this represents a challenging new agenda for the Wales Biodiversity Group. In developing our future programme, we must also be realistic about the time and energy that individuals will be able to commit to the WBG. The Group will therefore focus on setting the right strategic framework that enables and encourages others to take their own action at the local level or in their own areas of work.

#### *4.4 Opportunities for large-scale habitat expansion and restoration in Wales*

The emerging programme of action at a local level is one of the most exciting, influential and tangible consequences of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan in Wales. While the geographical context of individual LBAP areas offers an ideal basis for many biodiversity implementation projects, others require a wider focus if we are to succeed in meeting some of the more aspirational components of the UK BAP. The prominent emphasis which the UK BAP places upon habitat restoration and re-creation is one area requiring concerted national action, not least because of the sheer geographical scale and/or level of resources required, but actions for many of the more widespread priority species also require significant coordination and planning at a Welsh level.

Good examples of existing large-scale habitat restoration / re-creation projects in Wales include the Cwm Idwal grazing exclusion project in Snowdonia; reedbed creation projects on Anglesey; the Gwent Levels Wetland Reserve; lowland grassland restoration at Denmark Farm in Ceredigion and elsewhere; and the trial programme of heathland restoration enabled in Pembrokeshire by funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Each of these projects is set to deliver major conservation gains for one of more priority habitats and each has been successful in capturing a significant level of public interest and support. However, **the Wales Biodiversity Group believes that it is now time to build on these successes by identifying further key opportunities for large-scale habitat restoration across the Welsh landscape.** The Group believes that these should by their very nature be ambitious, imaginative and high profile, requiring concerted action by a range of local and national partners and of sufficient scale to ensure a major contribution to the UK-level expansion targets for one or more priority habitats and a complement of their characteristic UK or Welsh priority species. In all cases, some redirection or reinforcement of effort would be necessary for implementation and while staff and funding may already be in place at least to initiate action on the ground, further resources would be sought to support each project through to completion. CCW is currently starting a strategic review of habitat restoration priorities using its digital Phase I habitat data set, which will provide a good foundation for identifying possible areas for restoration.

It is very important to view this approach as complementary to, and not a replacement for, the very extensive existing programme of work to implement habitat action plans throughout Wales. Much of this work is relatively low profile in nature, involving the steady expenditure of effort to safeguard sites and maintain and improve the quality of habitats. This work has a long legacy in Wales and contributes a great deal to the realisation of BAP objectives. However, six years on from publication of the UKBAP it is all too evident that concerted additional effort is required if we are to begin to offset the losses of past decades and thus fully grasp one of the primary aims of the UKBAP.

## 5. Local action for biodiversity

[Relevant MBR recommendations: 3, 30-36, 48, 55, 56, 63]

### 5.1 Local action

We must make biodiversity meaningful to people in all sectors and communities in Wales if the goals of sustainability are to be achieved. Since the UK BAP was first published, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) in spreading the message about biodiversity and delivering both local and national conservation priorities. **LBAPs offer the means to integrate biodiversity needs into local services, to enhance the wildlife most valued by local communities as well as that identified as nationally or internationally important, and to engage local people and organisations in conservation** (see Boxes 2 and 3). We therefore welcome the priority that the Assembly has given to supporting LBAPs in its '*Plan for Wales 2001*' and the new funding in 2002-03 to support the work of LBAP partnerships.

#### **BOX 2: FRESH INSPIRATION FOR BIODIVERSITY IN RHONDDA CYNON TAFF**

In addition to the continued role of its steering group, the Rhondda Cynon

Taff Local Biodiversity Action Plan has developed five working groups to

progress action. These groups are farming, business, education, gardening

and media. The working groups are specifically designed to explore and

cater for different biodiversity interest groups. The groups have been very

successful in sustaining the momentum of biodiversity progress, because they have broadened participation in the LBAP, bringing new blood and ideas to the process. For example, the education group, which is co-ordinated by the Glyn cornel Environmental Centre, includes teachers, school pupils, a university and an environmental education adviser as members. This group is developing a register of people who can provide advice and help to schools on wildlife matters. The formation of working groups has also allowed different ideas and initiatives to develop, rather than to be forced. As a result, it is hoped that these initiatives will be based upon sound sustainable foundations.

LBAP partnerships are in place across all of Wales. As at November 2001, six LBAPs have already been published (Snowdonia National Park, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot); a seventh (Brecon Beacons National Park) is available on the National Park's website and a further nine plans are out to consultation. We owe this achievement

to the outstanding enthusiasm and commitment of all local partners, encouraged and supported by LBAP officers or others within local authorities who have taken on the responsibility for co-ordinating the LBAP Partnership. The appointment in 2001 by WBG of a LBAP Facilitator has provided invaluable support to the process by improving communication and the sharing of best practice, developing guidance for local partnerships, and advising on local needs at the Wales and UK levels. Partners in Wales have also led within the UK in providing scientific information on what biodiversity occurs where, in order to help local partnerships set actions and targets. This has included guidance on habitats produced by CCW, and the RSPB-led Species Audit, which is an electronic database of all priority and Red Data Book species in Wales broken down by geographical area.

An analysis recently undertaken by the Wildlife Trusts Wales (Appendix B) shows the habitats and species for which actions are included within draft or published LBAPs. These data are valuable for many reasons:

- They vividly illustrate the important contribution that LBAPs are making to meeting the conservation targets in the national Action Plans;
- They also show that there are some gaps in coverage. Most significantly, marine habitats and species are thinly represented within the available Welsh LBAPs. There are probably a number of reasons for this, including a lack of access by local partnerships to marine scientific expertise;
- They also reveal clearly the distinctiveness of local conservation priorities. A number of the actions identified within LBAPs will support the conservation of species proposed for inclusion on the Assembly's 'CROW list' of conservation priorities;
- They are an important communication mechanism to improve future implementation. The analysis will help local partnerships across Wales to identify potential sources of good practice and opportunities for collaboration, and guide national bodies in deciding where their expertise could help to stimulate conservation action.

Wales has much to be proud of at the local level, but there is still work to be done. As we approach the milestone of having LBAPs in place across all of Wales, we must ensure that the right structures and support are in place to ensure that plans are translated into action.

## *5.2 Next steps for local action*

**If there is to be long-term progress, local biodiversity action needs to be integrated into wider objectives, so that it is seen as a natural component of programmes to meet local social and economic needs, and recognised as means of achieving sustainable development at the local level.** This will require effort on a number of fronts, building on the foundation of existing good practice. For example, the Powys County Council Highways team is reviewing its management of roadside verges in order to enhance biodiversity (another example is at Box 3). Most fundamentally, we need to develop a wider understanding among local and national decision-makers of how the integration of biodiversity conservation into mainstream programmes can deliver better and more sustainable solutions to common problems.

Important steps to achieve this are already being taken. For example, local authorities' community

strategies will set a framework within which LBAPs can contribute alongside other local action plans to promote economic, social and environmental well-being. The Environment Minister is writing to all local authority chief executives to emphasise her commitment to encouraging local biodiversity action. At the Minister's request, the Wales Biodiversity Group is drawing up a suggested programme of actions that the Assembly's Cabinet, Committees and individual Members could undertake to raise the profile of biodiversity. We also plan to collect more information on strengths and gaps in LBAP implementation, so that we can celebrate and share widely the examples of good practice.

### **BOX 3: PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN GWYNEDD FOR FISHING AND BIODIVERSITY**

A local partnership in Gwynedd is working to enhance riparian habitats and fisheries in Gwynedd, with the assistance of Objective 1 funding. Angling groups and the Environment Agency initially proposed the project to improve fisheries interests in the area. Following discussions with the Countryside Council for Wales and the Biodiversity Officers within Gwynedd Council and Snowdonia National Park Authority, the project was expanded to encompass a wider biodiversity remit. This will enable habitats to be enhanced to support biodiversity priority species such as water voles and otters.

The work programme involves surveying main watercourses, tributaries and the surrounding habitat, and carrying out works such as fencing, tree planting and bank stabilisation. The proposals are drawn up in full consultation with the partners so that all interests can be accommodated. The majority of work will be carried out on private land and the proposals are generally welcomed by farmers who also see the benefits of reducing the poaching of riverbanks or the loss of livestock by drowning. The main benefits to the fisheries interests should be through the improvement of water quality and spawning sites.

This project demonstrates the importance of both statutory and non-statutory bodies working together in partnership to benefit biodiversity species and habitats as well as the needs of anglers and the local economy.

Other partners are also taking steps to enhance local delivery of biodiversity conservation. For example, the Association of Local Government Ecologists and the Local Government Association have recently launched in Cardiff their guidance for local authorities on carrying out a Best Value Review on the delivery of services where they relate to biodiversity conservation. **The WBG believes that the development of a new best value performance indicator, as a measure of biodiversity delivery across local authority services, would help to reinforce the importance of biodiversity conservation.**

Local wildlife sites offer an important mechanism for raising the profile of locally important biodiversity areas. Following a recommendation by the Local Sites Review Group, research is being

undertaken into the causes of non-development damage to local sites in England and Wales and existing and potential sources of funding. **Local wildlife site systems in Wales are at a relatively early stage in their development, and the availability of national guidance, produced by CCW in collaboration with local and national partners, would establish a clear and consistent framework for their future evolution.**

Better communication between the local and national level is a priority. CCW has recently appointed a Marine Biodiversity Officer who will provide a link between local partnerships and the UK Action Plan Steering Groups. The voluntary organisation *Plantlife*, which leads on many of the UK Action Plans, has recruited a new officer for Wales; and Butterfly Conservation has appointed a Conservation Officer and a BAP Moth Officer for Wales, supported by CCW grant funding. All these initiatives should help to strengthen communication in Wales between the different levels of implementation. Improving communication is also an important part of the LBAP Facilitator's work. Guided by local partners, the Facilitator will develop the existing programme of surveys and other targeted research to help identify needs or barriers to implementation at the local level and will ensure that these perspectives inform national programmes.

LBAP officers are crucial to the delivery of local biodiversity action that supports both local needs and national conservation priorities. They are well placed to help integrate biodiversity conservation with social and economic action, as they have both the broad expertise and skills and the local knowledge and contacts. A recent survey of biodiversity partners has demonstrated the wide contribution that LBAP officers make to biodiversity action, with over 80 per cent of respondents saying that an LBAP Officer had made an important contribution to the partners' work. Fifteen of the LBAP Partnerships have dedicated LBAP officers (some of whom are part-time). **We believe that a commitment to widen and strengthen the funding base for LBAP posts for all the local partnerships is essential if we are to translate local plans into sustained action.** The Assembly's new money for LBAP partnerships in 2002-03 is a welcome recognition of their value. Local partnerships also need better access to information and expertise to help them develop and implement their action plans, an issue to which we return in section 8.

### *5.3 The role of the Local Issues Advisory Group*

The Local Issues Advisory Group (LIAG), which is a sub-group of WBG, is responsible for promoting, supporting and monitoring the development and implementation of LBAPs in Wales, ensuring that the links are made between local and national action, and guiding the wider WBG partnership on local issues. LIAG will continue to play this increasingly important role, addressing many of the issues and actions that we have identified here. Its priorities for the future will include:

- Building and sustaining a wide base of partner participation and political support for biodiversity conservation at the local level, and making connections with local social and economic priorities;
- Developing its overview of the scope and content of LBAPs, using the analysis at Appendix B and other sources of information, to provide advice on opportunities for connections and on filling gaps in coverage;

- Extending the guidance available to LBAP partnerships (for example, on integration with community strategy implementation) and the sharing of good practice;
- Developing advice on funding strategies for LBAPs;
- Strengthening communication between the local, Wales and UK levels;
- Coordinating the development and implementation of a system of reporting of local action in Wales, consistent with wider UK systems.

## 6. Biodiversity through sustainable development

[Relevant MBR recommendations: 38, 41, 42, 48, 52-54, 57, 58, 61, 64-66, 70]

### *6.1 Integrating biodiversity considerations into policies and programmes*

The Convention on Biological Diversity emphasises that the objectives of biodiversity conservation should be fully integrated into and delivered through other areas of policy. This message is underlined in the MBR, which encourages greater efforts to mainstream biodiversity considerations into all areas of public policy and programmes as part of sustainable development. It is also reinforced by the Assembly's statutory duty, under the CROW Act 2000, to have regard to biodiversity conservation in the exercise of all its functions.

In Wales, we are particularly well placed to meet this challenge because of the work being undertaken to implement the National Assembly's Sustainable Development Scheme. The appraisal toolkit being prepared for use in developing policies in the Assembly will help to ensure that the impacts on biodiversity are identified at an early stage and are taken into account when making decisions. It will also help to identify ways in which policies can be mutually re-inforcing, so that biodiversity conservation supports rather than conflicts with social and economic objectives. In addition to the headline sustainable development indicator on populations of wild birds already adopted by the Assembly, biodiversity will also be reflected in the wider set of indicators on which work is currently underway.

In the meantime, **there are plenty of opportunities available to support biodiversity objectives through current programmes or emerging policies.** We have identified some of these below:

**Farming for the Future** sets out a vision for the future direction of farming in Wales in which the wildlife of the Welsh countryside will be enhanced. Actions are planned to ensure that all farming follows principles of sustainability and environmental sensitivity, and to address the challenge of guiding the future evolution of Welsh land use as a coherent whole.

**The Rural Recovery Plan** - £5 million is being made available over the next two years to promote integrated tourism, leisure and environmental projects, including the encouragement of wildlife in

ways that tourists can appreciate.

Implementation of over-arching strategies such as the **National Economic Development Strategy** and the **Transport Framework** offers many opportunities to integrate biodiversity thinking into social and economic programmes;

**Transport** - the work being undertaken to produce a Highways Biodiversity Action Plan for the National Assembly's road network is an excellent example of how steps to help biodiversity can be built into other operational programmes.

**Community strategies** – local authorities' community strategies, to promote and improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas, will set the over-arching framework for local biodiversity action.

**The Wales Woodland Strategy** identifies the conservation and enhancement of woodland biodiversity as a priority for action. The strategy aims to implement the BAP targets for woodland restoration and extension and to improve the integration of woodlands with other land management, while also fulfilling wider social and economic objectives.

**The Water Framework Directive** creates a strategic framework for managing the water environment by establishing a common approach to protecting, and setting environmental objectives for, all groundwaters and surface waters. The conservation and sustainable management of freshwater habitats is often difficult because of the need to address operations at the catchment level. The Directive's requirement to produce strategic management plans for river basins is set to become an important facilitator of this work.

**Planning guidance** - the draft new version of *Planning Policy Wales* recognises the importance of biodiversity outside as well as within statutorily designated sites. Future revision of the accompanying Technical Advice Note on Nature Conservation provides an opportunity to provide more practical guidance on how planning policies can complement and support biodiversity conservation. The proposed **Wales Spatial Plan – Pathway to Sustainable Development** will support and influence the spatial expression of policies and programmes, thereby helping the integration of biodiversity with other considerations at the broad scale;

**Access to the open countryside and a modernised system of public rights of way** - Research in South Wales has shown that wildlife watching is an important recreation activity linked to walking. LBAP partnerships could work alongside the newly established Local Access Forums to find opportunities to combine improved access with biodiversity conservation in ways that benefit their local communities. The Wales Biodiversity Group will seek to work with the National Access Forum to facilitate collaboration at the local level.

## **7. Biodiversity and society**

[Relevant MBR recommendations: 27, 68, 69]

### *7.1 A role for everyone*

Achieving the greatest benefits for biodiversity is only possible if we can secure a broad base of support, from all sectors and people in all walks of life. The previous section looked at opportunities to integrate biodiversity into other policies and programmes; and, in section 5, we discussed how to build support among decision-makers at the local level by demonstrating how biodiversity action can provide solutions to other problems. In this section, we focus on those outside government, in businesses or communities across Wales, whose support can make all the difference.

### *7.2 Business and biodiversity*

The MBR recognises that the adoption of sympathetic land use and management policies by businesses could make a significant contribution to biodiversity action plan targets, particularly at the local level. In many cases, small changes agreed through discussion between the different interests involved can make an important difference. For example, the South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee, the Environment Agency and local fishermen have agreed modifications to nets for use within estuaries to reduce their impact on birds flying at night. Taking account of biodiversity also makes good business sense, offering opportunities for competitive advantage and enhanced consumer reputation.

In Wales, the BAIS demonstration project (supported by EU LIFE funding) has worked with industries in Bangor, Swansea and Blaenau Ffestiniog to help them manage biodiversity on their own land. Guidance notes have been produced for those working locally and nationally to implement action plans on how to set up partnerships with business.

While there are promising signs of interest, there is still plenty of work to be done in building links to business. **As we aim to build businesses' understanding of biodiversity, so must we increase the WBG's understanding of business**, including the nature of the needs and opportunities within different business sectors. Our first step will be to draw on the expertise available in the Assembly, the Welsh Development Agency and business representative bodies such as CBI Wales and the Federation of Small Businesses (Wales region) to develop an agenda for future action.

### *7.3 Public awareness and education*

We have an obligation to connect and communicate with the public to make biodiversity conservation meaningful to them. There is a strong base of environmental interest on which to build, as illustrated by the high public membership of environmental voluntary organisations. All the national Action Plans include actions relating to communication and publicity; and LBAPs are an excellent mechanism for getting people involved in conservation on the ground. For example, many local partnerships in Wales organised events to involve members of the public in a nation-wide dormouse survey at the end of 2001. PULSE – soon to be launched Wales-wide through CCW – started as a Powys initiative to involve school children in biodiversity through monitoring ponds,

hedges and woodlands over time. To help such work, the LBAP Facilitator is developing guidance notes for local partnerships on activities that can help build public awareness and participation.

A particularly exciting venture has been the launch of *Natur Cymru* in summer 2001. This new magazine, the product of a partnership of seven organisations who are represented on the Wales Biodiversity Group, aims to promote the exchange of information and debate about biodiversity in Wales. With articles on distinctive features of Welsh wildlife such as red squirrels, the Welsh uplands and the future of farming, the magazine has already attracted nearly 1300 subscribers and is on course to become largely self-financing.

For the future, **we need to become more sophisticated in our awareness work to focus resources where they will be most effective.** Different approaches will work for different groups, and we need to do more to design communication initiatives to reflect their different needs. The WBG's role will be to identify and prioritise opportunities at the Wales level to build awareness among specific groups. These will include:

- Implementation of the Environmental Education Strategy produced by the Environmental Education Council for Wales;
- Building a stronger web presence for the Wales Biodiversity Group, to carry the key information about our work and the importance of biodiversity.

## **8. Information and knowledge for biodiversity**

[Relevant MBR recommendations: 4, 22, 24, 27, 72-75]

Both local and national partners have identified the availability of information about habitats and species as a constraint to the delivery of biodiversity action. Extremely valuable information on what occurs where in Wales is held by many different organisations – by public bodies in Wales and the rest of the UK, such as CCW, the Environment Agency, the National Museums and Galleries of Wales and the universities, but also by private sector bodies such as environmental consultants and voluntary organisations, small and large. Although it is less extensive than in some other parts of the UK, Wales benefits from the UK's long history of naturalists who study and record the world around them as a hobby. Their information, often held by local groups of naturalists' societies such as the Botanical Society of the British Isles, is an invaluable source for identifying changes over time and planning conservation action. The problem is how to make this kind of information, and that held by other bodies, available for use by all those with a genuine interest in biodiversity.

The UK-wide National Biodiversity Network (NBN) has been set up to meet this challenge by providing a gateway through which biodiversity information can be made widely available through the Internet. The NBN, the venture of a group of public and voluntary sector organisations that collect and store biodiversity information, aims to help people find and access information quickly so

that, once recorded, this knowledge can be used many times for different purposes.

Local Records Centres (LRCs) will form nodes of the NBN to meet local needs for storing, accessing and disseminating biodiversity information. One LRC has already been established in Powys as part of a UK pilot project, and discussions are underway in other areas of Wales to identify local needs and possible funding mechanisms. In 2002, the WBG will consider what support and strategic direction it should offer to the future development of the LRC network in Wales. On 20 February 2002, a seminar will be held at the National Assembly, introduced by the Minister for Environment, to provide an opportunity for bodies in Wales to find out more about how the NBN can help them access and disseminate biodiversity information.

A unique development within the UK is the initiative within Wales to coordinate the collation of marine biodiversity data through specialists in centres such as the National Museum, Welsh universities, CCW and the Marine life Information Network for Britain and Ireland (MarLin). This will enable validated data to be made available via the NBN gateway.

Sound conservation action also requires a strong base of expertise to interpret the available data for an area and set it in the wider context of knowledge about particular habitats and species and how biological diversity is generated and maintained. Mechanisms to enable access to expertise are particularly important to support the work of local partnerships, which may need specialist advice on particular habitats or species in their action plans. **The WBG will take forward work to develop a network for the exchange of expertise to support biodiversity action, building on existing links within Wales and initiatives such as the NBN where possible.**

An important aspect of this will be to strengthen the involvement of Wales' higher education and research institutions in the biodiversity process. There is some good practice at the local level, such as the Swansea Local Partnership that we should encourage elsewhere. A constraint on this could be the pressures on universities to build expertise in areas such as molecular biology, for which research grants are available. The loss of field-level taxonomic and ecological expertise across the tertiary education sector is well documented, and has led to a critical shortage of trained biologists with the necessary skills both to recognise and conserve biodiversity. This has also compromised the ability of many such institutions to provide the kind of scientific advice needed to underpin conservation programmes. This is a complex issue that WBG cannot tackle alone, but we will take steps to give a greater voice to the needs of biodiversity conservation.

## 9. Resources

[Relevant MBR recommendations: 19, 23]

As the MBR records, experience shows that it is extremely difficult to estimate with any accuracy the cost of implementing the UK habitat and species action plans. Further work is being taken forward at the UK level to provide advice to those responsible for action plan implementation on planning, monitoring and reporting expenditure. The MBR suggests that the Wales Biodiversity

Group should assess Wales' specific resource needs, and identify and promote appropriate mechanisms for meeting them. This means that we have to set clear priorities that reflect conservation needs and make the most of opportunities created by Wales' distinctive context.

As we take on this task, we recognise that it will not be a quick or easy one. We and our partners have to build wider support for biodiversity action by inspiring with our vision and showing how biodiversity conservation can also help provide solutions to other problems. We then need to encourage others to turn that commitment into practical support, remembering that many small steps will accumulate to make a big difference. WBG now also has a special responsibility to promote the delivery of action plans by identifying existing funding opportunities, such as the Lottery, the Rural Recovery Plan and Objective 1, and by working to create new ones, including through the adjustment of other expenditure programmes to take account of biodiversity needs.

## **10. Reporting on progress**

[Relevant MBR recommendations: 14,15, 16, 24]

Reports of progress in implementing the Habitat and Species Action Plans are collected across the UK on a regular basis. The next UK reporting round will take place in 2002 and will include, for the first time, an opportunity for LBAP partnerships to report on their contribution. The WBG will be responsible for assessing the implications of those reports for biodiversity conservation in Wales.

## **11. Conclusion**

We have set out in this report the achievements of the biodiversity process in Wales so far, and the steps that the Wales Biodiversity Group will be taking to build on that success. We have also sought to highlight some of the opportunities and challenges ahead that will require action by a wide range of partners. We commend this advice to the National Assembly as the basis for a comprehensive programme of action for biodiversity in Wales.

## **APPENDIX A: THE WALES BIODIVERSITY GROUP**

### **Terms of reference**

The role of the Wales Biodiversity Group (WBG) is to promote, monitor and advise the National Assembly for Wales on action to maintain and enhance biodiversity in Wales. Specifically, the WBG will:

stimulate action and monitor progress on the implementation of Species and Habitat Action Plans;

promote good practice in the preparation and implementation of Local Biodiversity Action Plans, and monitor progress with local delivery of biodiversity objectives;

promote awareness of and involvement in biodiversity, and monitor progress;

maintain an overview of the range of biodiversity action by different sectors in Wales and assess its overall contribution to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity;

Consider how funding might be encouraged from key partners for biodiversity activities in Wales;

report to the National Assembly on progress on implementing the UK Biodiversity Action Plan in Wales, identifying the key policy issues, and advise on the implications for future strategy in Wales;

liaise with the UK Biodiversity Group to report on progress and future plans in Wales and to co-ordinate approaches to common issues where appropriate.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

Country Landowners Association

Countryside Council for Wales

Environment Agency

Farmers' Union of Wales

Forestry Commission

Ministry of Defence

National Assembly for Wales: Countryside Division and Food and Farming Development Division

National Botanic Garden for Wales

National Farmers' Union - Wales

National Museums and Galleries of Wales

National Park Authorities in Wales

National Trust

Sea Fisheries Committees in Wales

Wales Wildlife and Countryside Link

Welsh Local Government Association

Welsh Water