

## LANCASHIRE BAP TEMPLATE FOR HABITAT ACTION PLANS

### ALLOTMENTS

(Line Drawing of Habitat)

#### **Summary**

Allotments can vary in both size and use. Most are used for horticulture and/or fruit and vegetable production, in essence resembling small arable fields. Diversity in management across allotment sites may provide a habitat mosaic offering ideal conditions for some forms of wildlife. Both tended and derelict sites can be significant for biodiversity. Floral and faunal communities are likely to vary from plot to plot depending on the length and style of management.

Factors affecting this habitat potentially include development pressure, changes in horticultural fashion and increased use of toxic chemicals.

#### **Action Plan Aim**

**To secure a 20% increase in the number of allotment holders' committees integrating biodiversity action into the management of their holdings.**

#### **Habitat Description**

Formally, an allotment is; *"An area not exceeding 40 poles in extent, which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetables and fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family"* Allotment Act 1922

Allotments sites vary in size and use. However, most are used for horticulture and/or fruit and vegetable production. In essence, they resemble small arable fields and so offer broadly similar ecological niches for characteristic, ruderal plant species and the animal species directly or indirectly dependent upon these for food and shelter, particularly small mammals, birds (particularly sparrows and finches), reptiles (particularly slow worms), amphibians (particularly common toads), and a range of invertebrates.

Some plots may be used in part or in total for fruit production and so have more affinity with orchards, woodland and scrub communities. Plots not in use may have reverted to rough grassland and provide habitats more akin to those associated with

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hay meadow or pasture. Some allotments sites may have substantial hedgerows, ditches, ponds and other features of value to wildlife.

This diversity in management across any given allotments site (tended individual plots, rough unmanaged grassland and associated features) may provide a habitat mosaic offering ideal conditions for some forms of wildlife.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that distribution and usage of allotment sites vary across Lancashire. In some areas uptake is apparently high and specialist allotment holder groups have formed. In others some plots are nearly empty. Both tended and derelict sites can be significant for biodiversity.

It is difficult to generalise about characteristic species of allotments in Lancashire. There have been no published studies for the county and there is no Local Biological Records Centre or Network. However, floral and faunal communities are likely to vary from plot to plot depending on the length and style of management.

#### **National Status**

There has been a decline in usage. We may suspect that some or all of the following may explain why uptake has been poor on some allotment sites:

*Lifestyle choice* - More people opting to purchase food from local supermarkets.

*Active sites* - If uptake on a site is high, then others are encouraged to want to join. The social aspects of gardening should not be overlooked.

*Site security* - The isolation of plots on a site with poor upkeep attracts attention and could lead to discouraging acts of vandalism.

*Poor state of vacant plots* - The sheer hard work of transforming a derelict plot to a workable allotment producing consumable products is discouraging - and beyond the skills of many.

#### **Regional Status**

No data found.

#### **Local Status**

No data found.

#### **Current factors affecting the habitat**

A number of factors are discussed below. However, in the absence of research they can only be speculative.

- Development Pressure
- Reduction in Produce
- Changes in horticultural fashion
- Increased use of toxic chemicals
- Loss of open water
- Lack of knowledge

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#### Development Pressure

There is increasing pressure from central Government to meet the demand for housing from within current urban footprints in preference to “greenfield” sites. Underused allotment sites may be used to meet this need. Certainly, pressure is likely to build to encourage novel use of allotment sites where high rates of uptake are not maintained.

#### Reduction in produce

There may be a shift away from growing fruit and vegetables – these can provide food and shelter for wildlife in autumn and early winter.

#### Changes in horticultural fashion

There is a trend toward the growing of fewer traditional “cottage garden” plant species – these are generally more favourable to local biodiversity than other horticultural plants because they tend to be species that are either native to Lancashire or have been grown in this area for many centuries. They also tend to produce more nectar and scent than “doubles” and other “highly bred” cultivars, making them more attractive to nectar-feeding insects; and they often have a longer flowering period.

#### Increased use of toxic chemicals

There has probably been an increase in the use of garden chemicals including herbicides, insecticides, slug pellets, and rat poison.

#### Loss of open water

Water features may increasingly be infilled because of fears about safety.

#### Lack of knowledge

There may be a lack of awareness among allotment holders of ways of making their holdings more wildlife-friendly.

### **Important Sites**

None are the subject of biodiversity designations (SSSI, BHS &c) except for an unspecified site or sites in East Lancashire that has/have been identified for Black Poplar (Jepson, P., pers. comm. 2004).

### **Current Action / Mechanisms**

- *Policy*

Allotment Acts (various) of 1908 -1950.  
Local Plan policies (various)

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- *Site Safeguard*

No sites have been notified as SSSI. Current BHS guidelines would appear to preclude their identification as BHS.

- *Land Management*

Plots are leased by district and unitary councils to individuals who manage their plot to their own preference, or by allotment committees that have devolved responsibility for the management and maintenance of allotments. Site owners may also manage hedgerows and other features. The relevant district council or its agents may subject vacant plots to an annual strimming.

- *Advisory*

None known.

- *Research and Monitoring*

No specific survey or monitoring of allotment biodiversity has been conducted.

- *Public Relations*

Productive Landscapes in Preston (PLIP) project.  
Burnley Productive Landscapes project.

### Indicators of Habitat Quality

These need to be developed.

### Proposed Actions

Action (priority: H,M,L)	Area	Measure / Milestone	Partners	Timescale
<b>Research and monitoring</b>				
Identify the number of allotments	Lancashire	Number identified	TWT, LCC	2008
To research the quality of allotment sites, including a measure of biodiversity on each site	Lancashire	50% of allotment sites surveyed	TWT, NE	2012
<b>Policy and legislation</b>				
To promote sustainability / lifestyle choices that can have a beneficial effect on		100% of strategies to reference the sustainability benefits of	LAs, LSPs	2008

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allotment habitats and / or associated species by ensuring that Sustainable Community Plans at district level recognise that importance of allotments to quality of life		allotments		
Where provision is made for the disposal of allotment sites for development purposes ensure that suitable obligations be attached to ensure developers provide some form of communal garden space open to all		100% of plans for development on allotment sites to incorporate a replacement communal garden space.	LAs	2010
<b>Habitat protection and management</b>				
Ensure a minimum of 0.3ha of actively managed allotment space within 600m walking distance for every 1,000 population throughout urban Lancashire (especially on new build sites or where provision is currently low)		100%	LAs, Developers	2020
Seek funding to investigate the feasibility of securing a community-based farm / education site on derelict allotments		Funding established	TWT	2008
<b>Advisory</b>				
Create a series of demonstration plots		Demonstration plots	LAs, TWT, BTCV	2010

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emphasising different aspects and techniques of allotment gardening		identified. Programme of events demonstrating techniques established.		
Provide web-based information, talks, CDs, leaflets, events and demonstrations based on allotment gardening		Funding secured to deliver	LAs, NE, TWT	2008
<b>Publicity</b>				
Establish novel / community / green use of allotment sites i.e. community composting schemes where large plots remain vacant		Allotment information leaflet produced	LAs	2008
Establish funding opportunities to extend and encourage community use		Funding established	LAs	2010

### Related Action Plans

#### Lancashire BAP

Purple Ramping Fumitory, Urban Bumblebees, Common Frog, Black Poplar

### References and additional reading

The Allotment Acts 1908 –1950; The Stationery Office.

### Contact Information:

UNITED KINGDOM

#### **National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners**

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Postal address: N.S.A.L.G., O'Dell House, Hunters Road, Corby, Northamptonshire NN17 5JE

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LANCASHIRE

#### **Learning Through Allotments**

Telephone: 01282-714 125

Postal address: Office D9, Northbridge House, Elm Street, Burnley, Lancashire BB10 1PD

#### **Offshoots Permaculture Project**

Telephone: 01282-429 438

Postal address: Natural History Centre, Towneley Park (next to museum), Burnley, Lancashire BB11 3RQ

#### **Clayton Hall Victorian Garden**

Telephone: 01254-871 010

Postal address: ???, Clayton-le-Moors, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 ???

#### **Green Space**

Telephone: 01282-862 711

Postal address: Bank House, Colne, Lancashire BB8 0BP

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