

---

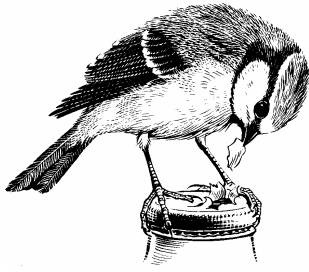
# HABITAT ACTION PLANS

---

## URBAN

### MANAGED GREENSPACE

#### DEFINITION



This category includes amenity grassland (i.e. intensively managed and regularly mown grassland), private gardens, allotments, town parks of many types, planted shrubberies, playing fields, golf courses, grounds of buildings, churchyards and cemeteries. These areas are all managed to some degree for their particular purpose, however, they can still be important reservoirs for wildlife in urban settings. In addition, they provide green breaks in development and contribute to the health and well-being of local people. Their proximity to schools and housing make them an ideal resource for learning about the natural world.

In addition to the grassland that dominates these sites, remnants of a diverse range of semi-natural habitats including woods, scrub or ponds are often found within their boundaries or next to them. These may have been in existence for many years - providing well-established continuity of biodiversity. They can also act as sanctuaries for biodiversity as outside of the managed areas they often receive relatively little human interference.

#### NOTABLE SPECIES

Song thrush  
Bullfinch  
Goldfinch  
Greenfinch  
Treecreeper  
Nuthatch  
House martin  
House sparrow  
Swift  
Common frog  
Common toad  
Smooth newt  
Great crested newt  
Hedgehog  
Fox  
Badger  
Pipistrelle  
Holly blue



### **CURRENT STATUS AND IMPORTANCE**

#### **International**

Managed greenspace is found in most of the world's towns and cities and as in the UK, offers an important refuge for many plants and animals, enhancing the lives of those who live there. The extent of managed greenspace in the world today is therefore important to global biodiversity.

#### **National**

The Biodiversity Audit for North West England notes this habitat can be found in any urban area in the UK, including north west England. Regionally important examples are present in Greater Manchester.

BAP Priority habitats and species are often found within the boundaries of managed greenspace sites including lowland dry acid grassland, lowland mixed broadleaved woodland, lowland heathland, great crested newts and water voles.

Several national initiatives and their incorporation into legislation are attaching greater importance to improving human quality of life in urban situations through providing quality urban greenspaces and incorporating considerations for biodiversity.

#### **Greater Manchester Resource and Distribution**

Amenity grassland and grassland that has been 'improved' by the addition of fertilisers, do not make as significant a contribution to biodiversity as less managed grassland. The intensity of management often precludes the growth of many plant species and is dominated by cultivars of perennial rye-grass and common broadleaved species such as white clover, daisy, broadleaved plantain or dandelion. Nevertheless, these grasslands can still have high biomass of soil fauna (e.g. earthworms and leatherjackets), and may be used as roosting sites for birds such as gulls or lapwings and may be part of the feeding territory of badgers and amphibians. The greatest value of amenity grassland, therefore, lies both in its existing value to limited but often high populations of a range of species, and in its potential to make a greater contribution to biodiversity through altering management regimes.

Gardens and allotments can support a diverse range of wildlife, depending on their management, structure and planted species. Gardens can support a host of common bird species (including blackbird, robin, blue tit, great tit, song thrush, house martin, tawny owl) and many people already make an effort to provide food or breeding sites for birds. Common butterflies such as the red admiral and peacock thrive in gardens, and moths also take advantage of the nectar supplies on offer. Garden ponds can also support amphibians including the great crested newt, provided they are not stocked with fish. Mammals such as hedgehogs, foxes and badgers often utilise urban greenspaces, especially gardens, as part of their feeding territories.

---

---

## HABITAT ACTION PLANS

---

---

There are approximately 11,000ha of amenity grassland in Greater Manchester, nearly 8.5% of the County. This includes many town parks, playing fields and golf courses. The actual area of gardens, allotments and other forms of managed greenspace is unknown but constitutes a significant area of the County. Managed greenspaces occur in all ten districts of Greater Manchester. The City of Manchester has nearly 20% of the total area of amenity grassland.

### Legal

- Protection is afforded to landscape features described by Regulation 37 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994 that “*are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species*” “*by virtue of their linear and continuous structure*” or *their function as stepping stones*. Managed greenspace can play an integral and important role in maintaining ecological networks amongst developed areas through their role in safeguarding open space and through safeguarding remnants of semi-natural habitat which act as stepping-stones.
- Some protection is given to urban habitats where these are notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or declared as Local Nature Reserves (LNR). However, for the majority of urban wildlife areas the protection comes from outside the conservation legislation, notably planning policies in Unitary Development Plans (UDP). Few areas of managed greenspace are likely to be designated as Sites of Biological Importance (SBI). However, there are examples where semi-natural habitats have been encapsulated within managed greenspace and their contribution to biodiversity has been recognised by their identification as SBIs.
- Some allotments, ‘statutory allotments’, are protected by various Acts and the permission of the Secretary of State is required before their disposal.
- Some sites may be common land, subject to specific legislation.
- Some species are given special protection under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and other legislation. The Act also prohibits the introduction of certain alien or invasive species including ragwort, Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed.
- Individual tree specimens may be subject to Tree Preservation Orders, though TPOs can also imposed on groups of trees. Trees in conservation areas are also protected.
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 afford protection to hedgerows that qualify as “Important” under the criteria listed within this legislation.

---

---

## URBAN – MANAGED GREENSPACE

---

---

### CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE HABITAT

#### International

Increasing urbanisation may lead to increasing abundance of these habitats, increased population pressures on existing sites or increased demand for greater provision of public greenspace.

#### National

- Simplification of park management and reclamation or redevelopment of disused land to a uniform landscape.
- Development encroachment onto parks, playing fields, old cemeteries, long abandoned sites and large established suburban gardens.
- Infill housing causing a loss of open space and fragmentation of ecological corridors.
- Uninformed management of greenspaces such as clearing of shrubs, filling in ponds (due to safety concerns) and levelling land with hillocks and hollows making them less attractive to wildlife.
- Ignorance of the value of the greenspace resource to biodiversity
- Use of inappropriate materials (peat, ‘unsustainable’ timber, waterworn limestone)
- Inbalance of hard/soft landscaping
- Size – tendency towards new housing allocating smaller areas to gardens.
- Inappropriate choice of boundary design, creating barriers
- Impact of domestic pets on native biodiversity

#### Greater Manchester

In addition to the above factors affecting managed greenspace, those listed below are particularly relevant to the Greater Manchester area.

Vast areas of amenity grassland in the county could offer opportunities to increase their value for wildlife. Reductions in mowing can allow plants to flower and set seed. The most significant factors affecting managed greenspace are listed below. The negative factors listed below are those that are thought to contribute to the decline in quality of managed greenspace. Factors thought to contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity of managed greenspaces are listed under the “positive” heading.

## HABITAT ACTION PLANS

Positive factors	Negative factors
National recognition that managed greenspace can be and should be managed to enhance the quality of such spaces, and that quality greenspaces and biodiversity are linked to improving human quality of life and well-being.	Payment arrangements of local authority maintenance workers where they are paid on the basis of the area of grassland they cut. This encourages an indiscriminate approach to grass cutting with little margin for incorporating varied mowing practices.
Golf course management has advocated the reduction in the use of chemicals in recent years as it is often unnecessary and can incur significant costs for relatively little benefit to the course.	General perception that urban greenspaces should be “tidied” or “gardened” promoting over intensive management and mowing regimes.
Remnant semi-natural habitats being actively managed as part of site management.	Loss of urban greenspace to development.
Recognition that parks, gardens and allotments are often the most accessible areas where the majority of the public gain contact with wildlife.	Nutrient enrichment of grasslands and other habitats through leaving grass cuttings (arising) where they are cut or disposing of them in semi-natural habitats nearby.
Many people provide supplementary food for birds and mammals that can be of vital importance in harsh winters	Use of fertilisers and pesticides, particularly in areas where this is not necessary, ie neighbouring semi-natural habitats.
	Lack of awareness of the value of a variety of semi-natural habitats within managed greenspace areas and how to incorporate their management for biodiversity into current parks and greens management practices. This can reduce costs, improve the aesthetics of urban greenspace and provide greater opportunities for a wider range of biodiversity to exist in urban areas.
	Tree planting considered over the value of other habitats such as unimproved or semi-improved grasslands.
	Neglect of management leading to sites not being valued by the community.

### LONG TERM TRENDS AND POTENTIAL THREATS

- Climate change – impact of invasive non-native species, longer mowing periods causing disturbance
- Growing interest in increasing biodiversity in grounds maintenance and in wildlife gardening

---

---

## URBAN – MANAGED GREENSPACE

---

---

### CURRENT ACTIONS

#### International

Unknown.

#### National

- Planning Policy Guidance 17: *‘Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation’* requires local authorities to take account of access to open spaces and areas for recreation within the planning framework. In addition to formal recreational areas, *“areas of open space that particularly benefit wildlife and biodiversity”* are also included. This demonstrates the value of urban greenspace but also the importance of such areas to benefit biodiversity.
- Planning Policy Guidance 9: Nature Conservation requires local authorities to *“conserve non-statutory sites together with countryside features which provide wildlife corridors, links or stepping stones, from one habitat to another”*. Urban greenspace provides a large proportion of land which can be useful in maintaining such connections.
- DTLR publication *“Greenspaces, Better Places”* encourages the consideration of developing diverse greenspaces and networks and enhancing existing greenspace to benefit the biodiversity, community and promote urban renewal.
- Policy emphasis on linking human well-being and quality of life to biodiversity particularly in urban situations. (Local Government Act 2000, Community Strategies).
- Attempts at incorporating of Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) into national policy and advice.
- A number of schemes can be used to enhance the wildlife interest of urban areas. Community Action for Wildlife provides assistance to local community groups in England wish to manage urban areas for their wildlife potential.
- Current interest in planning for sustainable cities and for low cost management of existing open spaces could help to maintain or improve local biodiversity.
- Urban habitats also have considerable potential for local people to take part in enjoyable activities, which benefit nature conservation and enable them to take action for the local environment.
- These areas also form an important education resource informing people of wildlife interests, natural processes and conservation management. The framework provided by Local Agenda 21 and Community Strategies is appropriate and important.

---

---

## HABITAT ACTION PLANS

---

---

### **Greater Manchester**

- Managed greenspace makes up a large proportion of ecological networks designated as “green corridors” or “wildlife corridors” within the planning framework in accordance with PPG9.
- Some Local Authorities are actively promoting management of managed greenspace to benefit biodiversity incorporating management of a range of habitats and staff training.
- The Local Authorities’ Countryside Services regularly encourage communities and schools to become involved in a range of activities and events highlighting the value of local urban greenspace.
- Many sites are managed in conjunction with local site action groups or ‘Friends of.’ groups consisting of members of the local community interested in enhancing their managed greenspace.

### **OBJECTIVES**

#### **National**

The Broad Habitat statement “Urban” contains the following objective:

Maintain the existing diversity and extent of wildlife in all urban areas, expanding the range and distribution of rare and common species and enabling this resource to be utilised as an educational tool.

In addition, objectives for consideration of managed greenspace in urban situations are included in the following:

- English Nature’s recommendations that an urban resident should have: access by foot to a natural greenspace of at least 2 ha within 280 m; at least one 20 ha site within 2 km; at least one 100 ha site within 5 km; and at least one 500 ha site within 10 km. English Nature’s definition of Natural Greenspace is that it must be naturally colonised. Also this leads to 8%+ of land area being put over to natural greenspace
- National Playing Fields Association 2.4 hectares per thousand population
- Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt).

## URBAN – MANAGED GREENSPACE

### Greater Manchester

In Greater Manchester, national targets and local aspirations have been translated into the following broad objectives:

Objective	Targets
<b>Maintain current amount of managed greenspace and prevent further losses and fragmentation.</b>	No further loss of managed greenspace.  Establish up-to-date baseline through survey.
<b>Promote appropriate management practices to enhance or increase managed greenspace's contribution to biodiversity.</b>	Introduce appropriate management regimes for 50% of managed urban greenspace of over 5 ha by 2006, integrating biodiversity management fully into other uses and functions of the site.  For areas under 5 ha produce site type specific strategy documents to identify appropriate management practices for the integration of biodiversity into other uses and functions by 2006.  Integrate appropriate survey and monitoring programmes into all management plans and strategy documents by 2006.
<b>Increase the amount of managed greenspace being managed to enhance or increase biodiversity, without reducing the area of other valuable habitats and species.</b>	Identify the potential for increase in extent by end of 2006 (potential sites to be determined by survey).

### PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action	Lead Body	Timetable for Action
<b>1. Policy</b>		
Ensure importance of managed greenspace is recognised and site protection policies are included in appropriate plans and strategies. Eg: UDPs, Community Strategies, nature conservation strategies, supplementary planning guidance, Red Rose Forest Strategy, Pennine Edge Forest, Forestry Commission strategies.	<b>EN/GMEU/ LA's/RRF/ PEF</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>



## HABITAT ACTION PLANS

Action	Lead Body	Timetable for Action
Ensure all planning applications are adequately assessed in relation to their impact on managed greenspace: that loss or damage is avoided and that opportunities are taken for enhancement and habitat creation.	LA's/GMEU/WT's	Ongoing
<p>Local Authorities to make a commitment to produce and implement management plans for areas over 5 ha in their control, strategy documents for areas under 5 ha, and greenspace strategies incorporating biodiversity considerations.</p> <p>50% of managed urban greenspace of over 5 ha to have management plans by 2005.</p> <p>Sites under 5 ha to have site type specific strategy documents by 2005.</p>	LAs	2005
All local authorities to have greenspace strategies (similar to Countryside Agency Green Scape Strategies) including cross boundary agreements and policies to ensure the protection of managed greenspace.	LAs	2006
<b>2. Site Safeguard</b>		
Identify key sites using agreed definition for urban managed greenspace.	Relevant GMBAP Working Group/LA's/WT's	2004
Identify and secure areas for potential expansion of urban managed greenspace (to reduce isolation and fragmentation of sites)	All BAP partners	2006
Contribute to the implementation of relevant species action plans for rare and declining species associated with managed greenspace (eg: song thrush).	All BAP Partners	Ongoing
Develop a strategic approach to the management of urban managed greenspace to maintain and enhance its value to biodiversity particularly its role in a green network across administrative boundaries.	LAs	2005

## URBAN – MANAGED GREENSPACE

Action	Lead Body	Timetable for Action
<b>3. Land Management</b>		
Promote and encourage positive management of managed greenspace with landowners, occupiers, managers and voluntary conservation bodies through the development of long-term conservation management plans or agreements.	<b>All BAP Partners</b>	<b>2005</b>
Complete or update existing conservation management plans to promote long-term positive management of managed greenspace with landowners/occupiers/ managers and voluntary conservation bodies.	<b>All BAP Partners</b>	<p><b>Ongoing</b> (50% of managed urban greenspace of over 5 ha to have management plans by 2005).</p> <p>(Sites under 5 ha to have site type specific strategy documents by 2005).</p>
Identify issues such as pesticide reduction, pollution reduction, planting of native species, low intensity management practices, increasing habitat diversity through management and creation.	<b>EN/LAs/</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<b>4. Advisory</b>		
Develop and promote best practice for urban greenspace management, particularly integrating conservation management into routine practices including the production of guidance notes on management. Ensure guidelines widely available and accessible to interested parties.	<b>EN/LAs/WTs GM Biodiversity Project</b>	<b>2006</b>
Establish demonstration sites to show good conservation and management practice for managed greenspace.	<b>LAs/WTs Identified by GM Biodiversity Project</b>	<b>2008</b>

## HABITAT ACTION PLANS

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Body</b>	<b>Timetable for Action</b>
Provide advice to owners/occupiers of managed greenspace on appropriate management regimes and biodiversity friendly management practices of managed greenspace.	EN/GMEU/ LAs/WTs	Ongoing
<b>5. Future Research and Monitoring</b>		
1. Identify gaps in knowledge of this range of habitats.	<b>Relevant GMBAP Working Group</b>	<b>2004</b>
2. If necessary undertake survey of managed greenspace in the county using standardised and repeatable methodology for each habitat type, ie: gardens and allotments, amenity grassland-parks, golf courses, cemeteries.	<b>All BAP Partners</b>	<b>Start 2004</b>
Establish and maintain a register of managed greenspace sites within Greater Manchester including details of condition and presence of important species.	<b>GMEU/ Bolton Museum/ Oldham Museum</b>	<b>2004</b>
Define standard and repeatable methods of establishing the condition of managed greenspace and consider the effectiveness of conservation management. Use knowledge to supplement register, management plans, etc.	<b>Relevant GMBAP Working Group</b>	<b>2005</b>
Contribute to increasing information on UK managed greenspace by submitting information from GM register to National Biodiversity Network web based catalogue of survey information. Such information should also be widely available locally.	<b>Biodiversity Project Officer</b>	<b>When established</b>
Submit details of relevant conservation achievements to the national biodiversity reporting system, BARS, to meet requested deadlines.	<b>Biodiversity Project Officer</b>	<b>2003 onwards</b>
Develop and implement appropriate surveillance and monitoring programmes to assess progress towards action plan targets.	<b>Biodiversity Steering Group</b>	<b>2004</b>
Produce distribution map of different types of managed greenspace across Greater Manchester.	<b>All BAP partners</b>	<b>2004</b>

## URBAN – MANAGED GREENSPACE

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Body</b>	<b>Timetable for Action</b>
Develop links with universities and encourage research on urban managed greenspace and associated flora and fauna.	<b>Academic Institutions/ Relevant GMBAP Working Group</b>	<b>2003 onwards</b>
Integrate appropriate survey and monitoring programmes into all management plans and strategy documents.	<b>LAs/WTs</b>	<b>2005</b>
Promote the principle of “survey first, manage second”.	<b>GMEU/LAs/WTs</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<b>6. Communication and Publicity</b>		
Seek opportunities to raise the profile of the importance of managed greenspace to biodiversity in the media and improve public awareness of its wildlife and conservation value.	<b>All BAP partners</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
Encourage public involvement in conservation initiatives and promote access to demonstration sites.	<b>All BAP partners</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
Publicise existing sites demonstrating good practice in the management of managed greenspace for biodiversity ensuring information widely available to landowners/managers.	<b>All BAP partners</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>

### Abbreviations

EN	English Nature
FC	Forestry Commission
GMEU	Greater Manchester Ecology Unit
LAs	Local Authorities
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
PEF	Pennine Edge Forest
RRF	Red Rose Forest
SBI	Site of Biological Importance
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
WTs	Wildlife Trusts

### RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

#### UK BAP

Unknown

---

---

## HABITAT ACTION PLANS

---

---

### **Greater Manchester BAP**

There will be considerable costs involved in undertaking survey and monitoring to provide up-to-date information on the distribution of managed greenspace, although some surveys may be undertaken by volunteers. In addition, the following activities will also incur costs:

- Establishment and maintenance of a central register
- Promotion of positive management
- Establishment of monitoring programme
- Publicity and awareness raising
- Staff and volunteer time

### **Possible Sources of Funding**

Core budget fund/maintenance budgets from local authorities

### **LINKS WITH OTHER ACTION PLANS**

#### **UK BAP**

Managed greenspaces are included in the Broad Habitat Statement “Urban” in the UK Steering Group Report.

### **Greater Manchester BAP**

Great Crested Newts, Bats, Song Thrush, Grassland

Proposed for 2<sup>nd</sup> tranche of GMBAP: Boundary features, Problem species

#### **Other BAPs**

Bolton BAP:                      Semi-improved grassland, Unimproved neutral grassland, Lowland dry acid grassland, Hedgerows, Bats, Great Crested Newt, Bluebell

North Merseyside BAP:      Urban trees, Urban grasslands, Urban birds, Great crested newts, bats, song thrush, bluebell

Lancashire BAP:              Urban Habitats

Oldham BAP:                    Great crested newts

---

---

## URBAN – MANAGED GREENSPACE

---

---

### CONFLICTS WITH OTHER ACTION PLANS

The expansion and management of urban managed greenspace could have a potentially adverse affect on the following habitats and species action plans in Greater Manchester.

- Woodland
- Grassland

### CONTACTS FOR URBAN BAP GROUP:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Tel Number</b>
GMEU	Anne GreatRex	0161 342 3597
Wigan Council	Roz Park	01942 404232
Stockport MBC	Roger English	0161 4744552
English Nature	Rebecca Jackson	01942 820342
Manchester Metropolitan University	Phil Wheater	0161 247 1589
United Utilities	Brian Tollitt	01925 235841
The Bolton Wildlife Project	Kim Patterson	01204 361847
Manchester University	Prof. John Handley	0161 275 6891
The Countryside Agency	Daniel Moores	
Groundwork Tameside	Robert Williams	
	/Ben Williams	0161 303 1336

### PROPOSED REVIEW OF PLAN

The Biodiversity Action Plan for Urban Managed Greenspace will be reviewed in 2008, and thereafter every five years.

### REFERENCES

- Barker, G. *“Green Networks”*
- DETR *“Urban White Paper”*
- DTLR (2002) *“Green Spaces, Better Places”*
- Gilbert, O *“Ecology of Urban Habitats”*
- DTLR (2002) *“Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Greenspaces”*
- HDRA *“Organic Grounds Maintenance”*
- Rogers *“Towards an Urban Renaissance”*
- Wheater, CP *“Urban Habitats”*

---

---

## HABITAT ACTION PLANS

---

---

- Boniface, T. unpublished. (2002) *“The potential contribution of golf courses to the conservation of biodiversity in Bolton”*