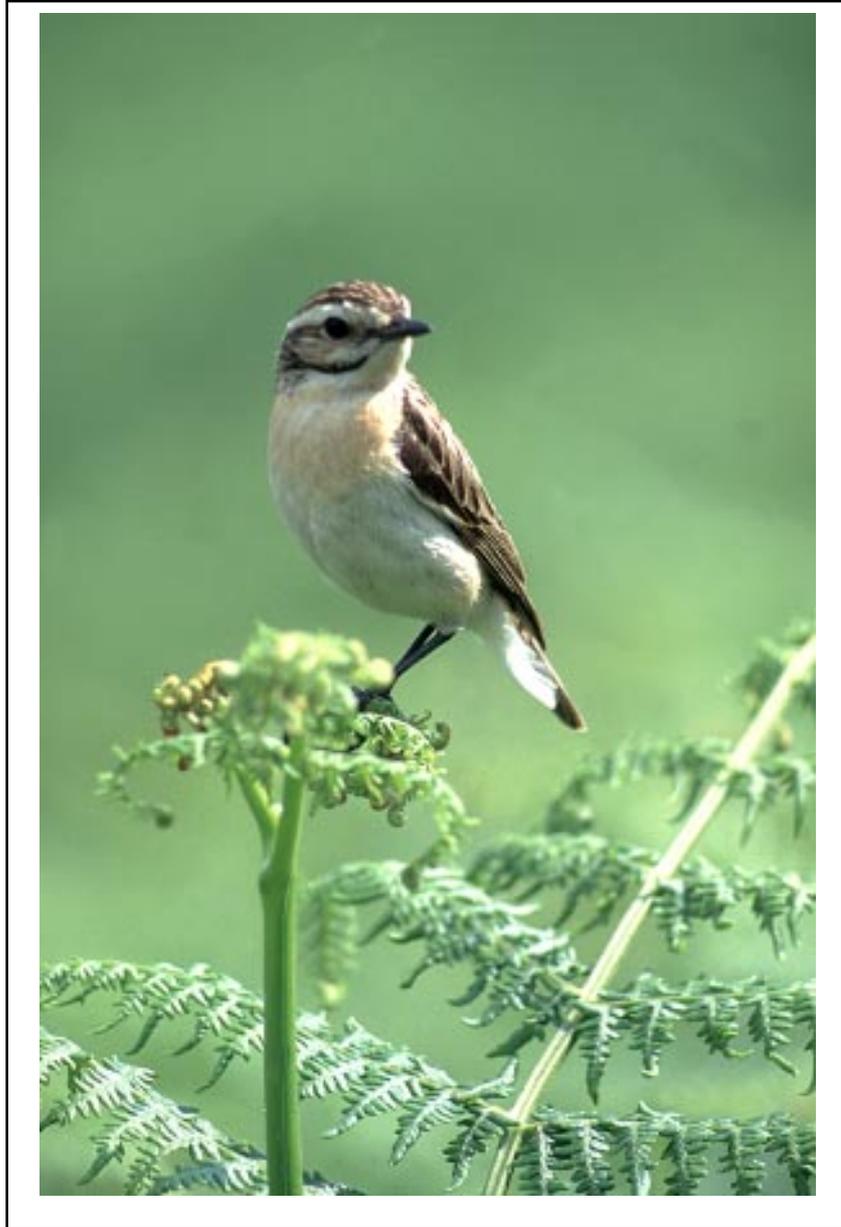


Action for Nature

Part Two - Habitat & Species Action Plans



*A Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taff
October 2000*

Preface

This Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taff has three parts.

Part One is the main document. It provides an introduction to biodiversity and describes the actions under four headings: raising awareness, identifying and recording wildlife, protecting sites and managing land for wildlife. Boxes in the text provide additional information on particular topics.

Part Two contains the Habitat and Species Action Plans. There are 26 Habitat Action Plans and 57 Species Action Plans, each giving details of current status and threats and the proposed actions for the habitats and species of particular importance in Rhondda Cynon Taff.

Part Three contains the Appendices. These include background information for reference purposes.

Action for Nature

Part Two: Habitat and Species Action Plans

Contents

Habitats and Species Relationships	3
Habitat Action Plans	
Upland oakwood	7
Lowland beech and yew woods	10
Upland ash woodland	11
Wet woodland	12
Lowland wood pastures and parklands	15
Planted coniferous	17
Ancient and/or species-rich hedgerow	18
Disused railway lines	20
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	21
Lowland meadows	23
Calcareous grassland	26
Lowland dry acid grassland	29
Heathland (upland and lowland)	32
Coal spoil	34
Ffridd / bracken slopes	36
Purple moor grass and rush pasture (Rhos pasture)	37
Fens / Swamp	40
Reedbeds	42
Raised bog and Blanket bog	43
Standing open water / Ponds	45
Canals	47
Rivers and streams	48
Craggs and scree	50
Urban	51
Industrial estates	52
Road verges	54
Species Action Plans	
Lower Plants	
Lichens	55
Mosses and Liverworts	56
Ferns	57
Vascular Plants	
Deptford pink	58
Monk's-hood	59
Cornish moneywort	60
Ivy-leaved bellflower	61
Black knapweed	62
Bluebell	63
Heath spotted-orchid	64
Green-winged orchid	65

Species Action Plans continued

Worms	Medicinal leech.	66
Insects	Southern damselfly.	67
	Silver-studded blue.	68
	Small pearl-bordered fritillary.	69
	Pearl-bordered fritillary.	71
	High brown fritillary.	73
	Marsh fritillary.	75
	Grayling.	77
	Narrow-bordered bee hawk-moth.	78
	Double line moth.	79
	Hornet robber-fly.	80
	Brown-banded carder bee	81
Fish	Twaite shad.	82
	Salmon and Brown trout.	83
Amphibians	Great crested newt.	85
Reptiles		87
Birds	Heron.	88
	Buzzard.	89
	Peregrine.	90
	Grey partridge.	91
	Lapwing.	93
	Barn owl.	94
	Nightjar.	96
	Swift.	97
	Kingfisher.	98
	Skylark.	99
	House martin.	100
	Dipper.	101
	Spotted flycatcher.	102
	Whinchat.	103
	Stonechat.	104
	Ring ouzel.	106
	Song thrush.	107
	Tree sparrow.	108
	Bullfinch.	109
	Linnet.	111
	Reed bunting.	112
Mammals	Hedgehog.	113
	Pipistrelle bat/ all bats.	114
	Brown hare.	116
	Red squirrel.	117
	Dormouse.	118
	Water vole.	120
	Otter.	122
	Badger.	124

Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats and Species Relationships

Priority Habitat	Local Habitat	Priority Species	Locally Important Species
broadleaved mixed and yew woodland			
		pearl-bordered fritillary high brown fritillary bullfinch song thrush spotted flycatcher dormouse pipestrelle/all bats	bluebell ferns mosses/liverworts lichens small pearl-bordered fritillary buzzard badger
upland oak woodland lowland beech and yew upland mixed ash woods wet woodland lowland wood pasture and parkland			
coniferous woodland			
		red squirrel nightjar	heron
boundary and linear features			
ancient species-rich hedgerows		grey partridge song thrush bullfinch tree sparrow linnet pipestrelle/all bats dormouse	bluebell
	disused railway lines	spotted flycatcher bullfinch linnet	black knapweed reptiles amphibians buzzard hedgehog badger
arable and horticultural			
		grey partridge brown hare	
improved grassland			
coastal and floodplain marsh		skylark water vole otter	lapwing amphibians heron
neutral grassland			
lowland meadows / upland hay meadows		skylark double line moth hornet robberfly brown-banded carder bee grey partridge song thrush pipestrelle/all bats brown hare	black knapweed green-winged orchid reptiles barn owl whinchat lapwing badger hedgehog

Priority Habitat	Local Habitat	Priority Species	Locally Important Species
calcareous grassland			
lowland and upland calcareous grassland		Deptford pink narrow-bordered bee hawk-moth hornet robberfly brown-banded carder bee skylark	green-winged orchid reptiles badger
acid grassland			
lowland dry acid grassland		Deptford pink high brown fritillary hornet robberfly skylark	heath-spotted orchid ivy-leaved bellflower reptiles badger
dwarf shrub heath			
lowland heathland / upland heathland		narrow-bordered bee hawk-moth hornet robberfly nightjar linnet	Cornish moneywort ivy-leaved bellflower grayling silver-studded blue reptiles stonechat whinchat
	coal spoil	narrow-bordered bee hawk-moth hornet robberfly nightjar linnet	Cornish moneywort ivy-leaved bellflower grayling reptiles stonechat whinchat
bracken			
	fridd / bracken slopes	narrow-bordered bee hawk-moth hornet robberfly nightjar linnet	Cornish moneywort ivy-leaved bellflower grayling reptiles stonechat whinchat
fen, marsh and swamp			
purple moor grass and rush pastures		double line moth narrow-bordered bee hawk-moth marsh fritillary reed bunting otter great crested newt lapwing	heath spotted-orchid small pearl-bordered fritillary amphibians barn owl heron lapwing
fens		narrow-bordered bee hawk-moth marsh fritillary reed bunting southern damselfly	small pearl-bordered fritillary amphibians reptiles
reedbeds		otter water vole	amphibians
bogs			
lowland raised bog / blanket bog		lapwing reed bunting	heath spotted-orchid

Priority Habitat	Local Habitat	Priority Species	Locally Important Species
standing open water and canals			
	ponds	medicinal leech water vole otter	amphibians heron kingfisher
	canals	water vole otter	
rivers and streams			
	rivers and streams	water vole otter twait shad	monk's-hood salmon / brown trout heron kingfisher dipper
inland rock			
	craggs and scree		ferns lichens mosses and liverworts ring ouzel peregrine
built up areas and gardens			
	urban	pipestrelle/all bats spotted flycatcher bullfinch	swift house martin hedgehog amphibians reptiles song thrush black knapweed bluebell
	industrial estates	lapwing pipestrelle/all bats	swift house martin amphibians reptiles
	road verges		
mosaic of habitats			
		otter brown hare bats song thrush tree sparrow reed bunting linnet skylark great crested newt	

Upland oakwood

Current Status

Upland oakwoods consist predominantly of sessile oak and birch, together with an understorey of small trees and shrubs. A characteristic Welsh habitat, upland oak woodland often supports outstanding assemblages of ferns, mosses, lichens and liverworts and is home to distinctive bird communities which include redstart, pied flycatcher and wood warbler. Although once predominant on the uplands and valleysides, only a small number of upland oakwoods still survive in the County Borough and these are restricted to streams, very steep valley slopes and cwms.

While the days of wholesale woodland clearance are gone, uncontrolled sheep grazing is denuding and gradually killing much of the remaining upland woodland resource. The restoration of positive management, exclusion of livestock and the recognition of the biodiversity and financial significance of upland oakwoods by landowners are three key actions.

There is no accurate figure for the extent of upland oak woodland in the Glamorgan (Vice County 41) region. However it is estimated that total ancient woodland area in VC41 (including upland oakwoods) covers 6736 hectares. The resource in RCT is not quantified but important upland oak woodlands are known. These include: Coed Craig-yr-Hesg, Cynon Valley Woods, Dyffryn Noedd Nedd a Mellte, a Moel Penderyn SSSI, Graig Pont Rhondda SSSI (Glyncornel Grounds and Woodlands LNR), Nant Gelliwion Woodland SSSI, Nant Y Bwllfa, Taff Valley woodlands, Blaenllechau/Darran Park Woods and Bronwydd Park.

Threats

1. Over-grazing (leading to a lack of natural regeneration) .
2. Invasion by non-native species (e.g. rhododendron, cherry laurel and sycamore).
3. Lack of appropriate woodland management.
4. Loss of genetic integrity through restocking with trees of non-native provenance.
5. Atmospheric pollution and global warming.
6. Economic development pressures.
7. Past practice of under-planting ancient woodland sites or replacing native trees with conifers to form commercial plantations.

Current Action

1. The Countryside Council for Wales has designated a number of upland oakwood SSSI.
2. The Forestry Commission has a presumption against clearance of native woodland for conifer planting or for agricultural use and provides guidance on woodland management and the expansion and creation of new native woodland.
3. Grants are available through the Forestry Commission Woodland Grant Scheme to encourage woodland owners to manage ancient woodlands sympathetically.
4. Local authorities issue Tree Preservation Orders.
5. Coed Cymru, funded by CCW, the Local Authorities and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) promotes sustainable management of woods and the marketing of produce.
6. Tir Gofal grant aid to farmers.
7. All ancient upland oak woodlands are pSINC.
8. The Council owns and manages Glyncornel Local Nature Reserve, an upland oakwood.
9. Forest Enterprise have surveyed possible upland oak woodlands on its estates.
10. Forest Enterprise has a CCW-approved habitat action plan for upland oak woodland.
11. Forest Enterprise is currently reviewing all replanted ancient woodland sites with the aim of converting to native woodland.
12. Coed Cymru has identified all RCT-owned woodland sites.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Using every available means, attempt to protect the existing resource of upland oakwoods in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Countryside Council for Wales Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>2: Coed Cymru has identified RCT ownership of woodlands. RCT will enter at least one new woodland site (which may be upland oak woodland) annually into a Woodland Grant Scheme.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: Seek to designate all upland oak woodlands as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify landowners.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>4: As opportunities arise, visit, survey and identify significant and vulnerable upland oakwoods and target grant aid money at these.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>5: Continue to promote the use of natural regeneration to establish and restore oak woodland to ensure genetic integrity is maintained. Encourage a continuous cover silvicultural system to create a diverse range of age and species.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>6: Where opportunities arise, identify potential for new oak woodland using local provenance material, on land of low existing biodiversity value, preferably linking areas of existing ancient woodland.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>7: Seek to develop UDP policies which protect upland oakwoods. The UDP offers the opportunity to adopt UK and European best practice and develop innovative policies.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>8: Where such conversion will yield a significant ecological benefit, continue to re-convert conifer plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland.</p> <p>Organisations Forest Enterprise</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>9: Promote management advice for woodland owners through Coed Cymru and the Woodland Grant Scheme.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Actions	Timescale
<p>10: Support the development of markets for sustainable woodland products through Coed Cymru.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>11: Produce a register of native woodland sites in RCT and identify suitable upland oak woodlands for seed collection.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>12: Promote training and raise public awareness in native woodland management through seminars and workshops.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	2001-2004
<p>13: Support the Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group's Regional Action Plan for Upland oakwood.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Countryside Council for Wales Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>14: Investigate, through a partnership approach, the opportunities for developing a tree nursery in Glamorgan capable of growing sufficient quantities of Glamorgan provenance trees.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Forest Enterprise Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Welsh Development Agency</p>	2001
<p>15: Identify the current 'baseline' area of upland oakwood in positive conservation management in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Countryside Council for Wales Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	2001
<p>16: Through the Council's Countryside Service, continue to undertake practical woodland management within Council-owned and managed woodlands.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going

Lowland beech and yew woods

Current Status

Native beech woodland is at the western edge of its global range in Mid and South Glamorgan. The Clydach Gorge (Monmouthshire), Coed Deri-Newydd (Caerphilly) and Radyr (Cardiff) are often quoted as the western- most native Beech woodlands in the United Kingdom. However a small number of beech woodlands occur in the Cynon Valley (only a few miles from Coed Deri-Newydd) on ancient woodland sites. Although small, the woodlands have the appearance of being native, with no evidence of being planted. In addition, prehistoric evidence of beech exists for Mid Glamorgan.

Threats

1. One of the suspected native beech woodlands, Cefn Pennar, was threatened by a proposed land reclamation scheme. However a re-designed and re-modelled scheme is now being developed by RCT Land Reclamation Officers which will hopefully respect and conserve the ancient woodland site.

Current Action

1. All sites are ancient woodland and pSINC.
2. Lowland beech and yew woods may be included in Woodland Grant Schemes and Tir Gofal.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Support the Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group's Regional Action Plan for Lowland beech and yew woodland.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Lead Partner Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>2: Seek to designate all ancient beech woodland sites as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: Where appropriate, enter native beech woodlands into Woodland Grant Schemes.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Lead Partner Forestry Commission</p>	on-going
<p>4: Coed Cymru has identified RCT ownership of woodlands. RCT will enter at least one new woodland site (which may be beech woodland) annually into a woodland grant scheme.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Lead Partner Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>5: Promote management advice for woodland owners through Coed Cymru and the Woodland Grant Scheme.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>6: As opportunities arise, visit and survey potential native beech woodlands and target grant aid money at these.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Lead Partner Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going

Upland ash woodland

Current Status

Upland ashwoods are restricted to areas of upland limestone and associated free-draining base-rich soils. Although ash predominates, these are mixed woodlands and oak, birch, elm, small-leaved lime and hazel may be locally abundant. Upland ash woodland is a nationally scarce resource, due to a combination of the comparative rarity of upland limestone and the pressures of generations of intensive sheep grazing. In south Wales the boundary between this habitat and lowland mixed deciduous woodland is not clear. Upland mixed ashwoods are, however, very important habitats and represent one of the richest habitats for wildlife in the uplands.

Most of these woods were treated as coppice in the past. Others have been wood pasture but most now have a high forest structure. Their extent in Glamorgan is currently unknown and there has been no assessment of their status in RCT.

Threats

1. Overgrazing leading to change in woodland structure.
2. Invasion by sycamore and other non-native species.
3. Dutch elm disease, leaving canopy gaps and opening the wood to wind-blow.
4. Quarrying.
5. Replacement of native trees with planted conifers or inappropriate broadleaf species.
6. Agricultural practices may lead to greater ecological isolation and nutrient enrichment, leading to soil changes.
7. Cessation of traditional management practices may lead to a reduction in structural diversity.
8. Climate change.

Current Action

1. The Forestry Commission has a presumption against clearance of native woodland for conifer planting or for agricultural use and provides guidance on woodland management and the expansion and creation of new woodland.
2. RCT Local Plans contain policies designed to protect important semi-natural woodlands.
3. All ancient woodland sites are identified as pSINC.
4. Upland ash woods may be included in Woodland Grant Schemes and Tir Gofal.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Investigate the extent of upland ash woodland in RCT. As and when opportunities arise, survey and assess upland woodlands against the National Action Plan.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Countryside Council for Wales Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	2000-2004
<p>2: If upland ash woodlands are found in RCT, adopt actions 2-6 of the Lowland beech and yew woodland LBAP for upland ash woodlands.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Countryside Council for Wales Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>3: Promote training and raise public awareness of native upland ash woodland management through seminars, workshops etc.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Forestry Commission Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group</p>	2000-2004

Actions	Timescale
<p>4: Promote and implement an agreed management plan for upland mixed ash woods.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>5: Seek to designate all upland ash woodlands as SINC.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004

Wet woodland

Current Status

Wet woodland occurs on poorly drained or seasonally wet soils, usually with alder, birch and willow as the predominant tree species, but sometimes including ash, oak, pine and beech on the drier riparian areas. It is found on floodplains, as successional habitat on fens, mires and bogs, along streams and hillside flushes, and in peaty hollows. These woodlands occur on a range of soils including nutrient-rich mineral and acid soils and also nutrient-poor organic types.

Many alder woods are ancient and have a long history of coppice management which has determined their structure. Other wet woodland may have developed through natural succession on open wetlands (sometimes following the cessation of active management) and structurally are little influenced by direct forestry treatments.

Wet woodland combines elements of many other ecosystems and as such is important for many taxa. The high humidity favours bryophyte growth. The number of invertebrates associated with alder, birch and willow is large and wet woodlands can provide cover and breeding sites for otter.

There is a network of small wet woodlands in RCT. They form an invaluable biodiversity resource in the County Borough.

Threats

1. Clearance and conversion to other land-uses.
2. Cessation of management in formerly coppiced sites may encourage succession to drier woodland types.
3. Lowering of the water table through drainage or water abstraction, resulting in a change to drier woodland types.
4. Inappropriate levels of grazing and poaching of the soil by sheep and cattle leading to a change in the woodland structure, ground flora and difficulties for regeneration.
5. Flood prevention measures and river control.
6. Constraints on the spread of woodland by agriculture, industrial or residential development.
7. Poor water quality arising from eutrophication, industrial effluent or rubbish dumping.
8. Invasion by non-native species which alter vegetation composition and lower conservation value (e.g. Indian balsam).
9. The increasing threat from the disease Phytophthora that affects alder.
10. Climate change, potentially resulting in changes in the vegetation communities.

Current Action

1. National forestry policy includes a presumption against clearance of broadleaf woodland and seeks to maintain the special interest of ancient semi-natural woodland.
2. Some wet woods in RCT are subject to Tree Preservation Orders.
3. The Forestry Commission Guide to the management of wet woods was published in 1994. FC guidelines on Forestry and Water are also relevant.
4. Council Local Plans contain policies designed to protect important semi-natural woodlands.
5. A large number of the County Borough's wet woods are identified as pSINC.
6. Wet woods may be included in Woodland Grant Schemes and Tir Gofal.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Where opportunities arise, undertake site visits, surveys and assessments to identify and record wet woodland sites within RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Countryside Council for Wales Forest Enterprise Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>2: Through every available means, attempt to protect the remaining resource of wet woodland from loss.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Countryside Council for Wales Dwr Cymru Welsh Water Forest Enterprise Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>3: Where opportunities arise, encourage the creation of new wet woods on poorly drained farmland using local provenance planting stock, or natural regeneration, and avoiding other habitats of nature conservation value.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Environment Agency Forest Enterprise National Assembly for Wales Agriculture Department Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>4: Seek to defend the remaining floodplain resource through the planning process and develop appropriate policy in the new Unitary Development Plan.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>5: Where opportunities arise, identify significant vulnerable wet woods and target grant money at these woodlands.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>6: After survey and evaluation, identify areas of conifer plantations suitable for reversion to wet woodland.</p> <p>Organisations Forest Enterprise</p>	on-going
<p>7: Promote management advice for woodland owners through Coed Cymru and the Woodland Grant Scheme.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>8: Support the development of markets for sustainable woodland products.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going

Actions	Timescale
<p>9: Continue to identify suitable wet woodland for seed collection.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>10: Continue to promote training and raise public awareness in native woodland management through seminars, workshops etc.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>11: Continue to promote the use of natural regeneration to establish and restore wet woodland to ensure genetic integrity is maintained. Encourage a continuous cover silvicultural system to create a diverse range of age and species.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>12: Support the Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group's Regional Action Plan for Wet woodland.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>13: Investigate, through a partnership approach, the opportunities for developing a tree nursery in Glamorgan capable of growing sufficient quantities of Glamorgan provenance trees.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Welsh Development Agency</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>14: Identify the current 'baseline' area of wet woodland in positive conservation management in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Glamorgan Wildlife Trust National Assembly for Wales Agriculture Department Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>15: Continue to bring wet woodland within Council ownership into conservation management.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Lowland wood pastures and parklands

Current Status

Wood pasture involves the grazing of livestock within a woodland setting. It was a traditional, ancient method of woodland management. Parklands are the classic landscape features of large houses and estates. Typical lowland wood pasture and parkland habitat consists of large trees, often with pollards, growing in various densities in a matrix of grazed grassland, heathland or woodland ground flora. Included in this definition are neglected wood pastures with veteran trees, and parkland or wood pasture that has been converted to other uses, but where surviving veteran trees are of nature conservation importance. Wood pastures and parklands have specialist lichen, moss flora and invertebrate and bird fauna.

Pollarding was the typical and traditional method of woodland management, often resulting in veteran trees. Parkland dates from the early eleventh century. No wood pasture is known in RCT. However, there are a small number of parklands associated with large country houses. These include Llanharan House and Miskin Manor, Bronwydd Park, Mountain Ash School and Aberdare Park. All support veteran parkland trees. It is also possible that a small part of the former deer park at Senghenydd lies within RCT.

Threats

1. Loss through change of use, including agricultural improvement and woodland planting.
2. Fragmentation of existing habitats reducing future viability.
3. Lack of tree regeneration due to over-grazing or lack of management .
4. Neglect, lack of appropriate management expertise, insufficient resources and loss of traditional management skills.
5. Inappropriate grazing levels; under-grazing leading to loss of habitat structure through scrub and bracken invasion, and over-grazing leading to bark browsing, soil compaction and loss of ground flora diversity.

Current Action

1. Certain species associated with or wholly dependant upon this habitat are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
2. The Forestry Commission has a presumption against clearance of native wood for conversion to other land uses and in particular seeks to maintain the special interest of ancient semi-natural woodland.
3. Local Authorities can assist the conservation of this habitat by issuing Tree Preservation Orders, making nature conservation designations, managing land within their ownership and implementing appropriate development plan policies and landscape designations.
4. Woodland management and marketing advice is available through Coed Cymru.
5. Tir Gofal grant aid to farmers.
6. CCW Parkland surveys were undertaken in the mid 1990's.
7. Sites may be identified through other initiatives, including the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust and LANDMAP.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Review CCW Parkland Survey information to identify parkland sites in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Welsh Historic Gardens Trust</p>	2002
<p>2: Seek to designate important wood pasture and parkland sites as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify landownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: As and when opportunities arise, encourage landowners to appropriately manage important lowland wood pasture and parkland.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going

Actions	Timescale
<p>4: Where opportunities arise, encourage schemes to increase the area of wood pasture and parkland, avoiding other habitats of nature conservation value.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>5: Support the Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group's Regional Action Plan for Lowland wood pastures and parklands.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>6: Identify the current 'baseline' area of lowland wood pasture and parklands in positive conservation management in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001

Planted coniferous

Current Status

A significant proportion of the area of RCT, especially in the Rhondda and Cynon valleys, is commercially planted as conifer plantation. While it is undoubtedly true that this wholesale change in vegetation has been at the expense of great tracts of the 'original' upland moorland, bog and heathland resource, little is known about the biodiversity value of the County Borough's conifer plantations. Certain areas, such as the Llanwonno Forest, support important bird populations, including nightjar and goshawk. Old records for red squirrel exist for the Llanwonno Forest area and an extant population exists in forestry in Merthyr Tydfyl CBC. Pine marten have been recently recorded in the Brecon Beacons and merlin have been found nesting in conifer plantations on the edge of upland moorland. The recent discovery of two large heronries in conifer plantations in the Rhondda valley and the discovery of dormouse in a Taff Ely plantation (in a native woodland strip) only emphasises our lack of knowledge regarding the biodiversity value of coniferous plantations.

Forest Enterprise are currently reviewing their planting programmes for the whole of south Wales. This offers an important opportunity to improve the biodiversity value of this major land-use.

Threats

1. The existing biodiversity status of conifer plantations in RCT is not known. The acquired interest of the plantations and the value of remnant areas of moorland, heath and bog has not been properly surveyed or assessed.

Current Action

1. Forest Enterprise are part of the Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process.
2. The planting programme for south Wales is currently under review by Forest Enterprise.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Continue to promote best biodiversity practice in the Forest Enterprise review of the planting programme of south Wales land holdings as per UK Forest Standards.</p> <p>Organisations Forest Enterprise Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>2: Where opportunities arise, encourage species and habitat surveys in Forest Enterprise-owned and managed plantations.</p> <p>Organisations Forest Enterprise Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: Continue to require habitat and species surveys for all planning applications affecting conifer plantations.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows

Current Status

Ancient hedgerows have been defined as those which were in existence before the Enclosure Acts (primarily in the nineteenth century). Although indicative, age is not a direct measure of biodiversity. This Action Plan therefore also includes species-rich hedgerows of more recent origin.

In RCT, species-rich hedgerows are defined as those which contain (on average) 5 or more native woody species in a 30 metre length. Hedgerows with species-rich ground flora are also included. Boundaries which consist only of an earth bank, stone bank or wall are not covered in this Action Plan, but when associated with a boundary line of trees and shrubs these features are considered to form part of the hedgerow.

In 1993 it was estimated that about 49,000 km of hedgerow remained in Wales. There is no reliable assessment of the proportion of Welsh or RCT hedgerows which are ancient and/or species-rich. However much of RCT is an ancient landscape and the proportion of species-rich hedgerows is likely to be high. The day-to-day work of Council's Countryside and Environment Officers certainly indicates that a high proportion of the hedgerows affected by planning applications reach the minimum requirements of the Hedgerow Regulations. For example, a survey of some 200 hedgerow sections for the proposed Church Village By-pass (1998) identified at least 50% as meeting the minimum standards of the Hedgerow Regulations.

Threats

1. Management neglect.
2. Unsympathetic cutting practises e.g. cutting all hedges on a farm every year, cutting during the bird nesting season, cutting hedgerow trees, and cutting during or immediately after harvest.
3. Fertiliser and pesticide drift into hedge-bottoms.
4. Lowering of banks and removal for agricultural or development purposes (including road widening).
5. Erosion of banks and grazing of hedgerow bottoms through heavy stocking.
6. Loss of large areas of hedgerows as a result of planning permissions.
7. Loss of hedgerow trees through senescence or felling, without encouraging replacements.
8. Shortage of data on the extent and quality of the RCT resource.
9. Lack of consensus on the optimum hedgerow management regime.
10. Lack of knowledge of invertebrate requirements in hedgerow management.

Current Action

1. CCW previously operated a hedgerow renovation scheme, which has now been replaced by the Tir Gofal Scheme as a source of funding for the management and restoration of species-rich hedgerows.
2. Hedgerow management advice is available from a number of organisations including CCW and GWT.
3. Hedgerows Regulations have now brought hedgerow conservation under the planning system.
4. The RCT Planning Department request hedgerow surveys on all development sites.
5. The use of Tree Preservation Orders has protected a number of hedgerows.
6. All three Local Plans contain policies on hedgerow protection.
7. Merthyr and RCT Groundwork Trust have undertaken hedgerow management at Penywaun.
8. Merthyr and RCT Groundwork Trust are running a hedgerow management days for volunteers.
9. CCW are currently developing a standardised hedgerow survey method for use in LBAP surveys.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: As and when opportunities arise, lobby for increased grant aid for hedgerow management and conservation.</p> <p>Organisations Country Landowners Association Countryside Council for Wales Farmers Union of Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust National Farmers Union Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>2: Promote best practice policies in the UDP for the protection and management of species-rich hedges in the planning process and seek to minimise the adverse effects of planning proposals on hedges.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: Through the planning process and as proactive boundary enhancement projects, encourage planting of new species-rich hedgerows using locally native species of UK (preferably Welsh) origin or stock.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: As part of the on-going 'Working for Wildlife' programme, provide local environmental groups (and interested individuals) with at least two hedgerow management training days over the five year period of the plan.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2005
<p>5: Encourage local Community Councils, schools and environmental groups to survey and monitor their local hedgerows. Use CCW's standardised hedgerow surveying methodology.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>6: Identify ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows in Council ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2002-2004
<p>7: Identify a baseline figure for hedgerows currently in grant aid management in RCT under the former Hedgerow Renovation Scheme and the length included within new Tir Gofal.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales National Assembly for Wales Agriculture Department Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>8: For all developments requiring planning permission ensure that strategic hedgerows which contribute to the landscape, biodiversity or Natura 2000 are conserved and maintained as biodiversity corridors.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Actions	Timescale
<p>9: To establish a code of practice, instigate a pilot project for sympathetic management of ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows in LA ownership and along LA managed roadsides.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2002
<p>10: Support the Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group's Regional Action Plan for Ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Disused railways

Current Status

The valleys of Rhondda Cynon Taff support a complex network of old disused railway lines and some tramways. Once the primary means of exporting coal, these track-ways have gradually reverted to nature, now represent a locally significant network of biodiverse corridors. Much of the network is now open to the general public and includes cycle tracks and footpaths. This allows people to enjoy the woodland, heathland, species-rich grassland and wetlands which are a feature of many disused railways.

A number of Key Countryside Sites include disused railway lines. Management works by the Council's Countryside Service has been designed to enhance biodiversity features of these sites.(e.g. grass verge cutting and scrub coppicing). The line between Llwydcoed to Cwmbach is a proposed Local Nature Reserve. In addition, Groundwork Merthyr and RCT and the charity organisation Sustrans are both actively involved in converting disused railway lines into community routes. If sensitively undertaken, the development of community routes on disused railways offers a great opportunity to encourage wildlife in a setting to which local people have easy access.

Threats

1. There is always a potential tension between cycle track creation and disturbance of the habitats and species which have colonised disused railway lines.
2. Road development along the line of disused railways.
3. A number of planning applications have been made to the Council to landfill disused railway cuttings. Some of these have been refused on biodiversity grounds.

Current Action

1. The Council's Countryside Service currently manages a considerable length of disused railway lines within Key Countryside Sites.
2. The Llwydcoed to Cwmbach Key Countryside Site, which includes a disused railway line, is currently being considered as a potential Local Nature Reserve.
3. Sustrans owns a number of disused railways in RCT and is actively pursuing the adoption of more disused lines as cycle track.
4. The National Cycle Network includes sections of disused railway line in RCT.
5. Groundwork Merthyr and RCT are also actively involved in cycle track development and management (Taff Trail and Cynon Trail).
6. A number of sections of disused railway line have been identified as pSINC.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Through the Countryside Service, continue to provide biodiversity management and enhancement of Council-owned disused railway lines.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>2: Seek to designate disused railway lines of biodiversity significance as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: Where appropriate, continue to require survey and assessment work for all planning applications which impact upon disused railway lines.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Encourage Sustrans to include biodiversity in management plans for their disused railway corridors.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Sustrans Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh

Current Status

As its title suggests, this Action Plan refers to the seasonally (primarily winter) flooded grasslands of coastal and river floodplains. There is obviously no coastal grassland in the County Borough, but there are still important relics of riverside floodplain. Periodically enriched with riverine silt, these grasslands were traditionally valued as lush summer grazing. Nationally very little species-rich floodplain grassland remains. Most has been agriculturally improved and in the valleys of south Wales much has been lost to employment, road and residential development.

Within south Wales unimproved floodplain sites are now very rare. In RCT only a tiny fragment of the original floodplain marsh is left and this is highly vulnerable to development pressure. However the County Borough still supports a network of species-rich and diverse sites. The best examples support intricate mosaics of dry and wet grassland, swamp and willow scrub and overgrown ditches. Particularly important floodplain marsh occurs on the River Ely catchment at Pant Marsh, Pontyclun and Llantwit Fardre Marsh and within the floodplain of the River Cynon between Penywaun and Mountain Ash.

Threats

1. Flood defence engineering.
2. Agricultural improvement and decline of traditional management.
3. Management neglect.
4. Industrialisation, road construction and urbanisation.
5. Changes in water level management, stemming from cessation of traditional farming practices.
6. Secondary threats; groundwater abstraction, land drainage, pollution, landfill and aggregate abstraction.

Current Action

1. Over 50% of the coastal and floodplain grazing marsh in Glamorgan is designated as SSSI; however no floodplain in RCT is notified as SSSI.
2. Pant Marsh, Pontyclun, Llantwit Fardre Marsh and the Upper and Mid Cynon Valley floodplains are pSINC.
3. The Cynon River Park (as identified in the Cynon Valley Local Plan) offers opportunities for the conservation and enhancement of the floodplain.
4. It is possible that farms with floodplain marsh may enter into Tir Gofal.
5. Welsh Water Dwr Cymru has commissioned a feasibility study into the enhancement of a small, but important area of floodplain on the River Taff at Cilfyndd Sewage Treatment Works.
6. CCW has commissioned a desk study review of the coastal and floodplain marsh resource in Wales.
7. The Penywaun Community Association owns a section of the Upper Cynon Floodplain pSINC and is reviewing options for positive management.

Lowland meadows

Current Status

The image of a traditionally managed hay meadow in mid June, awash with colour and alive with insects holds an important place in the national psyche. Once common, the agricultural mainstay of much of lowland Britain, species-rich neutral grasslands are now very rare.

In south Wales, the great majority of the species-rich neutral grassland is old pasture land, grazed by cattle, horses and sometimes sheep. There are also some remaining unimproved hay meadows. Lowland meadows are permanent grasslands, which for generations have been managed for livestock or hay production and have not received intensive fertiliser or herbicide application. The relatively low nutrient status of the soil and traditional management techniques allow a wide diversity of flowering plants and bryophytes to co-exist. Low intensity, traditional management is key to the survival of these floristically diverse grasslands. The agricultural advances of the last fifty years in grassland management has directly led to the loss of virtually all of the resource. Today, those grasslands which have survived are a relic of pre-war British agriculture. Between 1930 and 1997 it is estimated that a 97% loss in semi-natural lowland grassland occurred in England and Wales. Today less than 2000 ha is thought to remain in Wales.

The National lowland meadow Action Plan refers primarily to one National Vegetation Classification community: black knapweed and crested dog's-tail mesotrophic grassland MG5. MG5 is now a very rare grassland community which in global terms is largely restricted to the British Isles. This LBAP also includes the closely related rye grass and crested dog's-tail mesotrophic grassland MG6. MG6 is generally considered to have been derived from MG5 through moderate levels of agricultural improvement. Although relatively widespread, the LBAP only includes the least improved forms of MG6, in which hay meadow herbs such as bird's-foot trefoil, black knapweed and hay rattle are at least locally frequent.

The CCW Phase I Habitat Survey in Mid and South Glamorgan made clear distinction between the relatively unmodified semi-improved neutral grassland (MG5 and most species-rich MG6) and other forms of semi-improved neutral grassland. 487 ha of relatively unmodified good quality semi-improved neutral grassland (which equates to MG5 and good MG6) was mapped by CCW Phase I. It is almost completely restricted to the lowlands and the more nutrient-rich, deeper neutral soils. In the south of the County Borough (the so-called Border-Vale) it occurs in approximately half of all tetrads. In the north of the County Borough it is restricted to valley bottoms, although regionally important areas occur in both the Cynon and Taff valleys. The habitat is extremely rare throughout the Rhondda.

It is clear that at something close to 500 ha, Glamorgan supports a nationally significant area of lowland meadow. This represents a quarter of the total figure for Wales and 3-5 % of the estimated UK area of species-rich neutral grassland. The conservation of this resource is clearly of national and international significance. RCT has a responsibility for this habitat resource in both a regional and national context.

Threats

1. Industrial and residential development (including a number of important sites which have long-term development allocations in Local Plans and stand to be lost over the next 5 years).
2. Agricultural improvement (draining, infilling and re-seeding) and change (from hay to silage production and spring/summer grazing).
3. Opencast coal mining.
4. Land reclamation schemes.
5. Landfill operations.
6. Road development.
7. Commercial forestry.
8. Grant-aided woodland planting.
9. Cessation of traditional cutting and grazing regimes (potential knock-on from BSE crisis).
10. Over-grazing.
11. The widely held conviction amongst land owners that unimproved pasture is unproductive and of little agricultural value (reinforced by the lack of a site-targeted grant-aid scheme in Wales).
12. Lack of awareness of the significance of hay meadows and old pasture, particularly within planning authorities, farmers, statutory landowners, managers and government bodies.
13. Planning developments which affect species-rich grasslands are increasingly being supported by expensive 'habitat translocation' proposals which ultimately will be proved unsuccessful. The concept undermines the very principles on which nature conservation is based and is a very serious threat to biodiversity conservation throughout south Wales.

Actions	Timescale
<p>7: Continue to raise awareness of the significance of lowland hay meadows and old pastures at all levels; agricultural, business, government (local and central) and the general public.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>8: Investigate at a regional level if species-rich 'ragwort-free' hay, harvested from pSINC can be used as traditional horse feed and marketed as such. Target pony clubs, riding clubs and studs.</p> <p>Organisations British Horse Society Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2002
<p>9: Through the Old Meadows and Pastures Biodiversity Briefing Note, promote compliance with good management practice on horse-grazed pastures.</p> <p>Organisations British Horse Society Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2002
<p>10: Identify the current 'baseline' area of lowland meadow in positive conservation management in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales National Assembly for Wales Agriculture Department Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>11. Seek to designate all important lowland meadows as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify landowners.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004

Calcareous grassland

Current Status

Calcareous grasslands are a floristically diverse and species-rich habitat. They are restricted in Glamorgan to the northern and coastal limestone. Where the limestone is exposed, or lies close to the surface, the flora is strongly influenced and supports characteristic calcareous species which are absent from the great majority of acidic soils.

In the part of RCT covered by this LBAP, no primary calcareous grassland has survived. However 'secondary' calcareous grassland occasionally develops (from the seed bank) where limestone is exposed by road cuttings or quarry operations. Although these calcareous grasslands rarely 'fit' a recognised vegetation community type, they are often species-rich, supporting species such as cowslip, salad burnet, kidney vetch and bee orchid. Calcareous grassland is particularly important for invertebrates. Key species include the small blue butterfly and glow-worm.

None of the secondary calcareous grassland resource is formally managed and many sites have scrub encroachment. On such sites, remnant areas of open lawn are maintained by rabbit grazing. The CCW Phase I Habitat Survey confirms the scarcity of calcareous grassland. In mid and south Glamorgan 55 ha of unimproved and 130 ha of semi-improved were recorded. In the area covered by this Action Plan, no primary calcareous grassland remains. However a number of important secondary sites occur and these are designated as pSINC.

The conservation of calcareous grassland is a biodiversity priority. The conservation strategy for this habitat type should be integrated with the objectives and targets of lowland hay meadow and old pasture, and lowland acid grassland BAPs.

Threats

1. Quarrying operations.
2. Residential development.
3. Agricultural Improvement.
4. Land reclamation schemes.
5. Landfill operations.
6. Road development.
7. Commercial forestry.
8. Cessation of traditional cutting and grazing regimes (potential knock-on from BSE crisis).
9. Over-grazing, in particular horse and sheep.
10. A conviction amongst some land owners that calcareous grassland is unproductive and of limited value or merit (reinforced by the lack of a site-targeted grant-aid scheme in Wales).
11. Lack of awareness of the significance of calcareous grasslands, particularly within planning authorities, and by farmers, statutory landowners, managers and government bodies.
12. Planning developments which affect species-rich grasslands are increasingly being supported by 'habitat translocation' proposals. This is a very serious problem for nature conservation throughout south Wales.

Current Action

1. Tir Gofal may include some calcareous grassland.
2. CCW have completed a Phase I Habitat Survey for Glamorgan and a detailed Phase II Survey of many important species-rich grassland sites. As a result there is a very good understanding of the floristic identity of Glamorgan's grassland.
3. Calcareous and secondary calcareous grassland are SINC selection criteria.
4. Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC have produced a draft Biodiversity Briefing Note called Hay Meadows and Old Pastures designed to raise awareness of the habitat amongst decision makers, planners and the general public.
5. The A4119 Key Countryside Site supports areas of secondary calcareous grassland.
6. Two working quarries (Hendy and Forest-wood) support areas of secondary calcareous grassland. As part of the long-term restoration strategies for these sites, the maintenance and encouragement of areas of calcareous grassland is a key biodiversity objective of the Local Authority.

Actions	Timescale
<p>10: Through a Heritage Lottery Fund bid, or through other funding sources, develop an agri-environmental grant scheme for SINC. Model on Coed Cymru, including development of a sustainable market for biodiversity products.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Lead Partner Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	2001
<p>11: Promote compliance with good management practice on horse-grazed pastures (see English Nature and Horse Society Publication). Develop a Glamorgan initiative with BHS and individual pony clubs and societies.</p> <p>Organisations British Horse Society Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Lead Partner Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	2002
<p>12: Promote best practice methodology for quarries and road schemes to encourage the development of species-rich grassland.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>13: Pursue the conservation and enhancement of secondary calcareous grassland on existing limestone quarries in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>14: Seek to designate all important calcareous grassland as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify landowners.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004

Lowland dry acid grassland

Current Status

Although upland acid grassland is one of the main habitat types of the un-enclosed mountains of the Glamorgan uplands, lowland acid grassland is a very much rarer and more restricted grassland type. Restricted to acid soils on enclosed, traditionally-managed valley sides, these acid soil versions of hay meadow and old pasture are every bit as precious and endangered as their species-rich neutral grassland counterparts. In National Vegetation Classification terms, the key lowland acid grassland community is sheep's fescue-common bent-heath bedstraw acid grassland U4. In its classic lowland form this is a species-rich, diverse grassland of very high biodiversity significance.

Lowland acid grasslands are permanent pastures which have been traditionally managed for generations, either for livestock or hay production. Their diversity is based upon low nutrient status and low intensity management. Less than 30,000 ha of lowland acid grassland remains in the UK. As with lowland meadow, the agricultural advances in grassland management, over the last fifty years, have led to the loss of the resource. This has been compounded in south Wales by the effects of both over-grazing by sheep and agricultural abandonment. CCW Phase I Habitat Survey of Glamorgan differentiated between unimproved lowland acid grassland and semi-improved acid grassland. Unimproved acid grassland equates to the target for this Action Plan, e.g. the lowland forms of U4. The survey recorded 700 ha of lowland unimproved acid grassland in Mid and South Glamorgan. Glamorgan as a whole supports approximately 1000 ha of lowland acid grassland, with a significant proportion of this in RCT.

The conservation strategy for this habitat type should be integrated with the objectives and targets of lowland meadow.

Threats

1. Residential development.
2. Agricultural improvement (draining, infilling and re-seeding) and change (from hay to silage production and spring/summer grazing).
3. Opencast coal mining.
4. Land reclamation schemes.
5. Landfill operations.
6. Road development.
7. Commercial forestry.
8. Grant-aided woodland planting.
9. Cessation of traditional cutting and grazing regimes (potential knock-on from BSE crisis).
10. Over-grazing.
11. The widely held conviction amongst land owners, that unimproved pasture is unproductive and of little agricultural value (reinforced by the lack of a site targeted grant-aid scheme in Wales).
12. Lack of awareness of the significance of lowland acid grassland, particularly within planning authorities, and by farmers, statutory landowners, managers and government bodies.
13. Planning developments which affect species-rich grasslands are increasingly being supported by 'habitat translocation' proposals. This is a very serious problem for nature conservation throughout south Wales.

Current Action

1. In RCT a number of SSSI support areas of acid grassland.
2. The former Habitat Scheme administered by FRCA was targeted at species-rich grassland.
3. Tir Gofal may include some areas of lowland acid grassland.
4. CCW has completed a Phase I Habitat Survey for Glamorgan and a detailed Phase II survey of many important species-rich grassland sites. As a result there is a very good understanding of the floristic identity of Glamorgan's grassland.
5. Sites supporting species-rich lowland acid grassland have been identified as pSINC.
6. Environmental policies in Structure Plan and Local Plans offer a degree of protection for acid grassland.
7. Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC have produced a draft Biodiversity Briefing Note called 'Hay Meadows and Old Pastures' designed to raise awareness of the habitat amongst decision makers, planners and the general public.
8. A number of Key Countryside Sites managed by the Council's Countryside Service support lowland acid grassland. Enclosures at Glyncomel LNR are hay-cut every summer.

Actions	Timescale
<p>9: Through the Old Meadows and Pastures Biodiversity Briefing Note, promote compliance with good management practice on horse-grazed pasture.</p> <p>Organisations British Horse Society Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2002
<p>10: Identify the current 'baseline' area of lowland dry acid grassland in positive conservation management in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>11: Seek to designate all important lowland dry acid grassland as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify landowners.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004

Heathland (upland and lowland)

Current Status

Heathland includes a variety of vegetation types in which low-growing ericaceous shrubs dominate. Dry heath occur on free-draining acid soils, characterised by heather, bell heath, bilberry and western gorse. On water-logged ground wet heath is typical, with cross-leaved heath, deer grass, sphagnum mosses, cotton-grasses and sundew. In many locations these heathland communities form complex habitat mosaics with purple-moor grass, acid and neutral grassland and bracken. Many rhos pastures (see purple moor-grass and rush pasture LBAP) support significant proportions of wet and dry heath. Heathland is also an important element of the ffridd (see LBAP) and re-vegetated coal-spoil sites (see LBAP).

Lowland heathland and upland heathland are afforded separate National Biodiversity Action Plans. The 300m contour is generally considered to be the boundary between the two habitat types. In general terms, upland heath is less diverse and encompasses large areas of un-enclosed mountainside. However, in Glamorgan the oceanic climate means that clear distinction between lowland and upland heath cannot be made, therefore heathland as a whole is covered by this Plan.

Heathland is a scarce and declining habitat in Europe. About one-fifth of the world's total area of lowland heathland occurs in Britain and Ireland. The total area of lowland heathland in the UK is approximately 58,000 ha, of which approximately 7,000 ha occurs in Wales. CCW Phase I Habitat Survey data has recorded over 1200 ha of lowland heathland vegetation in Mid and South Glamorgan. The great majority of this resource occurs in the Valleys and upland fringe of Mid Glamorgan. Rhondda Cynon Taff supports over 400 hectares of lowland heathland vegetation. A currently unknown area of habitat occurs above the enclosure wall. The significance of heathland in mid Glamorgan is not currently reflected in national heathlands strategies. In Wales only the coastal heathlands of West Glamorgan, Gwynedd, Anglesey and Pembrokeshire are nationally recognised. The recognition of the regional and national significance of the Mid Glamorgan heathlands (including the ffridd, rhos pasture and re-vegetated coal-spoil) is urgently needed to ensure that national biodiversity objectives do not exclude this important resource.

Threats

1. Lack of adequate survey information and strategic assessment of south Wales valleys resource.
2. Lack of management.
3. Agricultural improvement.
4. Inappropriate management, including uncontrolled burning (in early spring) and over-grazing by sheep.
5. Development, especially for roads, minerals, housing and associated infrastructure.
6. Recreational pressures e.g. golf course creation, motorbike scrambling and a lack of public awareness.
7. Fly-tipping, vandalism and burning are problems, particularly on some urban heathlands.
8. At a strategic level there is very little conservation effort directed toward the heathland resource in RCT or the wider south Wales valleys.
9. Inappropriate tree planting, forestry and amenity woodland creation.

Current Action

1. Heathland is a SINC selection feature and all known heathland sites are pSINC.
2. The RSPB have an on-going heathland regeneration programme operating in Wales. This is designed to restore heath and link up heathland blocks. The heathlands of the south Wales valleys however are not currently targeted.
3. As part of mitigation for extension of the tipping area at Tower Colliery, a small area of upland grassland will be fenced off and monitored. The intention is to restore an area of heath and monitor the progress of the restoration.
4. Small areas of heathland are included within a number of Key Countryside Sites managed by the Council's Countryside Service.
5. The restoration of the Bryn Pica landfill site in the Cynon Valley has been conditioned to include heathland creation.
6. The South Wales Police will take action against illegal off-road motorcycle scrambling and have a role in raising awareness and criminal damage from fires.
7. Heathland may be included in Tir Gofal.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate all important heathland as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify landowners.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Make representations during review of the Common Agricultural Policy to encourage payment for positive management of heathland.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: Integrate heathland conservation into forestry plans.</p> <p>Organisations Forest Enterprise Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: As and when opportunities arise, promote the regional/national biodiversity significance of heathland in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>5: Support the Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group's Biodiversity Action Plan for Lowland heathland.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Environment Agency Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>6: Through every available means, attempt to protect the remaining resource of heathland in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>7: Review the likelihood of extending detailed heathland assessment into the south Wales valleys.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>8: Appropriately manage heathland on all Council owned Key Countryside Sites through the Council's Countryside Service.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>9: Identify all Council owned heathlands.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001

Actions	Timescale
<p>10: Identify the current 'baseline' area of heathland in positive conservation management in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001

Coal spoil

Current Status

Coal spoil tips are an industrial and cultural legacy from the south Wales coal industry. During the hey-day of the mines, coal spoil tips were a black scar on the valley side. As a belated reaction to the Aberfan disaster, the Coal Board, the WDA and Local Authorities removed and reclaimed all of the remaining dangerous coal tips. The remaining tips are generally stable and after years of natural regeneration many support habitat of considerable local biodiversity value.

Acid grassland, heath and gorse have gradually colonised and softened the coal spoil of the valleys. On longer established sites, woodland has naturally established and areas of wetland have developed at the foot of some tips. Tips are also important for their lichens, mosses and liverworts, rare plants (e.g. stag's-horn clubmoss) and locally distinctive alien plant species (including yellow-flowered small cudweed and pearly everlasting). Many coal spoil tips are important as refuges of ffridd and heathland fauna, with grayling butterfly, slow worm and stonechat being characteristic species.

The biodiversity and cultural historic importance of coal spoil is sometimes at odds with a desire to sweep away reminders of an industrial past. Land reclamation schemes threaten a number of important sites. The challenge for this Action Plan is to raise awareness of the significance of coal spoil for the biodiversity of the valleys and encourage their conservation, whilst promoting informal enjoyment by the general public.

Threats

1. Land reclamation schemes are the principal threat to the vegetated coal spoil resource.
2. Coal spoil is blended with good quality coal from Tower Colliery for use in the coal-fired power station at Aberthaw. No strategic targeting of potential coal spoil sources has been made. As a result, private developers acquire coal spoil sites and seek planning permission to excavate the spoil. At least one well vegetated site has been lost in this manner and more could potentially be affected. This is a major concern in the strategic conservation of well established, re-vegetated coal spoil sites.
3. Forestry planting is a potential threat to coal spoil sites.
4. Anti-coal spoil sentiment is an obvious problem for the conservation of the resource.

Current Action

1. A number of coal spoil sites are identified as pSINC, either as individual sites or as larger ffridd designations.
2. Land reclamation schemes now require ecological assessments to be undertaken and, if necessary, mitigation to be employed.
3. The Craig-yr-Hesg proposed Local Nature Reserve, Pontypridd supports a small area of re-vegetating coal spoil. This is in various stages of colonisation and offers a good educational example of the successional nature of coal spoil heaps.
4. RCT have produced a Coal Spoil Biodiversity Briefing Note, which summarises and highlights issues associated with the habitat.

Actions	Timescale
<p>4: As opportunities arise, investigate the opportunity for re-instating cattle grazing on ffridd and bracken slope sites, as a means for enhancing biodiversity and reducing bracken depth.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>5: Seek to designate all important ffridd/bracken slopes as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004

Purple moor-grass and rush pasture (rhos pasture)

Current Status

Within RCT, wet, marshy grassland is one of the most characteristic and important habitat types. The great majority of this grassland falls within a broad classification 'purple moor-grass and rush pasture' which in Wales is commonly referred to as 'rhos' pasture. Rhos pasture is the characteristic grassland of wet, acid to neutral, generally poorly drained and nutrient-poor soils (and characteristic of the south Wales coalfield). In RCT, rhos pasture occupies low lying valley bottoms, hillsides and commons (particularly those linked to the coalfield geology). They support a characteristic and species-rich flora and fauna and represent one of the most significant biodiversity resources in south Wales. The British Isles supports a substantial proportion of world resource of purple moor-grass and rush pasture. Glamorgan supports around 5-10% of the UK habitat resource and at 1,500 hectares, RCT supports between 1.5 and 3% of the UK resource. Some forms of rhos pasture are recognised as a European Priority within the EC Habitats Directive. As a result a small number of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) have been designated in Wales to protect the best examples.

The nature conservation significance of rhos pasture has only very recently been recognised. Considerable areas of rhos pasture have been lost to agricultural improvement and urban and industrial development. These losses have accelerated since the 1960s and remaining areas of rhos pasture are becoming increasingly fragmented. Although still an integral element of the County Borough's biodiversity, urgent and innovative action is required if the wider biodiversity resource is to be maintained outside of statutorily protected sites. The decline of the culm grasslands (the Devonian name for purple moor-grass and rush pasture) of Devon and Cornwall (48% loss of the entire resource between 1984 and 1991) is a salutary lesson for nature conservation in RCT and the whole of south Wales.

A variety of types of rhos pasture can be recognised in RCT. These different types of habitat can be classified into a number of different vegetation communities (see Appendix 4). In addition, the complex habitat mosaics which comprise rhos pasture sites often also support wet heath, and dry acid and neutral grassland. The fauna of rhos pasture is nationally renowned and includes the marsh fritillary butterfly. Outside of the Brecon Beacons National Park, RCT has only one rhos pasture SSSI, Llantrisant Common. The rhos pastures of south Wales are a national treasure for which RCT has a significant national responsibility.

Threats

1. Industrial and residential development (including a number of important sites which have long term development allocations in Local Plans and stand to be lost over the next 5 years).
2. Agricultural improvement and land drainage.
3. Opencast coal mining.
4. Land Reclamation Schemes sometimes affect associated purple moor-grass and rush pasture which are used as 'waste' ground onto which coal spoil is tipped.
5. Landfill operations.
6. Road development.
7. Commercial forestry.
8. The widely held conviction amongst land owners that rhos pasture is wasteland, of no value or merit.

9. Grant aided woodland planting on rhos pastures.
10. Cessation of grazing (potential knock-on from BSE crisis).
11. Over-grazing / over-burning.
12. Lack of awareness of the significance of rhos pastures, particularly amongst decision makers.
13. There is a lack of statutory site protection in RCT. The SSSI series which CCW operates can only protect a small proportion of the total area of high quality rhos pasture. The remainder have to make do with the limited protection afforded by pSINC and SINC designation.

Current Action

1. The Agri-environment scheme Tir Gofal will bring areas of rhos pasture into positive management, but this cannot be targeted and cannot be used to set targets for rhos pasture conservation or target vulnerable sites. It is also only available to registered farmers and is not eligible to land holdings of under 3 hectares in size. Much of the rhos pasture in RCT is therefore not eligible for Tir Gofal.
2. All species-rich or large rhos pasture sites are identified as proposed Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (pSINC).
3. Full statutory protection for marsh fritillary under the Wildlife and Countryside Act should, by inference, lead to protection of important sites. Butterfly Conservation’s ‘Butterfly Action Plan for Wales’ provides some framework for identifying important sites on the basis of their butterfly fauna (marsh fritillary and small pearl-bordered fritillary are particularly relevant).
4. Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC have produced and circulated a rhos pasture Biodiversity Briefing Note, designed to raise awareness of the habitat amongst decision makers, planners and professional advisors.
5. The RCT Countryside Service manages a number of small, but species-rich areas of rhos pasture on Key Countryside Sites.
6. RCT Countryside Service operates an alpine hay cutter and bailer specifically to cut small rhos pastures which cannot be grazed.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: As and when opportunities arise, continue to develop a network of managed purple moor-grass and rush pastures across RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>2: Through every available means, attempt to protect the remaining resource of rhos pasture from loss.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: Lobby for site specific grant-aid.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Support the Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group’s Regional Action Plan for Purple moor-grass and rush pasture.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>5: Continue to develop the RCT Countryside Service’s capabilities to manage rhos pasture in Council ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Actions	Timescale
<p>6: Investigate the feasibility of a cattle grazing unit to be used to manage medium and large rhos pasture sites. This may need to be on a sub-regional or even regional basis. Arrange an initial meeting of potential key partners.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Lead Partner Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	2002
<p>7: As and when opportunities arise, continue to raise awareness of the significance of rhos pasture at all levels; agricultural, business, government (local and central) and the general public.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>8: Where opportunities exist on Council owned land, increase the viable area of species-rich rhos pasture through the positive management of species-poor or unmanaged rhos pasture on adjacent land.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>9: Seek to designate species-rich and large purple moor-grass and rush pastures as SINC, as part of the UDP process, and identify landowners.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>10: Identify the current 'baseline' area of purple moor-grass and rush pasture in positive conservation management in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001

Fens / Swamp

Current Status

Fens are wetland sites which depend upon ground water and/or inputs from watercourses. Fens generally occur on more than 0.5 m of peat, often in natural depressions. A distinction can be made between fens in which the dominant plane of water movement is vertical (topogenous) and those in which it is lateral (soligenous). Three main types of fen can be identified and these depend upon topographic rather than vegetation 'criteria'. These are valley mire, basin mire and flood-plain mire. Valley and basin mires are generally upland features and support a variety of bog and rhos pasture vegetation (see also Raised and blanket bog Action Plan). Un-degraded valley and basin mires are now very rare habitats in south Wales. RCT supports regionally important areas of valley mire. The CCW Phase I Habitat Survey recorded only 110 hectares of lowland valley and basin mire in the RCT LBAP area.

Floodplain mires tend to be lowland features and due to flooding are generally more nutrient-enriched. Floodplain mires usually support vegetation dominated by a few species of tall emergent plants, which in the CCW Phase I Habitat Survey is termed swamp (see also Reedbed Action Plan). Swamp is a classic floodplain wetland habitat. The CCW Phase I Habitat Survey mapped flood-plain mire and swamp as a combined swamp habitat and found less than 50 ha in Mid and South Glamorgan. Although not all swamp is flood-plain mire, both wetland habitats are similar, rare and declining in RCT and they are therefore considered together in this Action Plan. Only 8 hectares of swamp was recorded in the RCT LBAP area by the CCW Phase I Habitat Survey.

RCT supports a significant proportion of the Mid Glamorgan area of habitat, although there are no fen or swamp SSSI. Areas of valley mire are mostly restricted to the northern upland fringe. A very important concentration of valley mire habitat occurs in the Hirwaun area. Areas of swamp are genuinely lowland features and occur as small (usually less than 1 ha) sites often closely associated with floodplains. Important sites include Pant Marsh and Coedcae Marsh at Llantrisant, Jubilee Marsh at Llanharan and at Hirwaun Ponds. Currently it is not known how much true flood-plain mire occurs in RCT.

Fens and swamp are important for their associated flora and as habitat for aquatic invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles and birds.

Threats

1. Loss due to drainage and change of landuse to intensive agricultural production.
2. Development of lowland, greenfield sites for employment and residential development.
3. Water abstraction from aquifers causing reductions in the water flow from spring lines.
4. River canalisation and flood defence works lowering water table.
5. Lack of management of existing fens and swamps resulting in drying, scrub invasion and succession to woodland.
6. Susceptibility to agricultural run-off and afforestation within the catchment, leading to nutrient enrichment and subsequent change in the plant communities.

Current Action

1. A national database of fen sites (FenBASE) is in preparation by CCW and is due for completion in 2000.
2. Fens and swamp are SINC selection features.
3. Tir Gofal may offer a very limited opportunity to promote fen and swamp conservation.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Through all available means, attempt to protect the existing fen and swamp resource in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>2: Seek to designate all species-rich or large RCT fen and swamp sites as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify landowners.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: Manage RCT-owned fen and swamp sites. Initially identify all swamp on RCT Key Countryside Sites.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>4: Where opportunities arise, encourage the restoration of fen and swamp habitats and the creation of new habitat at appropriate locations.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Environment Agency Groundwork Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>5: Support the Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group's Regional Action Plan for Fens.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Environment Agency Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>6: Identify the current 'baseline' area of fen and swamp in positive conservation management in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001

Actions	Timescale
<p>4: As and when opportunities arise through the planning process, create small reedbeds as habitat and pollution controls.</p> <p>Organisations Dwr Cymru Welsh Water Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>5: Identify the current 'baseline' area of reedbed in positive conservation management in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001

Raised bog and Blanket bog

Current Status

Peat bogs are one of the characteristic and internationally significant habitats of the United Kingdom. These are generally ombrotrophic features (rain-fed) deriving their mineral nutrients principally from rainfall. They are therefore restricted to humid, oceanic climates. The west coast of the British Isles represents ideal conditions. Sphagnum moss forms a major component of the vegetation. As sphagnum dies, it gradually decomposes into peat. As a very rough rule of thumb, every 1 metre of depth of peat equates to a thousand years. Deep peat sites are habitats of great antiquity and many were formed at the end of the last Ice Age.

Two types of ombrotrophic bog occur; raised and blanket. As defined in the Joint Nature Conservation Committee report 'Guidelines for selection of biological SSSIs: bogs, a raised bog 'is characteristic of relatively flat underlying topography or basins, and so found mainly on low plains or broad valleys'. Blanket bogs are not restricted to level sites or basins. They are bogs which form 'a blanket over both concave and convex surface, on level to moderately sloping ground in the uplands'.

Although relatively species-poor, the flora of upland bogs is very special and characteristic. It includes a range of sphagnum moss species, cotton grasses, cross-leaved heath, deer-grass, bog ashodel and sundews. Upland bogs support important breeding bird populations. In RCT uncommon breeding birds such as snipe, curlew and lapwing occur on bog sites.

The denudation of British peat bogs through peat extraction, forestry and drainage is well documented. RCT is at the southern edge of the upland peat bog range in Wales.

Threats

1. Land drainage.
2. Afforestation has occurred on a considerable proportion of the RCT uplands. Large areas of original blanket bog are likely to have been adversely affected.
3. In national terms commercial peat extraction is a major problem. No commercial extraction occurs in RCT, although some small-scale domestic extraction may occur.
4. Over-grazing by sheep is an ever-present problem in the uplands of RCT. This can have extremely deleterious impacts for large tracts of bog.
5. Ombrogenous bogs in lowland position have suffered from industrial development.
6. In the past, areas of bog are likely to have been affected by coal spoil deposition and land reclamation schemes.
7. Although, during the mid 1980's the Welsh Upland survey included considerable parts of the uplands of RCT, a detailed appraisal of the upland peat bog resource is long overdue.

Current Action

1. Raised and blanket bogs are key selection features for SINC designation.
2. The Planning Authority is aware of the significance of upland bogs and through the planning process will look to protect and conserve sites under development pressure. Recent schemes including Parc Eirin, Tonyrefail and a power-line diversion have been amended to avoid upland peat-land areas.
3. RCT CBC have a non-peat use policy.
4. Bogs may be included in Tir Gofal.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate all unmodified (or relatively intact) raised and blanket bogs as SINC.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Encourage forest managers to respect upland peat bogs in their planting regimes and to release peatland areas from forestry after harvesting existing crops.</p> <p>Organisations Forest Enterprise Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: Where opportunities arise, lobby the National Assembly for Wales, UK Government and European Community to instate agri-environment mechanisms to reduce sheep stocking levels on upland areas, including peat bogs.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Lobby for further strategic survey and assessment work in the uplands of RCT to better establish the status of the upland peat bog resource.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>5: Identify the current 'baseline' area of raised bog and blanket bog in positive conservation management in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Forest Enterprise National Assembly for Wales Agriculture Department Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>6: Investigate the opportunities for community composting and anaerobic digestion facilities to reduce demand for peat.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004

Standing open water / Ponds

Current Status

Still water habitats support a characteristic range of aquatic and wetland flora and fauna. Oligotrophic (nutrient-poor) waters account for the great majority of the water-bodies in RCT. These often acidic water-bodies encompass a wide range of habitat types, including small flooded mine workings, peaty upland pools, land reclamation lakes and upland reservoirs (such as Llyn Fawr and Twyn Rhondda Fach). Upland water-bodies are generally of low productivity, with relatively species-poor flora. However the flora can include characteristic species such as quillwort (restricted in Glamorgan to Llyn Fawr and Llyn Fach), alternate water-milfoil, bog pondweed and marsh St. John's-wort. Upland dragonflies and damselflies flourish in acid pools and lakes. The scarce blue-tailed damselfly, black darter, common hawkler and keeled skimmer are characteristic upland pool species. In RCT, oligotrophic water-bodies support important amphibian populations. Palmate newt and frog are very common. Great crested newt have been recorded on one oligotrophic, peat-based wetland site. Further upland sites, and in particular flooded mine workings (occurring in similar sites in Merthyr), have a high potential for this statutorily protected species (See Great crested newt Biodiversity Action Plan).

In contrast, nutrient-rich (mesotrophic and eutrophic) water bodies are less common and are restricted to lowland areas. These more productive water-bodies can support dense fringes of swamp vegetation and more diverse aquatic floras. Floating, curled and Canadian pondweed are important aquatic species. Diverse dragonfly communities can include upwards of ten species and nesting birds such as coot, moorhen and little grebe occur. Great crested newt have recently been discovered in pools at a landfill site in the Llantrisant area.

Very little survey work has been undertaken on the ponds and lakes of RCT and the biodiversity significance of the resource is still not well understood. There is a need for strategic survey work to allow the significance of pools and lakes in RCT to be put into a local and regional context.

Threats

1. Agricultural infilling has been responsible for the loss of many farmland ponds and pools.
2. Industrial and residential development has led to the loss or compromising of urban fringe pools and ponds.
3. Land-fill schemes continue to threaten the remaining pond resource.
4. Rubbish tipping.
5. Pollution (including mine water seepage and historical chemical dumping) is an on-going problem on many sites.
6. Lack of management threatens many sites.
7. Occasionally over-enthusiastic management can destroy marginal and shallow water-features of biodiversity value.

Current Action

1. Ponds and lakes are SINC selection criteria.
2. Key flora and fauna (including amphibian and dragonfly assemblages) are SINC selection features.
3. The planning process recognises water-bodies as important wildlife features and assessment and mitigation is required for schemes affecting these habitats. As a result a number of ponds have now received some assessment work and some SINC sites have been identified.
4. The Council manages a number of man-made ponds/lakes e.g. Dare Valley Country Park, Glyncornel and Clydach Vale. This management, although primarily for amenity (including some angling), is benefiting biodiversity both incidentally (cutting of excessive pondweed) and directly (establishing of emergent vegetation).
5. Ponds may be included in Tir Gofal.
6. A wide range of guidance is available on pond creation and management for schools (for example Learning Through Landscapes Trust, and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust/WATCH/Shell Better Britain).

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Continue to manage council-owned and controlled waterbodies, and their surrounds, sensitively. Target 'Key Countryside Sites' and develop management plans and work programmes.</p> <p>Organisations Groundwork Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>2: Undertake a pond survey, based upon the Cardiff County Council survey. Provide a census of ponds and lakes in RCT, with assessment of the floristic and faunistic value.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2003
<p>3: Seek to protect as SINC all species-rich ponds and lakes as defined by the SINC selection criteria.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>4: Through the planning process, require ecological surveys for all developments affecting standing open water or ponds.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>5: Promote pond creation and management in school grounds.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2003
<p>6: Identify the current 'baseline' area of standing water/ponds in positive conservation management in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Environment Agency Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust National Assembly for Wales Agriculture Department Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>7: Through the Council's Countryside Service continue to provide appropriate vegetation management for ponds within Key Countryside Sites.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Rivers and streams

Current Status

The rivers and streams of Rhondda Cynon Taff are fundamental and integral to the biodiversity of the whole area. The area has a rich and intricate network of rivers, streams and issues. These range from narrow, deeply incised upland streams feeding the fast flowing Rhondda and upland Taff and Cynon, through to gentle lowland streams and issues, and the winding lowland sections of the Cynon, Taff and Ely. The range of habitats supports a characteristic riparian flora and fauna. This network functions as a corridor for wildlife movement throughout the Borough, linking wetland sites and bringing wildlife into the heart of our urban centres. Rivers and streams also provide important corridors of wildlife movement across Unitary Authority boundaries, linking the biodiversity of Rhondda Cynon Taff with the rest of Glamorgan.

The recovery of the rivers and streams of RCT is one of the great environmental advances of the last twenty years. The industrial rivers and streams of the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries were highly polluted and biologically dead. The decline in heavy industry and the rise of stronger environmental legislation has directly resulted in the cleaning of the rivers and the return of flora and fauna.

The return of otter, dipper and salmon are heralded successes for the south Wales valleys. Rivers and streams are also widely appreciated by the general public. The beauty and biodiversity value of our major rivers is well understood by a sizeable proportion of the general public. The success of 'Afonydd Glan-Clean Rivers' River Care groups (under the umbrella of Keep Wales Tidy) is strong testimony to the growing reality of a shared responsibility for the health of the rivers and streams of Rhondda Cynon Taff.

Threats

1. Although much reduced, pollution from agricultural, industrial, road and urban sources is still an on-going concern for riparian ecology.
2. New road developments threaten to further disrupt the wildlife corridor function of a number of rivers and streams.
3. Despite flood implications, floodplain development is still progressing in RCT. This has potentially significant implications for increased riparian disturbance, loss of adjacent floodplain habitats and severance of wildlife corridors.
4. Bank protection schemes are often environmentally sterile. Efforts to enhance urban river sections also sometimes conflict with the requirements of EA land drainage officers. There is a strong feeling that environment enhancement opportunities may be lost or discouraged without proper consideration of biodiversity issues.
5. The Planning Department has received a number of landfill applications requesting the culverting and infilling of small valley-side streams and issues. While every effort is made to resist these, they are symptomatic of the pressures for land utilisation and rationalisation in this area.
6. River management systems (e.g. seasonal abstraction) can have major deleterious impacts on ecosystems and breeding cycles.
7. Riverbank habitat can be damaged by livestock trampling and disturbance.

Current Action

1. The Environment Agency has produced Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs) for all of the river catchments in RCT. These provide an excellent summary of the current status of river catchments and highlight actions for pollution control, environmental works etc.
2. Dwr Cymru Welsh Water is currently upgrading and modernising the storm water sewage outfalls within RCT. This process will reduce the sporadic sewage pollution which still occurs at times of high rainfall.
3. Keep Wales Tidy has established the 'Clean Rivers-Afonydd Glan' project in the early 1990's and an excellent network of River Care groups has been established (on the Rhondda, Cynon, Taff and Ewenny Fach). These groups were initially involved in litter clearance, but are increasingly widening their work programmes to include a variety of environmental projects.
4. River corridor surveys and mitigation (see otter and dipper SAPs) are increasingly required by the LA Planning Department for developments which affect rivers and streams.
5. Forest Enterprise has water guidelines and forest design plans (which include riparian zone management).
6. During 1999-2000 RCT CBC, Groundwork Merthyr and RCT and Keep Wales Tidy, with CCW grant aid, have undertaken three biodiversity training days (Working for Wildlife) with the local River Care Groups.
7. RCT CBC has produced a 'Rivers and Streams' Biodiversity Briefing Note, which summarises and highlights biodiversity issues associated with river corridors.

8. Part of the Rhondda River lies within the Glynconnel Local Nature Reserve and is under the management of the Council's Countryside Management Service.
9. Streams may be included in Tir Gofal.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Continue the 'Working for Wildlife' biodiversity training days.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Environment Agency Groundwork Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Continue to encourage the establishment of River Care groups on all main rivers in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Groundwork Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: Continue to require appropriate river mitigation measures for all developments affecting rivers and streams.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Seek to designate all rivers and streams which reach the required standard as SINC's, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>5: Continue to implement and monitor actions contained within Environment Agency's LEAPs.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>6: Using the RCT Biodiversity Briefing Note 'Rivers and Streams', continue to raise awareness of riparian biodiversity issues.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>7: RCT to supply Environment Agency with pSINC data to add to the Environment Agency's database.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>8: Within the UDP, seek to adopt best practice policy protection for rivers and streams.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>9: Continue to provide biodiversity management for rivers and streams on Key Countryside Sites through the Council's Countryside Service.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Crags and scree

Current Status

The valleys of south Wales have been formed and moulded by the rigours and forces of successive Ice Ages. The geomorphological and geological heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taff is immensely rich and varied and is inextricably linked with the County Borough's superb biodiversity. The crags and scree slopes of Rhondda Cynon Taff are glacial features and habitats of considerable biodiversity value at the southern extreme of their UK distribution.

Crags are often associated with the glacial cwms, where ice accumulated and the glaciers began their grinding journeys, gouging out the valleys. Crags with north-facing aspects are refuge for plant species and communities which were common immediately after the last Ice Age, but now are mainly associated with northern and/or alpine regions. For countless generations, the forebears of these plants have been stranded on the same cold sunless ledges, including species such as roseroot, oak fern, parsley fern and fir clubmoss. Crags also offer safe nesting sites for birds of prey (notably peregrine) and ravens. The Rhondda and Cynon have a succession of wonderful crags and cwms which form both landscape and biodiversity features of national significance.

Natural scree slopes can appear to be sterile habitats of little value. However, they are specialist habitats of a unique biodiversity value. Distinctive vegetation communities, including mosses, ferns and heathland, and specialist invertebrate communities are often associated with scree sites. While virtually no site-specific work has been undertaken on the scree of Rhondda Cynon Taff, the slopes of the Rhondda Fawr and parts of the Cynon Valley are a Local Biodiversity Action Plan feature of considerable local and regional significance.

Threats

1. In the past, afforestation has threatened crags and scree sites.
2. Global warming is a very real threat to the arctic-alpine flora of the south Wales valleys.

Current Action

1. Important crag and scree sites are included in pSINC designations.
2. A number of crags and cwms (e.g. Graig Fawr, above Cwm Parc, and Craig-y-Llyn) are regularly surveyed by amateur botanists and by the BSBI.
3. Mynydd Ty-Isaf SSSI and Craig y Llyn SSSI are both important crag and scree sites.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate all important crag and scree sites as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Continue to require survey and assessment work for any planning application affecting important crag and scree sites.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage surveys and recording of crag and scree sites in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004

Urban

Current Status

Most people in the County Borough live in an urban environment. Although countryside may be close at hand, most of us live in terraced streets and housing estates, with tarmaced roads, backyards, small modern gardens, schools, supermarkets, playing fields and allotments. In these circumstances wildlife is sometimes less obvious, but it can be fostered and encouraged to enrich and benefit all of us in our daily lives. Urban areas also provide important habitats for some species, such as the house martin. The object of this Action Plan is to encourage people to look around them, and to recognise the potential for biodiversity enhancement in their own 'patch'.

Threats

1. The very act of urbanisation has obviously had major adverse impacts on biodiversity.
2. A lack of ownership of the immediate environment we live in often prevents people from being proactive.
3. A huge lack of imagination and insensitivity to biodiversity in building design and development layouts has compounded the original biodiversity loss associated with development.
4. A lack of community resources and information stifles action.

Current Action

1. The River Care groups of the County Borough are an excellent example of community-based environmental action.
2. Keep Wales Tidy and Groundwork sponsor and assist local action.
3. The Council has made areas of Key Countryside Sites available to local groups.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Continue to encourage community environmental groups to be established throughout the County Borough.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>2: Through the 'Working for Wildlife' biodiversity training day programme, offer basic environmental training for groups and promote good local practice throughout the County Borough.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: Continue to encourage community groups to adopt Council-owned land for environmental projects. Assist in providing technical advice and support.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Investigate whether a County Borough 'Biodiversity Excellence Award' scheme for local environmental groups would be feasible and appropriate.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2002

Actions	Timescale
<p>5: Through training day events, this LBAP and every-day work, continue to encourage and foster interactive discussion and co-operation between groups throughout the County Borough.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>6: Co-ordinate a series of urban wildlife surveys, targeted at urban indicator species, such as house martin, swift and hedgehog.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>7: Through the Council's Countryside Service, continue to provide advice and management support for local environmental groups and schools.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Industrial estates

Current Status

Rhondda Cynon Taff has considerable areas of industrial estate land. Some sites support remnants of the habitat on which they were developed, and verges of species-rich grassland, rhos pasture or relic woodland are not uncommon. Other abandoned sites have acquired some biodiversity value through natural regeneration. However the vast majority of active industrial estates are ecologically sterile. Landscaping (if any) is often based upon ornamental planting programmes using non-native species. Although considerable sums of money are spent on their routine maintenance, this is never undertaken with biodiversity objectives in mind. No industrial units have been constructed incorporating biodiversity features into the fabric of the building (e.g. bat or swift boxes). The great quantities of roof and car park run-off are neither attenuated by, or treated with wetlands. Industrial estates in the County Borough represent old fashioned design ethics and a wasted opportunity for biodiversity. This lack of a strategic biodiversity policy compounds the original biodiversity loss which accompanied many greenfield and brownfield site developments. The objective of this Biodiversity Action Plan is to encourage and promote biodiversity initiatives on industrial estate sites.

Threats

1. The major decline in biodiversity associated with industrial estates has been the loss of the original habitat in the development. Many industrial estate sites and future employment allocations have and will cause the loss of sites of significant biodiversity value.
2. There is an enormous lack of awareness amongst property developers, owners and companies with regard to the potential biodiversity improvements that can be made to existing sites. Virtually no examples of best practice exist.
3. There is an equal lack of awareness with regard to the potential opportunities e.g. incorporating bird and bat boxes into new developments, and providing such features in enhancement schemes.

Current Action

1. When reviewing new industrial estate applications, the Planning Department always requests that landscape plantings include trees and hedgerows of native, local origin stock.
2. A factory development in Taff Ely has recently been conditioned to incorporate bat and bird boxes.
3. The WDA consultation document on sustainable development, issued in 1999, contains themes which promote biodiversity improvements on industrial sites.
4. The Groundwork Bright Sites initiative has led to a review of a number of existing industrial estates. Some positive recommendations regarding biodiversity enhancement and conservation are hoped for.
5. WDA has produced a Handbook for developing Sustainable Development Action plans on Industrial Estates in Wales.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Develop a best practice guide for industrial estates aimed at owners and development bodies.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Welsh Development Agency</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2003
<p>2: Promote at least one best practice industrial estate in RCT to promote a biodiversity role model example.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Groundwork Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Welsh Development Agency</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2003
<p>3: Where opportunities arise, survey and assess industrial estates and identify areas of biodiversity significance.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Develop the Bright Site initiative to promote direct biodiversity enhancement.</p> <p>Organisations Groundwork Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Welsh Development Agency</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>5: Produce an Industrial estate Biodiversity Briefing Note and circulate to all industrial estates in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001

Road verges

Current Status

The County Borough is criss-crossed by hundreds of miles of roads. Within their curtilages are banks, verges and roundabouts. They represent a grassland, scrub and hedgerow area which is an important collective biodiversity resource. The best road verges can support species-rich, long established hay meadow vegetation, diverse secondary calcareous grassland, luxuriant stands of heather, bilberry, mixed scrub and emerging woodland. Roads present barriers to movement, affect drainage patterns and create water, air and noise pollution. They have compromised and destroyed many valuable wildlife sites. However, if properly managed, their verges can represent a valuable and under-utilised resource for wildlife.

The Council currently manages one road verge nature reserve, on the A4119 at Llantrisant. Traditional road verge and hedgerow maintenance was of low intensity and sympathetic to flora and fauna. In the modern age budgetary restrictions mean that few sections of road verge and hedgerow are now sensitively managed. Although the resulting increase in bramble, scrub and rank grassland may benefit small birds and mammals, it has led to a significant decline in areas of species-rich grassland. Given the financial constraints, it is a major challenge to reverse the fortunes of the road-side biodiversity of the County Borough, but it has enormous potential benefits for biodiversity and the overall appearance and appeal of our roads.

Threats

1. The loss of traditional, low intensity road-side management is the principle cause for the decline in the quality of road-side habitats.
2. The provision of pavements, cycle-tracks, lay-bys, etc. has the potential to conflict with road verge habitat.

Current Action

1. The Council currently manages one road verge section (the A4119 near Miskin). This road cutting supports species-rich neutral and calcareous grassland (including large numbers of cowslip and common spotted-orchid).
2. Various local authorities have developed road verge nature conservation strategies, for example Kent CC, Worcestershire CC, Gwynedd CC and Vale of Glamorgan CBC.
3. National Assembly for Wales is developing a trunk road BAP.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Launch a County Borough road verge audit using the general public to report potentially interesting road verges (based upon a survey sheet and list of indicator species). Identify the first tranche of important road verges in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2002-2004
<p>2: Using the results of the County Borough road verge assessment, and using the model of the A4119 Key Countryside Site, create at least five new road-side nature reserves in the County Borough. Identify road verge nature reserves with the brimstone butterfly marker.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2004
<p>3: Review road verge management practices in other local authority areas and investigate the opportunity for developing a RCT biodiversity verge management strategy.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2002

Deptford pink

Current Status

A delicate, inconspicuous pink, the Deptford pink is known from only 24 sites in the UK. It has severely declined over the last 60 years. The plant is traditionally associated with light, free draining alkaline soils, dry pastures, disturbed ground, roadsides and hedgerows, but also occurs on naturally acid sites. Deptford pink was surprisingly discovered on the sides of a disused quarry at Tonypanyd in 1997. The colony is localised but supports healthy population (c.1200 plants). The Council owns the site. Protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and is a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Nationally, the decline is due to the loss of habitat to agricultural development, loss of grazing and habitat succession.
2. On the Tonypanyd site, quarry ledges support sparse vegetation and the species seems relatively secure, however, shading by willow scrub (growing from the base of the quarry) could prove a problem in longer-term.

Current Action

1. The Tonypanyd colony lies within a Key Countryside Site.
2. Countryside Rangers know the site and the species.
3. Conservation of the colony has been written into a site Management Plan.
4. Plantlife offer site management advice.
5. Site visit by CCW and the Council's Ecologist in 1999 reviewed management priorities.
6. With CCW's agreement, Groundwork Merthyr and RCT, and the Countryside Service Rangers undertook localised scrub coppicing in 1999.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Through the Council's Countryside Service, continue to conserve the Deptford pink population at Tonypanyd.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Groundwork Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>2: Monitor the Deptford pink population (plant count and map colony extent) annually in July and send results to Plantlife.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: Incorporate Deptford pink management into the Key Countryside Site Management Plan. Forward the draft Plan to Plantlife and CCW for comment.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000
<p>4: On a three year basis commencing in 2002, review the site management with CCW in light of the annual population assessment.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2002
<p>5: Survey other potential Deptford pink sites. In particular, request botanical survey and assessment work for land reclamation and landfill applications affecting potential sites.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Welsh Development Agency Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>6: Evidence of digging-up plants should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Monk's-hood

Current Status

According to the 'Flora of Glamorgan', monk's-hood is 'Native in eastern Glamorgan, where it is locally abundant on stream-sides in the Ely, Taff and Rhymney Valleys'. Elsewhere, the species has a scattered distribution in the south west of England and the southern marches. The River Ely in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan is notified as an SSSI for its monk's-hood. Only a short section of the Ely in RCT is included in the SSSI. However, in RCT the Ely and a number of its tributaries support important populations of this characteristic and distinctive species. RCT supports a significant proportion of the Welsh resource.

Monk's-hood is a nationally scarce species and has been identified by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process as a locally valued and regionally significant plant.

Threats

1. Riverine development.
2. Flood-defence works.
3. In places, monk's-hood may be out-competed by brambles and tree growth, however, it is a robust species which generally competes well.

Current Action

1. The River Ely (and some of its main tributaries, including parts of the Afon Clun) and River Taff are pSINC.
2. The presence of monk's-hood is a SINC selection criterion.
3. A short section of the River Ely SSSI lies within RCT.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate all sections of stream or river with monk's-hood as SINC, as part of the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Through the Recorders' Newsletter and River Care groups, encourage the recording of monk's-hood in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>3: Promote monk's-hood as a biodiversity emblem for river conservation in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004

Cornish moneywort

Current Status

A small discreet plant of damp ditch sides, walls and roadsides. Nationally, this is a very localised species with its population centred on Cornwall, south Devon and Exmoor. In Wales only nine sites exist. The main population occurs in the Taff Ely area, with a few records in south west Wales. In RCT Cornish moneywort is associated with rhos pasture and heathland. The 'Flora of Glamorgan' (A.E Wade et al.) states that the species is 'Very local, known only from a small area around Llantrisant, Pontypridd and Caerphilly on the southern fringe of the Uplands'. The species has been confirmed at Llantrisant Common (1993) and the Graig, Llantrisant (2000) and historic records exist for Pontypridd Common.

Cornish moneywort is a nationally scarce species and has been identified in this Local Biodiversity Action Plan as a locally significant species.

Threats

1. The species is naturally scarce in south Wales.
2. Its preferred habitat is vulnerable to drainage and intensive mechanised ditch clearances.
3. It is also likely to depend upon stock grazing, to keep ditch sides open and un-shaded. The cessation of cattle grazing may be a major factor in its apparent decline.

Current Action

1. The BSBI recorder for east Glamorgan and the CCW staff have surveyed a number of sites in the recent past and confirmed that at least two extant populations still occur.
2. Llantrisant Common is a SSSI and the Graig and Pontypridd Common are both pSINC.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Re-survey Pontypridd Common.</p> <p>Organisations Botanical Society of the British Isles Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>2: Monitor all known Cornish moneywort sites on a five yearly basis.</p> <p>Organisations Botanical Society of the British Isles Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>3: Disseminate survey and monitoring information to CCW, National Museum of Wales and RCT CBC, as well as to the relevant landowner.</p> <p>Organisations Botanical Society of the British Isles Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>4: Seek to designate all extant sites as SINC, as part of the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>5: On extant sites, inform all landowners of the existence of Cornish moneywort and its biodiversity significance. Offer advice on conservation (e.g. ditch management, grazing). Investigate with each landowner the option of a management plan.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2002
<p>6: As opportunities arise, survey other potential sites for Cornish moneywort.</p> <p>Organisations Botanical Society of the British Isles Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Ivy-leaved bellflower

Current Status

A low-growing, inconspicuous flower of rhos pastures, moorland and acid grassland. Well-distributed in the uplands and in select lowland locations, ivy-leaved bellflower is a species for which Wales has an international responsibility. Recent work has shown that Wales supports the majority of the world's population of this diminutive flower. The south Wales coalfield is one of its Welsh strongholds and in RCT it is a locally common species. With our global responsibility for the plant, ivy-leaved bellflower has a important role to play in raising awareness of biodiversity issues.

Ivy-leaved bellflower has been identified by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process as a locally valued flower.

Threats

1. There is no indication that this species is undergoing a significant population decline, although many potential sites have been lost since 1960's to forestry, industry, agricultural improvement and urban sprawl.

Current Action

1. The presence of ivy-leaved bellflower is a selection criterion for pSINC. Many rhos pasture pSINC support ivy-leaved bellflower.
2. The significance of the species is recognised in the Council's Rhos Pasture Biodiversity Briefing Note.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage the recording of ivy-leaved bellflower in the County Borough.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	<p>2001-2004</p> <p>Lead Partner</p>

Black knapweed

Current Status

Black knapweed is a familiar hay meadow and grass verge flower. In mid to late summer, the purple flowers are a very important nectar source for grassland insects. Being a large, distinctive flower, black knapweed is a good indicator for use by the general public in identifying locally important grassland habitats.

Black knapweed has been identified by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process as a locally valuable plant species.

Threats

1. Species-rich grassland is lost to agricultural improvement and abandonment, and employment and residential development.
2. Grass verges are threatened by inappropriate verge management and road improvements.

Current Action

1. Lowland hay meadows and old pastures are National and Local Biodiversity Action Plan habitats.
2. All known species-rich hay meadows, old pastures and grass verges are pSINC.
3. The RCT CBC Biodiversity Briefing Note for Old Meadows and Pastures promotes black knapweed as a key indicator species.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate species-rich old pasture, hay meadows and road verges as SINC, as part of the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Using black knapweed as a primary indicator of species-rich grassland, encourage River Care groups, environmental groups and school children to identify locally important grassland</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>3: As part of the 'Working for Wildlife' programme, provide a wildflower identification training day for local River Care groups, other voluntary organisations and interested individuals.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001

Bluebell

Current Status

An attractive and well known flower of ancient woodlands, bracken slopes, and ancient hedgerows. Bluebell woodlands are a speciality of the British Isles and the Atlantic fringe of Northern France. The moist, oceanic climate of the UK evidently provides ideal conditions for bluebells. The bluebell is an excellent symbol of woodland conservation and a species for which the UK has a genuine global responsibility.

The bluebell is afforded protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (sale only) and has been identified as a locally significant species.

Threats

1. Although apparently abundant in some locations, the species is in decline due to habitat loss.
2. A decline in traditional woodland management can lead to the shading out of bluebells.
3. Urban encroachment and a 'tidy park' mentality threaten bluebells in urban locations, e.g. Central Park, Church Village where a fine stand of bluebell has been reduced and weakened by regular mowing (including during the flowering period).
4. In some areas bluebell have been commercially removed. The inclusion of the species into the Wildlife and Countryside Act was specifically intended to legislate against this. The up-rooting of bluebell, with or without the landowner's permission, is now illegal.
5. Picking of bluebell flowers is undesirable and can weaken colonies.
6. The planting of Spanish bluebell in gardens and parks has led to cross-pollination and hybridisation of our native bluebell. This is a very real problem in urban and suburban woods and hedgerows.
7. Livestock grazing in woodlands.

Current Action

1. Ancient woodlands and species-rich secondary woodlands and the ffridd are SINC selection criteria. These will include many woods and slopes with bluebell.
2. The Council owns and manages a number of woodlands. At least one, Coed Caedyrys, is an excellent bluebell woodland.
3. Two woodland SSSI exist. Glyncornel is not a natural bluebell wood, but sheep exclusion has led to a recovery of ground flora, including bluebell. Gelliwion SSSI is a woodland near Pontypridd that supports bluebell.
4. The Nature Conservancy Council's Ancient Woodland Inventory has identified ancient woodlands in Glamorgan of over two hectares in size.
5. A number of important woodlands are protected by virtue of Tree Preservation Orders.
6. Coed Cymru is actively promoting good woodland management practice in RCT; ground flora improvements accompany good management.
7. The Hedgerow Regulations have brought hedgerows into the planning process and ensure the retention of a number of hedges.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate all ancient woodland bluebell sites as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Sympathetically manage all Council-owned bluebell sites.</p> <p>Organisations Llantwit Fardre Friends of the Earth Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>3: Evidence of digging-up and selling native bluebell should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Where opportunities arise, continue to enter bluebell woodlands into Woodland Grant Schemes.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Lead Partner Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going

Heath spotted-orchid

Current Status

The heath spotted-orchid is a beautiful species found on acid grassland, heath, spoil tips and rhos pasture. For much of the County Borough this is the only familiar orchid, and as such it has a high public appeal. It is also a good indicator of valuable grassland and heath habitat and is one of the key indicators which can be used by the general public and school children to identify locally interesting habitat. The heath spotted-orchid is therefore an important emblem of biodiversity conservation in RCT.

Heath spotted-orchid has been identified within the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process as a locally valued flower.

Threats

1. Locally, sites are lost to agricultural intensification and abandonment.
2. Many urban fringe sites are threatened by residential and employment developments.

Current Action

1. Many heath spotted-orchid colonies occur on pSINC.
2. The orchid was highlighted as one of the key indicators of good quality rhos pasture in the Council's Biodiversity Briefing Note on Rhos Pasture.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate species-rich acid grassland, heath or rhos pasture as SINC, as part of the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: To raise awareness of botanical surveying, develop a school-based orchid survey.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2004

Medicinal leech

Current Status

The medicinal leech is a rare and endangered inhabitant of ponds and small lakes. Famed for its medical applications, the medicinal leech is now rarely seen or recorded. In Wales it is largely restricted to Anglesey, with only a few sites in south Wales. Although no confirmed records exist in RCT, an unconfirmed report has been made for a pond in the Cynon Valley. There has been no strategic pond survey or assessment work in the County Borough; we simply do not know whether the medicinal leech exists undiscovered somewhere in RCT.

The medicinal leech is listed on Appendix III of the Bern Convention, Appendix II of CITES and Annex V of the Habitats Directive. It is listed as vulnerable on the IUCN and as rare in the UK Red List. It is protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and it is a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Loss of ponds through water abstraction, natural succession and infilling.
2. Loss of stock-grazed ponds.

Current Action

1. A number of ponds and small, natural lakes are identified as constituent parts of pSINC.

Actions	Timescale
1: Review historical records for medicinal leech in RCT. Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner	2003
2: Undertake a survey of ponds in RCT, based upon the Cardiff Pond Survey, and include medicinal leeches. Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner	2003
3: If any medicinal leech sites are identified, seek to designate as SINC through the UDP process, and identify land ownership. Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner	2000-2004
4: Evidence of illegal killing, or harming of medicinal leech should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action. Organisations South Wales Police Lead Partner	on-going

Southern damselfly

Current Status

A damselfly of wet, base-rich flushed streams and seepages. Nationally very rare, the species main distribution is in the south-west of England and the New Forest. In Wales the damselfly occurs sparingly around the southern and western coasts. Southern damselfly has been recorded at Cwm Cadlan SSSI/pSAC in the Cynon Valley. Although the site is within Brecon Beacons National Park, there is a chance that colonies may occur within base-flushed rhos pasture sites in both the Cynon and Taff Ely area.

The species is listed on Annex II of the EC Habitats Directive and Appendix II of the Bern Convention. It is listed as rare in the UK Red List and is a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. A naturally rare species, many potential sites have been lost or degraded by agricultural, residential or industrial development.
2. Insensitive and / or intensive drain and ditch management.

Current Action

1. British Dragonfly Conservation and CCW have targeted southern damselfly as a key conservation species.
2. The presence of southern damselfly is a SINC selection criterion.
3. Potential sites are already designated as pSINC by the Local Authority.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Where opportunities arise, survey potential southern damselfly sites in the Cynon Valley.</p> <p>Organisations British Dragonfly Society Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>2: Seek to designate all suitable rhos pasture sites as SINC, as part of the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: If sites are identified, inform the landowner(s), CCW, British Dragonfly Society, LA and GWT and provide advice to the landowner on the management of the site.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>4: Establish monitoring schemes for all potential sites.</p> <p>Organisations British Dragonfly Society Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>5: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage general dragonfly and damselfly recording in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004

Small pearl-bordered fritillary

Current Status

The small pearl-bordered fritillary is a beautiful black and orange checked butterfly, very similar to its close relative, the pearl-bordered fritillary. In common with all species of fritillary butterfly, this insect has experienced a frighteningly rapid decline in Britain. Extinct in the east of England, the wet grassland and hillside colonies of western Britain represents its UK stronghold. In RCT, the butterfly is locally common in rhos pasture (larval food plant: marsh violets) and dry grassland/bracken slopes (larval food plant: dog-violets). There may be a few woodland colonies. It is thinly distributed throughout the lowland areas of the County Borough. Butterfly Conservation have identified at least 20-30 sites in Glamorgan. This is undoubtedly an under-estimate of the total population, but no quantitative information is currently available.

The small pearl-bordered fritillary is identified by Butterfly Conservation in their National Action Plan for Wales as a medium priority butterfly in a British context. It has been identified by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process as a locally distinctive and vulnerable butterfly.

Threats

1. Loss of breeding sites to agricultural improvement/drainage works.
2. Loss of many urban fringe and valley-bottom sites to housing and industrial development. A number of potential sites are allocated for development and have extant planning permissions.
3. Land reclamation schemes threaten a number of sites in south Wales.
4. Forestry and woodland planting have been encouraged on rhos pasture and bracken slopes.
5. Cessation of traditional grassland management (grazing) leading to scrub and woodland invasion of rhos pasture and grassland.

Current Action

1. Two SSSI in the area covered by this LBAP support small pearl-bordered fritillary habitat.
2. All known small pearl-bordered fritillary sites have been designated a pSINC.
3. RCT CBC owns rhos pasture with small pearl-bordered fritillary at Cwm Colliery and near Mountain Ash.
4. Potential sites are owned and managed by RCT CBC at Parc Dowlais and Parc Eirin (due to come into Council ownership).
5. At least one Woodland Grant Scheme site (near Pontyclun) supports small pearl-bordered fritillary. The slope on which the butterflies fly has been fenced, which may in future reduce its suitability for the butterfly. Revisions to the WGS could assist the long-term future of the colony (one of the few woodland colonies in RCT).
6. The extension to Trane Cemetery, Tonyrefail, includes an area of potential habitat.
7. Butterfly Conservation has produced a National Action Plan for Wales and have appointed a Butterfly Guardian for Wales.
8. The Council's Rhos Pasture Biodiversity Briefing Note has been produced to raise awareness of the biodiversity significance of the habitat of the small pearl-bordered fritillary.
9. The Glamorgan Regional Biodiversity Action Plan for Rhos pasture has identified the small pearl-bordered fritillary as a priority species and has set out biodiversity targets for the conservation of the habitat.
10. The Maerdy Community Woodlands, managed by GEAR, supports a small pearl-bordered fritillary colony.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate all small pearl-bordered fritillary colonies as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Continue to bring known and potential small pearl-bordered fritillary colonies in Council ownership into positive management.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Actions	Timescale
<p>3: As opportunities arise, provide landowners and managers of small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly colonies with information (e.g. Rhos Pasture Biodiversity Briefing Note) and advice.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Continue to encourage landowners with rhos pasture or species-rich bracken slopes to enter Tir Gofal.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>5: As opportunities arise, provide advice and, where possible, assistance in the management of sites.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>6: Through the Recorders' Newsletter and Butterfly Conservation's work for the 'Butterflies of Glamorgan', encourage survey work to identify small pearl-bordered fritillary sites and encourage the submission of records to GWT, Butterfly Conservation and LA.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>7: Continue to influence forestry schemes to ensure woodland planting does not destroy sites of existing biodiversity value. Continue to advise on Woodland Grant applications.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Pearl-bordered fritillary

Current Status

Although once strongly associated with traditional coppice woodland sites (and historically restricted to woodlands in eastern England), in Wales this species is found on warm, sunny ffridd and bracken slopes, where young violets grow in abundance. Nationally the decline in woodland management has expunged virtually all woodland colonies. The pearl-bordered fritillary is now largely restricted to western Britain and confined to bracken slopes. In RCT, old records exist for the Llantrisant area and include the ancient woodland of Coed Trecastell. There have been no recent records for the butterfly in the County Borough, but hopes are still high that the pearl-bordered fritillary still occurs. There are a number of potentially suitable sites and the ffridd is still a very under-surveyed habitat.

The pearl-bordered fritillary is listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (sale only). The Butterfly Conservation National Action Plan for Wales identifies the pearl-bordered fritillary as of high priority importance in Britain. It is also a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Lack of suitable grazing (ideally cattle) on ffridd and bracken slopes.
2. Sheep grazing of ground flora, reducing violet growth.
3. Conifer afforestation and smaller scale tree planting schemes.
4. Decline in woodland management.

Current Action

1. The National Habitat Action Plan for Wales produced by Butterfly Conservation identifies the pearl-bordered fritillary as of high priority importance in Britain. The Action Plan concentrates on conserving extant populations in mid and north Wales, but also contains Actions to survey former sites, investigate re-introduction opportunities and re-instate grazing onto recently abandoned sites.
2. Butterfly Conservation has co-ordinated a national pearl-bordered fritillary survey.
3. Butterfly Conservation has produced a 'Butterfly and Bracken' leaflet, highlighting the importance of bracken for four fritillary butterflies.
4. Where possible, the Planning Department comments on all woodland grant schemes which potentially affect important bracken slopes.
5. The presence of pearl-bordered fritillary and species-rich ffridd and bracken slopes are SINC selection features.
6. One potentially suitable pearl-bordered fritillary site in the Llantrisant area has been identified (and received some survey work in 1998).
7. Coed Cymru has pro-actively encouraged a number of woodland grant schemes in RCT to create violet-rich glades in woodland.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Visit at least one potential pearl-bordered fritillary pSINC in RCT annually, during adult flight season. Report findings to Butterfly Conservation.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Forest Enterprise Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Seek to designate all violet-rich slopes as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: Where appropriate (and where suitable bracken slopes occur in close proximity) encourage positive woodland management of coppice woodlands and cycle track verges to create additional violet-rich habitat.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Forest Enterprise Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004

Actions	Timescale
<p>4: Encourage the retention of wide, sunny open rides in commercial forestry plantations.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Forest Enterprise Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>5: Where opportunities arise, encourage landowners of species-rich bracken slopes to re-introduce cattle grazing at appropriate stocking rates and duration.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust National Assembly for Wales Agriculture Department Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>6: Where appropriate, encourage existing Woodland Grant Schemes to provide proactive management for violet growth and fritillaries.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>7: Evidence of the illegal selling of pearl-bordered fritillary should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>8: Raise awareness of the biodiversity importance of bracken slopes with landowners and provide general advice to promote good management. RCT to produce a 'Biodiversity Briefing note' for fridd/bracken slopes.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

High brown fritillary

Current Status

The high brown fritillary was once considered to be the archetypal woodland fritillary butterfly. In the past it occurred throughout England and Wales and was strongly associated with well-managed coppice woodlands. However, in common with all 'woodland' fritillary butterflies, a massive population crash and range contraction has occurred since the early 1960's. This loss has been directly correlated to the abandonment of coppice woodland and the shading out of the violets on which the butterflies rely. In common with the pearl-bordered and small pearl-bordered fritillary butterflies, the significance of violet-rich bracken slopes has only recently become fully appreciated. The ffridd and bracken hillsides of western Britain are now the national stronghold for this species. RCT currently supports two high brown fritillary colonies where the butterfly flies on species-rich bracken slopes. The longest known colony is in the Taff Valley and is small and very vulnerable to grazing changes. The second colony was discovered in July 2000 in the Rhondda Valley, but it is too soon to assess its size. Elsewhere, the County Borough supports a number of highly suitable sites, and more survey and assessment is urgently needed.

Fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and listed as vulnerable on the UK Red List. The high brown fritillary is identified as high priority in a British context in Butterfly Conservation's National Action Plan for Wales. It is also a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Loss of coppice regime in woodlands.
2. Over-grazing of bracken slopes by sheep, destroying violets.
3. Lack of cattle and horse grazing on bracken slopes, leading to an excessive build-up of dead bracken.
4. Woodland grant schemes (including 'Bracken Challenge') targeting bracken slopes and grant-aiding woodland creation to detriment of butterfly habitat.
5. Land reclamation schemes.

Current Action

1. The Taff Valley site is monitored by Butterfly Conservation and Caerphilly Mountain Rangers.
2. The Butterfly Conservation document National Action Plan for Wales identifies high brown fritillary as a high priority in a British context. It includes actions to promote better management of sites, monitor populations, survey potential breeding sites and consider potential re-introduction programmes.
3. Butterfly Conservation has produced a Butterfly and Bracken leaflet, highlighting the importance of bracken for four fritillary butterflies.
4. Where possible, the Countryside Section comments on all woodland grant schemes which potentially affect important bracken slopes.
5. The presence of high brown fritillary and species-rich ffridd and bracken slopes are each SINC selection features.
6. The owner of the Taff Valley site is aware of the butterflies presence and significance and is not hostile to nature conservation aspirations. It is believed that the landowner has applied to Tir Gofal.
7. The Rhondda colony is partly in the ownership of the County Borough Council and although it is subject to land reclamation issues, it is hoped that a pro-active nature conservation strategy can be developed for the site.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate both known high brown fritillary sites (and other important fridd and bracken covered slopes) as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Where appropriate (and suitable bracken slopes occur in close proximity), encourage positive woodland management of coppice woodlands and cycle track verges to create additional violet-rich habitat.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: Where opportunities arise, encourage landowners of species-rich bracken slopes to re-introduce cattle grazing at appropriate stocking rates and duration.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust National Assembly for Wales Agriculture Department Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>4: Investigate management options for known sites. Ensure that high brown fritillary conservation and enhancement is fully taken into account in the design of land reclamation proposals at the Rhondda site.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service Coed Cymru Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000
<p>5: Raise awareness of the biodiversity importance of bracken slopes with landowners and provide general advice to promote good management. RCT to produce a 'Biodiversity Briefing Note' for Fridd/bracken slopes.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>6: Where appropriate, encourage existing Woodland Grant Schemes to provide proactive management for violet growth and fritillaries.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>7: Evidence of the illegal killing of high brown fritillary should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Marsh fritillary

Current Status

The marsh fritillary is the emblem of the purple moor-grass and rush pastures of south Wales. It is the classic butterfly of the wet, species-rich pastures of the region and is now widely recognised as an indicator of wetland conservation in Glamorgan. The butterfly larvae feed on devil's-bit scabious and thrive in cattle-grazed pastures where the food-plant and nectar sources are not shaded-out by taller grasses and rushes. Although over 50 colonies have been recorded in Glamorgan, most of these are small. The butterfly is known to survive in 'meta-populations' where several sites are responsible for the long-term viability of a single colony. Over generations individual sites may temporarily become unsuitable (e.g. from a short-term loss of grazing), but when management is returned the butterfly is able to re-colonise from neighbouring sites. Meta-populations depend on having breeding sites which are within easy dispersal range. The marsh fritillary is not a strong flyer and even in years of abundance has limited powers of dispersal. Maintaining a network of potential breeding sites (including areas which may be temporarily unsuitable for the butterfly) is therefore essential for the long-term future of the butterfly.

Records exist for the Cynon Valley and for Taff Ely. The butterfly is known to have occurred on more than a dozen sites. In meta-population terms, there may be three colonies. One is at the northern end of the River Cynon, one in the Tonyrefail area and one in the Llantrisant/Church Village area. There may still be important colonies elsewhere and odd records exist for a number of sites. The largest colony in RCT was recently (and perhaps fatally) damaged by a private sector / WDA development at Parc Eirin. Another large population (the largest remaining population in RCT) has been threatened by a development proposal at Hirwaun.

Elsewhere, colonies have been successively lost through abandonment of grazing, landfill operations, road schemes and development schemes. The future of the marsh fritillary in RCT is in the balance, with little positive nature conservation management and considerable negative pressures (including a series of very wet summers).

The marsh fritillary is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is listed in Annex II of the EC Habitats Directive and Appendix II of the Bern Convention and is a high priority species in a British context in Butterfly Conservation's National Action Plan for Wales. It is also a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Abandonment of traditional grazing, leading to loss of diversity and breeding habitat.
2. Residential and employment development. Many marsh fritillary colonies must have been lost in the last thirty years.
3. BSE crisis has directly led to a decline in cattle grazing.
4. The promotion of foreign cattle breeds at the expense of hardy Welsh breeds able to graze purple moor-grass.
5. Afforestation.
6. Drainage and re-seeding of wet fields.

Current Action

1. All known marsh fritillary sites are pSINC.
2. The presence of marsh fritillary butterflies or suitable rhos pasture habitat, are SINC selection criteria.
3. The Local Authority Planning Department requires planning applications which potentially affect marsh fritillary colonies or potential habitat to include species surveys and assessments. The Parc Eirin and Hirwaun colonies were identified as a result of the planning application process.
4. A sample of Glamorgan colonies are monitored by CCW and Butterfly Conservation annually. While none of these are in RCT a few sites are visited in most years.
5. Marsh fritillary butterflies were highlighted in the RCT CBC Biodiversity Briefing Note 1: Rhos Pasture.
6. A Glamorgan Regional Action Plan has been produced for purple moor-grass and rush pasture and includes actions of benefit for marsh fritillary.
7. Butterfly Conservation have produced a 'National Action Plan for Wales'.
8. The Council owns small areas of suitable marsh fritillary habitat; part of the Parc Eirin colony occurs on a small area of Council-owned land and a small colony also occurs on Council land at Cwm Colliery.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate all sites as SINC, as part of the UDP process, and identify landowners.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Manage all Council-owned marsh fritillary sites sympathetically. Review the tenancy agreement for the Cwm Colliery site. Manage the Parc Eirin area in line with the S.106 Agreement.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Welsh Development Agency</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>3: Continue to investigate site protection and conservation measures for all known and potential colonies.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Undertake a strategic marsh fritillary butterfly review in RCT. Identify known and potential sites, meta-populations, site ownership, and develop a strategic conservation plan.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Welsh Development Agency</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2001
<p>5: Where opportunities arise, continue to visit known and potential marsh fritillary sites.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>6: Evidence of illegal killing, or harming of marsh fritillary butterfly should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>7: As opportunities arise, provide land owners and managers of marsh fritillary colonies with information (e.g. rhos pasture Biodiversity Briefing Note) and advice.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Grayling

Current Status

The grayling is a fascinating butterfly associated with heathland, coastal grassland and upland fringe acid grassland. Once widespread, the species has lost the great majority of its inland range and, like the stonechat, is now very closely associated with coastal regions. The grayling is, however, a characteristic butterfly of the south Wales valleys, where it thrives on the ffridd zone and in particular on vegetated coal-spoil tips. The association of grayling with coal-spoil is a feature of the post-industrial landscapes of the Cynon and Rhondda valleys. The regional and national significance of this species and habitat association has not gained the attention they deserve. Conservation of the former is inextricably linked to the protection of the latter. The grayling also offers an emblem through which the biodiversity value of re-vegetated coal spoil can be promoted with the local community.

The grayling has been identified by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process as a locally significant species.

Threats

1. Agricultural improvement is a potential threat for lowland sites.
2. Land reclamation projects threaten a number of known grayling colonies.
3. The afforestation of spoil tips.

Current Action

1. Species-rich coal spoil, heathland and ffridd are selection criteria for pSINC.
2. Butterfly Conservation has produced actions for grayling in their 'National Action Plan for Wales'. This document includes actions to monitor and manage grayling sites.
3. Butterfly surveys are required for land reclamation schemes potentially affecting grayling habitat.
4. Grayling occur on a number of Key Countryside Sites.
5. A Draft Coal Spoil Biodiversity Briefing Note has been produced as part of the RCT LBAP process.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate important coal spoil, ffridd and heathland sites as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: As opportunities arise, use the grayling to raise awareness of coal spoil conservation in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: On Council-owned land, continue to identify grayling breeding sites and incorporate positive management actions to ensure long-term survival in management plans. Begin with Key Countryside Sites.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Promote coal spoil conservation through the Coal Spoil Biodiversity Briefing Note.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>5: Through the Recorders' Newsletter and Butterfly Conservation's work for the 'Butterflies of Glamorgan', encourage survey work to identify grayling sites and encourage the submission of records to GWT, Butterfly Conservation and LA.</p> <p>Organisations Butterfly Conservation Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004

Double line moth

Current Status

The double line moth is a very distinctive red-brown moth. It is a species of rhos pasture and other wet grassland and is thus well-suited to mid Glamorgan. The larval food plants are various grass species. This nationally scarce species has declined in many of its English localities and is now effectively confined to south Wales and south-west England. An important Glamorgan population has recently been identified through the work of the Glamorgan Moth Recording Group. The conservation of rhos pasture in south Wales is inextricably tied-up with the conservation of the double line moth.

The double line moth is classified as nationally scarce and is a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Loss of rhos pasture habitat will destroy double line moth sites.
2. Over-grazing of sites.
3. Abandonment of traditional cattle grazing.

Current Action

1. All sites which support double line moth will be pSINC.
2. Species-rich and large rhos pastures are identified as pSINC.
3. Moth surveying is being undertaken for the Church Village by-pass.
4. A network of voluntary moth recorders operates in RCT and are active members of the Glamorgan Moth Recording Group.
5. A moth recording evenings are held as part of the Glyncornel Events programme.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate all double line moth breeding sites as SINC, as part of the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: As part of the planning process, require moth surveys and assessment for large developments affecting rhos pasture sites.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>3: Continue to bring Council-owned rhos pasture into the Key Countryside Site network, and hence into positive management.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Encourage moth surveying and recording by the general public through the Glamorgan Moth Recording Group and the Recorders' Newsletter.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Moth Recording Group Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Hornet robber-fly

Current Status

The hornet robber-fly is a large and unmistakable predatory fly, which is associated with grazed unimproved grassland and heathland. The larvae of the fly live on livestock dung where it is presumed they predate dung beetle larvae. The adult feeds on a wide range of invertebrates, including dung beetles, flies and grasshoppers. Over the last 100 years the hornet robber-fly has contracted in range and disappeared from many of its traditional localities. Since 1970 the species has been recorded from only forty 10km squares in the UK. As with so many species, a lack of recording in south Wales is evident. Recently, several new sites have been discovered in the region and there is a high probability of finding further sites. The species is a good indicator of unimproved grassland and heath. Raising general awareness of biodiversity issues associated with it will promote the conservation of a much wider range of flies; a group which is currently disliked and misunderstood by the general public.

The hornet robber-fly is a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Loss of habitat (agricultural, employment and residential development, afforestation etc.).
2. Use of persistent parasite treatments for livestock kills dung beetles and the food source for the hornet robber-fly larvae. This might be central to the national decline of the species.
3. Changes in stock management of grasslands and heaths.

Current Action

1. Unimproved grassland and heath are SINC selection criteria and the great majority of potential habitat is currently designated as pSINC.
2. Bryncarnau Grassland SSSI and Llantrisant Common SSSI may support suitable habitat and is managed by grazing.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Undertake an adult survey of at least one potential site, annually.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Raise awareness of hornet robber-flies and encourage surveying and recording, through the Recorders' Newsletter.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: Require hornet robber-fly surveys and assessments for all developments which potentially affect suitable habitat.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>4: Seek to designate all hornet robber-fly sites as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004

Twaite shad

Current Status

The twaite shad is a foot-long silvery fish, which spends much of its life in estuarine water but enters the upper estuaries of rivers such as the Usk, Wye and Severn to spawn. Although records exist for the River Taff, there is no evidence of breeding and its status is unknown.

The species has been identified as occurring in RCT from the CCW and RSPB biodiversity audit for Wales. It is a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Water quality and water pollution.
2. Weirs (and potentially the Cardiff barrage) prevent migration.
3. Loss of spawning habitat to river engineering.
4. Losses in the Severn estuary incidentally to salmon fishing.

Current Action

1. The Environment Agency has a Taff Catchment LEAP that includes policies for protection of fish populations, although this does not specifically mention twaite shad.
2. A fish-pass on the Treforest Weir is under consideration, and would allow migratory fish to access the Taff catchment above Treforest.
3. The Environment Agency, CCW and English Nature have produced a leaflet on the allis and twaite shad. This provides an excellent summary of both species and a 'shad catch record' for anglers to record incidental catches of both fish and return to the Environment Agency offices in St. Mellons.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Establish whether twaite shad is a species of biodiversity concern in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000
<p>2: As opportunities arise, encourage fishing groups to acquire copies of the allis and twaite shad leaflet and to submit any incidental records.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Amphibians

Current Status

South Wales supports a network of wetlands, flushes, small ponds and artificial lakes. Many of these are associated with rough grassland, hedgerows and woodlands. The Valleys are also notoriously wet and Rhondda Cynon Taff supports many areas of ideal amphibian habitat. Apart from the great crested newt (which has its own Action Plan), the amphibian fauna of the County Borough includes (in descending order of abundance); common frog, palmate newt and common toad. It is likely that smooth newt occurs, but no confirmed records exist. Considerable national attention has been given to the decline in amphibians and, although many local extinctions will undoubtedly have occurred, the amphibian fauna of the County Borough remains strong. It may therefore be regionally (or even nationally) significant.

All species of amphibian are afforded some level of protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Common frog, common toad, palmate newt and smooth newt are protected from sale only, while the great crested newt is fully protected.

Threats

1. Loss of ponds, wetlands and hibernation sites to agricultural intensification and residential and employment development.
2. Road kills are a serious threat in certain areas, particularly where hibernation sites and breeding pools lie either side of a road. Very large numbers of frogs and toads can be killed even on minor roads during the brief period of breeding activity in early spring. Major new road schemes (including both the Porth and Church Village by-passes) have the potential to affect local amphibian populations.
3. Although relatively tolerant of low-level water pollution, gross pollution incidents can significantly affect breeding colonies.
4. Although disease is a natural factor, garden frog populations in some parts of the country are affected by devastating kill-offs. This may be due to disease in isolated urban populations; if so it may be of less significance in RCT.
5. Standard road drainage design (such as gully pots) involves considerable hazards for amphibians, creating death traps and physical barriers to migration.

Current Action

1. Sites which support three species of regularly breeding amphibian (excluding great crested newt) are identified as pSINC. Similarly, sites with very high populations of an individual species will also be considered.
2. Amphibian surveys, assessment and mitigation is required for planning applications which affect potential amphibian habitat. This includes road schemes.
3. The Council's Countryside Service manages a number of Key Countryside Sites with amphibian breeding sites and foraging/hibernating habitat.

Actions	Timescale
1: Seek to designate all important amphibian sites as SINC, as part of the UDP process, and identify land ownership. Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner	2001-2004
2: Through the planning process, ensure that amphibian surveys are undertaken for developments which potentially affect amphibian sites. Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner	2000-2004
3: Ensure mitigation is incorporated into all development proposals which potentially affect amphibians and their habitats (including good practice road drainage). Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner	2000-2004
4: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage the recording of amphibians in RCT. Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner	2001-2004
5: Evidence of illegal killing or harming of amphibians should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action. Organisations South Wales Police Lead Partner	on-going

Great crested newt

Current Status

The great crested newt is considered to have an unfavourable conservation status in Europe and has been shown to have declined by 25-30% in Britain within the last 25 years. Despite this, the great crested newt is still widespread, with strongholds in parts of lowland England and Wales. Elsewhere it is rare or absent (e.g. Devon and Cornwall).

Britain supports a significant proportion of the European population (estimated 400,000 individuals, in 18,000 colonies) with 90% of colonies in lowland England. In Wales no quantitative data are available but the species is fairly widespread through the eastern half of the country. Two small colonies are currently known in RCT. The great crested newt has a complex set of habitat requirements. They require a fair-sized pond, ditch or section of canal. These water-bodies are usually floristically diverse (although colonies can occur in almost un-vegetated ponds), with at least 50 cm depth of water and usually over 100 metres square in area. Fish and ducks are a threat. Ponds which occasionally dry-up can still be suitable (because predatory fish cannot survive). Good water quality is not a primary requirement and colonies can occur in distinctly polluted water. Surrounding habitat is very important as feeding and hibernating habitat for the adults. Ideally one hectare of suitable habitat can support up to 250 adult newts, but at least half a hectare of prime habitat is the minimum required area for a viable, long-term population. Research indicates that immature animals can range 500 metres from a breeding pond. Ideal habitat includes rough grassland, rhos pasture and light scrub. Derelict land-fill sites, industrial estates, town gardens and parks can be as acceptable as prime, unimproved wetland habitat.

The great crested newt is fully protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations 1994 (Regulation 38) and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and is listed in Annexes II and IV of the EC Habitats Directive and Appendix II of the Bern Convention. It is also afforded a National Biodiversity Action Plan. Due to their status within the Habitats Directive, great crested newt and their habitat have some of the strongest environmental policy protection of all Welsh species.

Threats

1. Loss of suitable breeding ponds due to water table reduction, in-filling for development, pollution, farming (especially toxic effects of agro-chemicals), waste disposal, neglect, fish stocking, and degradation, loss and fragmentation of terrestrial habitats. In Wales, the redevelopment of old flooded quarry sites has led to local extinctions.
2. The loss of foraging and hibernation habitat through a wide range of agricultural, land-fill, employment and residential developments.

Current Action

1. Both RCT colonies are pSINC.
2. Great crested newt is a SINC selection criterion.
3. In RCT, open water and a range of wetland habitats are SINC selection criteria.
4. The planning process recognises water-bodies as important wildlife features and assessment and mitigation is required for planning schemes impacting upon these habitats. Consequently, within RCT, several ponds have received some assessment and a number of pSINC have been identified.
5. In 1996, Clwyd County Council and CCW formulated a successful Local Action Plan for great crested newt.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate all breeding sites and surrounding habitat as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Continue through the planning process, to make amphibian surveys a requirement for all developments affecting standing open waters and areas of adjacent foraging habitat.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Actions	Timescale
<p>3: As and when opportunities arise, secure appropriate, favourable management for great crested newt colonies.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>4: As and when opportunities arise, encourage the creation of breeding ponds in the vicinity of known colonies, without destroying existing important wetland habitat.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>5: Undertake a pond survey, based upon the Cardiff County Council survey, and include amphibian surveying.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Environment Agency Groundwork Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2003
<p>6: Compile an information pack on great crested newts and promote the training of volunteer surveyors. Publish guidance on legal obligations for the species.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2002
<p>7: Obtain and implement actions put forward in Clwyd County Council's great crested newt Action Plan.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000
<p>8: Evidence of illegal killing, or harming of great crested newt should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Heron

Current Status

The heron is one of the largest British bird species. They are regularly seen laboriously flying along rivers and valleys. Until recently, it was assumed that most of the herons seen in RCT originated from the large heronry in the Vale of Glamorgan. Only one small heronry on the River Taff was known. However, in 1998 a large heronry (17 nests) was discovered in the Rhondda. Although known for several years by local residents, it only came to a wider attention when forestry works threatened the site. As an example of local biodiversity action, the response and awareness-raising exercise of the local residents demonstrated what can be achieved. Forest Enterprise are now aware of the heronry and it is secure. Recently, a third larger heronry has been recorded in a conifer plantation in the Pontypridd area.

In addition to nesting sites, certain wetland sites are particularly important as hunting ground for herons. One of these is the Cynon floodplain at Tirfounder Fields, Aberaman, where herons regularly feed in and around a series of floodplain pools and lagoons. Tirfounder Fields is under immense development pressure and the conservation of these undisturbed wetland habitats is of considerable importance for a host of wetland species. The heron is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and has been identified by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process as a locally valued bird.

Threats

1. Loss of feeding grounds is a major problem for all wetland species. Fortunately, a wetland network still exists in RCT, and assuming that it can be maintained and protected, herons will continue to find suitable feeding areas.
2. Herons are susceptible to cold winters.
3. Disturbance to and loss of nesting sites.
4. The significance of conifer plantations for herons in the RCT potentially brings the bird into conflict with felling programmes.
5. The South Wales Police has reported that there are confirmed instances of herons being shot in south Wales.

Current Action

1. Local residents continue to observe the Rhondda heronry.
2. Forest Enterprise is now fully aware of the Rhondda heronry.
3. The Vale Colony is annually monitored by GWT.
4. Heronries are SINC selection features.
5. Forest Enterprise operates a pre-work assessment procedure and looks for heronries.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate all heronries as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Add all three RCT heronries to the BTO Heronry Census. Monitor all three sites in accord with BTO Census methodology.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Lead Partner Glamorgan Bird Club Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: Evidence of illegal killing, trapping or egg-taking should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Buzzard

Current Status

The buzzard is the largest common bird of prey in south Wales. The mewing cry and circling, broad-winged flight of the buzzard are a familiar sound and sight throughout the County Borough. Until relatively recently, the buzzard was a scarce, irregular winter visitor to Glamorgan, however, the last thirty years have seen a major population increase. The buzzard is a biodiversity success story. Nesting in woodland, and hunting and scavenging over hillsides and along road verges, the buzzard is a common feature along the south Wales' section of the M4. The fact that buzzards have escaped persecution and prospered in an increasingly urban environment holds lessons for biodiversity conservation.

Buzzard is listed on Annex II of both the Bern and Bonn Conventions and is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The buzzard has been identified by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process as a locally valued and characteristic bird.

Threats

1. Localised persecution may deter nesting in some areas.
2. In the past, myxomatosis devastated rabbit populations and led to declines in buzzard numbers. Although both have recovered, diseases and population fluctuations in prey may effect the buzzard in the future.
3. Urbanisation into open country may reduce nesting and hunting habitat.

Current Action

1. Regular nesting sites are a SINC selection criterion.
2. Large and/or ancient woodlands are SINC selection criteria.
3. The BTO Breeding Bird Survey provides a UK (and possibly Welsh) monitoring overview of buzzard numbers.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage the recording of nesting buzzard to establish breeding populations and identify sites vulnerable to disturbance or development.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>2: Continue to encourage the monitoring of buzzard populations in RCT and an increase in the number of BBS areas.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: Evidence of illegal killing, trapping or egg taking of buzzard should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Peregrine

Current Status

The peregrine falcon is a powerful, beautiful and spectacular bird of prey. Threatened by egg collectors, war-time culls and, most devastatingly DDT, the species has recovered and is currently re-colonising large parts of its natural range in Britain. The success of the British peregrine population contrasts starkly with its global situation, where populations have crashed and breeding ranges have retracted and become fragmented. The British peregrine population is now of both European and world significance.

Associated with coastal fringes, valleys and upland habitat, the peregrine is dependant upon cliffs, cwms and quarries for nesting sites (although a few urban birds also use tall buildings). The birds are expert hunters. The stooping dive of a hunting peregrine is one of the natural wonders of the sky, the contact cry of birds high overhead is one of the Valleys most evocative sounds. The fortune of the peregrine in the south Wales valleys is, however, in the balance. Along with a wide variety of medium-sized birds, peregrine will predate racing pigeons. Some pigeon owners have singled-out the peregrine as the cause for every lost pigeon and every failed race.

Unfortunately, certain individuals have systematically robbed and destroyed nests and eggs and shot birds. Breeding success of the several eyries in the County Borough is very poor. The persecution of birds of prey was common during the ignorance of the Victorian age. The fact that peregrine are still persecuted in the south Wales valleys reflects badly upon all of us.

The peregrine is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is listed on Annex I of the EC Habitats Directive, and Appendices II of both the Bonn and Bern Conventions. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan process has identified the peregrine as a locally significant bird suffering a very specific threat.

Threats

1. Persecution, in the form of egg collection, nest destruction and the shooting of adult birds.
2. DDT poisoning was a major cause of the population decline in the 1950's and 60's.

Current Action

1. The presence of nest sites is a SINC selection feature.
2. The Environment Agency, South Wales Police and some LAs have set up a pilot peregrine watch scheme.
3. Most nesting sites are well known.
4. The publication of the 'Raptor Working Group Report' (DETR 2000) represents a long-awaited report on conflicts and conservation strategies for the peregrine. The report contains a number of recommendations to reduce the conflicts between peregrine and racing pigeons. It emphasises that peregrine are a relatively minor factor in racing pigeon fatalities.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Evidence of illegal killing, trapping or egg-taking of peregrine should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>2: Support the peregrine watch schemes in south Wales.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Forest Enterprise Glamorgan Bird Club Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Neighbouring Local Authorities Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC South Wales Police Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: Seek to designate all peregrine nesting sites as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004

Actions	Timescale
<p>4: Using the findings of the Raptor Working Group, review the strategy for peregrine conservation and develop a pro-active conservation strategy in RCT (and the surrounding area).</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group Neighbouring Local Authorities Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Royal Society for the Protection of Birds South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004

Grey partridge

Current Status

Although now a rare bird in RCT, the grey partridge was once the characteristic game bird species of lowland mixed farmland. It also occurred in the valleys and has been recorded over a number of years on the slopes above Llwynypia. Nationally, grey partridge has experienced a 50% population decline in the period 1969-1990 and is declining throughout its UK range. Although the only recent records are unconfirmed (including a probable record near Church Village in June 2000), there has been very little surveying in much of the County Borough. This is a species which needs survey effort to establish whether it is still part of the bird fauna of the area.

The grey partridge is a National Biodiversity Action Plan species. It is also listed on Annex III/I of the EC Birds Directive and Appendix III of the Bern Convention.

Threats

1. Agricultural intensification, leading to loss of nest sites (hedge bottoms). Although this is a major factor in eastern England, it is less likely to be of major significance in RCT.
2. Pesticide application destroying food sources.
3. Silage cutting destroying nests.
4. Wetter springs reducing nesting success.

Current Action

1. Hedgerow regulations control loss of hedges in the County Borough.
2. Breeding bird surveys are regularly required for planning applications.
3. In 1999 the BTO annual Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) monitored all or part of seven 1km squares in RCT and 28 in the whole of east Glamorgan. Grey partridge populations are monitored at a UK scale.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Continue to monitor grey partridge populations through the BBS at a south Wales level.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>2: Through a RCT Recorders' Newsletter, encourage farmers to report sightings of grey partridge to the LA and Glamorgan Bird Club.</p> <p>Organisations Country Landowners Association Farmers Union of Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust National Farmers Union Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001

Actions	Timescale
<p>3: Seek to designate any regularly used nesting sites as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify landowners.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>4: Through articles in the farming press, encourage the recording of grey partridge in RCT and the submission of records to the LA and Glamorgan Bird Club.</p> <p>Organisations Country Landowners Association Farmers Union of Wales National Farmers Union Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>5: As and when opportunities arise, assist the BTO regional representative to increase the number of BTO BBS monitoring stations in east Glamorgan.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Lapwing

Current Status

Although originally a wetland bird, the lapwing has long been associated with agricultural land. In Wales the bird was until recently a common breeding bird of wet, grazed pastures. However, from the early 1980s, breeding bird monitoring by the British Trust for Ornithology has recorded a steady decline in breeding numbers on farmland. These losses have been particularly severe in Wales where a 77% decline in numbers was recorded between 1987 and 1998. The reasons for these losses are complex, but are primarily due to agricultural intensification. In RCT, the lapwing is a scarce nesting species and only a very few sites are known which support them during the breeding season. Key to this Action Plan is encouraging the recording of lapwing in the County Borough and, in particular, the identification of breeding sites. The lapwing is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and is a species of conservation concern for the RSPB. The lapwing has been identified by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan as a locally vulnerable species which can help to raise awareness of wetland conservation and the similar plight of other wetland bird species (e.g. curlew and snipe).

Threats

1. Increases in stocking rates of grassland, leading to disturbance and egg-trampling.
2. Shift in grassland management to early silage cropping, destroying nests.
3. Loss of wet pasture to drainage and agricultural improvement.
4. High levels of fertiliser application leading to denser and faster growing grassland which is not ideal feeding habitat for chicks.
5. Loss of wet pasture to residential and industrial development.
6. Increased human disturbance of urban fringe farmland.

Current Action

1. The presence of regular breeding lapwing is a SINC selection feature.
2. All known species-rich wet pastures are pSINC.
3. Bird surveys are required for many large planning applications and all planning applications impacting upon potential lapwing habitat (e.g. Church Village by-pass).
4. In 1999, the BTO annual Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) monitored all or part of seven 1km squares in RCT and 28 in the whole of east Glamorgan. Currently lapwing can be monitored at a UK level.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate all regular breeding lapwing sites as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage the recording of lapwing in RCT and the submission of records to the LA and Glamorgan Bird Club.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: Continue to support the Breeding Bird Survey in RCT and encourage an increase in the number of survey areas.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Evidence of illegal killing or egg-taking of lapwing should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>5: Continue to require Breeding Bird Surveys and assessment for all planning applications which potentially impact upon wetland bird communities.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Nightjar

Current Status

A much-reduced summer visitor, the nightjar is a mysterious nocturnal bird, rarely seen and usually detected by its far-carrying churring call. The nightjar was traditionally associated with heathland and coastal dunes. Now it is mainly restricted to recently-cleared conifer plantations, where birds nest on bare ground. The UK population is estimated to be 3000 pairs. The significance of upland sites has only recently become recognised. The juxtaposition of upland plantations (nesting sites) and open fridd and rhos pasture (feeding areas) is an important habitat mosaic. In RCT and adjacent areas, nightjar is known to breed in the Llanwonno Forest, Hensol Forest (Vale) and Caerphilly Mountain (Caerphilly). Although the nightjar's call is unmistakable, the upland areas in which it may occur are difficult to survey (particularly at night) and many potential sites are not visited. Protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, listed on Annex I of the EC Birds Directive and Appendix II of the Bern Convention. The nightjar is a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Loss of heathland sites.
2. Decline in large insects due to agricultural change and pesticides.
3. The inevitable change in habitat structure as conifer plantations mature reduces the suitability of individual sites to a few years, although the on-going felling programme does continue to create new sites.

Current Action

1. FE work in Thetford Forest has devised means of maintaining populations in active Conifer plantations.
2. In 2000 two site visit (27/06/00 and 19/07/00) to a known nightjar site in the Llanwanno Forest were led by RCT Countryside Service. The first visit recorded two churring males and a minimum of four birds, the second visit recording a minimum of three churring males and six flying birds.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Through the Council's Countryside Service, visit at least one potential nightjar site in RCT annually. Use FE data to identify potential sites.</p> <p>Organisations Forest Enterprise Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage recording of nightjar in RCT and submission of records to the LA and Glamorgan Bird Club.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>3: Evidence of illegal killing, trapping or egg taking of nightjar should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Seek to designate all regularly used nesting sites as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004

Kingfisher

Current Status

Kingfisher are unmistakable, even as a fleeting flash of azure blue glimpsed through a wooded riverbank. No-one is left unimpressed by their first meeting with a kingfisher, and as a harbinger of clean rivers and wild riverbanks, the kingfisher is a biodiversity success. Kingfisher are found on all the major rivers of the County Borough and a number of larger streams. They require an earth bank, free from vegetation in which they excavate their nest, and a section of river with a number of favoured hunting pools where small fish can be caught. In the Rhondda, where little original river bank remains, numbers are limited by the availability of nesting sites. In the Llantwit Fardre/Church Village area, river pollution has made many sections of stream unsuitable for fish and kingfisher alike. The kingfisher is an excellent biodiversity symbol for riverine conservation. It is also a species which can directly benefit from biodiversity initiatives and actions.

The kingfisher is listed under Annex I of the EC Habitats Directive and Appendix II of the Bern Convention and it is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan process has identified kingfisher as a locally valued bird.

Threats

1. Lack of nesting sites on otherwise suitable river sections.
2. Water pollution.

Current Action

1. Presence of breeding kingfishers is a SINC selection criterion.
2. Major river sections and unmodified streams are SINC selection features.
3. The provision of artificial nest-banks, for use by kingfisher, has been successful in parts of Britain.
4. Kingfisher surveys and assessments have been required for the Church Village by-pass.
5. One Waterways Breeding Bird Survey plot in RCT is monitored by the BTO.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Through the Recorders' Newsletter and River Care groups, encourage the recording of kingfishers in the County Borough.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Bird Club Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Continue to support the BTO's Waterways Breeding Bird Survey in RCT and encourage an increase in the number of survey areas.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>3: As nest-bank sites are identified, notify the Environment Agency and Welsh Water Dwr Cymru of their location.</p> <p>Organisations Dwr Cymru Welsh Water Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>4: Through planning applications (and any other opportunities), investigate the potential for creating artificial nesting banks.</p> <p>Organisations Dwr Cymru Welsh Water Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>5: Evidence of illegal killing or egg-taking should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Skylark

Current Status

Although still a common and familiar songbird of hillsides, grasslands and commons, the skylark has raised enormous public concern by the nature of its huge population decline (50% between 1969 and 1991). It has been a victim of gross changes in agricultural practice, which have been most significant in the arable regions of the south and east of England. In the south Wales valleys the bird is still a common species and there is no clear indication of population change.

Nationally, the skylark's fortunes can only be rescued by revising current agricultural practice. Agri-environmental schemes are one potential vehicle for this. Locally, it is important that we can understand the strength of our skylark populations (and assess this in both a local and national context), and that we are able to monitor change.

The skylark is a priority National Biodiversity Action Plan species, protected under the EC Birds Directive and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Threats

1. Changes in agricultural practice (in particular intensive management of grasslands and early silage cuts).
2. Afforestation of the uplands.

Current Action

1. Skylark are incidentally protected by pSINC designations.
2. Breeding bird surveys are regularly required for planning applications.
3. In 1999 the BTO annual Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) monitored all or part of seven 1km squares in RCT and 28 in the whole of east Glamorgan. In addition to providing UK and Welsh indications of skylark population change, the BTO report that on current coverage it will be possible to monitor skylark populations at a South Wales (Glamorgan and Gwent) level. This is very exciting news.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Continue to monitor skylark populations through the BBS at a south Wales level.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>2: As and when opportunities arise, assist the BTO regional representative to increase the number of BTO BBS monitoring stations in east Glamorgan.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>3: Through the LBAP process, encourage membership of the BTO, RSPB and Glamorgan Bird Club in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Royal Society for the Protection of Birds</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage recording of skylark in RCT and the submission of records to the Local Authority and the Glamorgan Bird Club.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>5: Evidence of illegal killing, trapping or egg taking of skylark should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Dipper

Current Status

The dipper is a characteristic bird of upland, fast-flowing water courses, being perfectly adapted to feed on aquatic invertebrates. With its smart brown and white plumage, distinctive bobbing movements and whirling flight, the dipper is an irreplaceable feature of local rivers. The dipper is an indicator of good water quality and a healthy aquatic environment. It nests in tree roots and in crevices under bridges. The dipper is an excellent biodiversity symbol for riverine conservation. It is also a species which can directly benefit from biodiversity initiatives and actions.

The dipper is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and has been identified by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process as a locally valued bird.

Threats

1. Good water quality is vitally important in maintaining a healthy aquatic invertebrate community.
2. The lack of suitable nest sites can limit the breeding density of dipper on many sections of river.
3. The very spatey nature of rivers in RCT means that safe nesting sites, free from disturbance (particularly by children), may be limited in some urban areas.
4. Bridge renovation work may incidentally deprive dipper of nesting sites.
5. The removal of bankside trees as a part of flood defence works may destroy nesting sites.

Current Action

1. Regular nesting sites are a SINC selection criterion.
2. Major river systems and unmodified streams are SINC selection criteria.
3. In 1999, a dipper nest box was incorporated into a new footbridge in the Rhondda. It was being used by dipper within weeks.
4. The Breeding Bird Survey run by the BTO may provide some monitoring of dippers. One BTO Waterways Breeding Bird Survey section is monitored in RCT, and this may include dipper.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Where opportunities arise, encourage the provision of dipper nest boxes on river bridges in the Rhondda, Cynon, Ely and Taff river catchments.</p> <p>Organisations Dwr Cymru Welsh Water Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>2: When new bridges or bridge renovations are required, undertake dipper surveys and provide nest site mitigation.</p> <p>Organisations Dwr Cymru Welsh Water Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>3: Continue to support the BTO's Waterways Breeding Bird Survey in RCT and encourage an increase in the number of survey areas.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Through the Recorders' Newsletter and River Care groups, encourage the recording of the dipper in the County Borough.</p> <p>Organisations Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>5: Evidence of illegal killing or egg-taking should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Spotted flycatcher

Current Status

An insectivorous summer visitor, this species has been in decline since the early sixties (62% decline in woodland and 70% decline in farmland between 1968-1991). It is now a scarce breeding bird in the County Borough. The spotted flycatcher, although associated with woodland, is also a classic garden bird. Sheltered, warm gardens with walls and climbers offering nesting and feeding sites are ideal habitats. This is a species which could react well to pro-active urban initiatives.

The spotted flycatcher is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and EC Birds Directive. It is also a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Drought in the wintering grounds of west Africa.
2. Poor summer weather in the UK may be responsible for suppressing insect populations and reducing breeding success.
3. Loss of nest sites, due to loss of mature trees (from disease and storm damage), clearing of vegetation from walls, re-pointing and restoration of walls, etc.

Current Action

1. The LA own and manage a large number of potential spotted flycatcher sites, e.g. cemeteries, parks, and school grounds.
2. Breeding bird surveys are regularly required for planning applications.
3. In 1999, the BTO annual Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) monitoring all or part of seven 1km squares in RCT and 28 in the whole of east Glamorgan. Currently spotted flycatcher can be monitored at a UK level and perhaps at a Welsh level.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Continue to monitor spotted flycatcher populations through the BBS and encourage the reporting of spotted flycatchers through the BTO Garden Bird Survey.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>2: Cemeteries, schools and parks are potentially significant habitats. Review all LA-owned sites in RCT and identify nest box opportunities. Incorporate the maintenance of nesting sites into the management plans for each site.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>3: As and when opportunities arise, assist the BTO regional representative to increase the number of BTO BBS monitoring stations in east Glamorgan.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>4: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage recording of spotted flycatcher in RCT and submission of records to the LA and Glamorgan Bird Club.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>5: Evidence of illegal killing, trapping or egg taking of spotted flycatcher should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Whinchat

Current Status

The whinchat is a small, delicately marked member of the thrush family. It is a characteristic bird of commons, hillsides and bracken slopes. Once widespread and common, the whinchat has experienced a massive population decline in lowland, eastern parts of the UK. Virtually extinct in the east, the western hills and valleys represent an important habitat. Survey and assessment work for 'Birds of Glamorgan' (Hurford and Lansdown, 1995) found that whinchat only occurred in northern parts of the vice-county with 'a strong affinity shown to bracken-covered hillsides in the river valleys of the coalfield'. Survey work at Llwynypia has consistently illustrated the importance of the ffridd to breeding whinchat (e.g. 15 pairs in 1976, 12 in 1992) and is a clear indication of the biodiversity importance of this most characteristic of south Walian habitats. The whinchat is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and has been identified by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process as a locally valuable and characteristic bird of the ffridd.

Threats

1. Nationally, the whinchat has lost many breeding sites to agricultural improvement.
2. Many traditional sites in the east of England have been swallowed-up by urban sprawl.
3. As an African migrant, the whinchat is subject to climate and habitat changes in both migratory and wintering grounds. Apparently unexplained fluctuations in numbers may be due to unrecorded impacts many hundreds of miles away.
4. Afforestation of bracken slopes has caused the loss of breeding habitats in many areas.

Current Action

1. The presence of regular breeding whinchat is a SINC selection criterion.
2. The ffridd and bracken slopes are both SINC features and are afforded a Habitat Action Plan.
3. A local naturalist continues to survey and monitor the bird populations at Llwynypia in the Rhondda Fawr. For over 30 years, his work has provided insights into the fluctuations and changes of many bird populations in the Rhondda.
4. Bird surveys and assessments are required for planning applications affecting the ffridd.
5. In 1999, the BTO annual Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) monitored all or part of seven 1km squares in RCT and 28 in the whole of east Glamorgan. Currently whinchat can be monitored at a UK level and perhaps at a Welsh level.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate areas of nesting and feeding habitat as part of ffridd and bracken slope and coal spoil SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage the recording of whinchat in RCT and the submission of records to the LA and Glamorgan Bird Club.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: Undertake sufficient consultation and assessment to ensure that commercial forestry and Woodland Grant Schemes do not adversely affect breeding whinchat sites.</p> <p>Organisations Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Lead Partner Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>4: Continue to encourage growth in the number of BBS survey areas in RCT.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Lead Partner Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going

Actions	Timescale
<p>5: Encourage the use of the whinchat, together with the stonechat, as an emblem for ffridd and heathland conservation.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>6: Evidence of illegal killing, trapping or egg taking of whinchat should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Stonechat

Current Status

The stonechat, a close relative of the whinchat, breeds on hillsides and slopes of gorse, bracken, heath and wet grassland. It is a species which has undergone a major population decline over the last fifty years and is now very largely a coastal bird. Stonechat depend upon the maintenance of typical ffridd habitat and, as a resident species, is highly vulnerable to cold winters. The mild Glamorgan valleys, with a network of species-rich and diverse ffridd, represent a significant inland habitat area. The stonechat population of Llwynypia has been monitored for many years.

The stonechat is an indicator of good quality ffridd habitat and an emblem for its conservation. The stonechat is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and has been identified by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process as a locally valuable and characteristic bird of the ffridd.

Threats

1. Localised losses in habitat associated with agricultural change, residential and employment development, and afforestation.
2. Cold winters can severely affect stonechat populations.

Current Action

1. The presence of regular breeding stonechat is a SINC selection criterion.
2. Heathland, ffridd and bracken slopes are SINC features and are afforded a Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
3. A local naturalist continues to survey and monitor the bird populations at Llwynypia in the Rhondda Fawr. For over 30 years, his work has provided insights into the fluctuations and changes of many bird populations in the Rhondda.
4. Bird surveys and assessments are required for planning applications affecting the ffridd.
5. In 1999, the BTO annual Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) monitored all or part of seven 1km squares in RCT and 28 in the whole of east Glamorgan. Currently stonechat can be monitored at a UK level and perhaps at a Welsh level.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate areas of nesting and feeding habitat as part of ffridd and bracken slope and coal spoil SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage the recording of stonechat in RCT and the submission of records to the LA and Glamorgan Bird Club.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: Undertake sufficient consultation and assessment to ensure that commercial forestry and Woodland Grant Schemes do not adversely affect breeding stonechat sites.</p> <p>Organisations Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Continue to encourage monitoring of stonechat populations in RCT and an increase in the number of BBS survey areas.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>5: Use the stonechat, together with the whinchat, as an emblem for ffridd and heathland conservation.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>6: Evidence of illegal killing, trapping or egg taking of stonechat should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Ring ouzel

Current Status

The ring ouzel is also known as the mountain blackbird. A summer visitor, it breeds in the lightly-wooded slopes and cwms of upland Britain. The ring ouzel is an archetypal mountain bird. In the autumn, they may descend to slightly lower elevations and feed on rowan trees, prior to a southward migration. This species is locally common in northern Britain, but is much more rare further south. Apart from a small population in Dartmoor, the nesting birds of mid Glamorgan are the most southerly in the UK. Breeding Bird Surveys have consistently found singing males in a few locations at the northern end of the Rhondda, although the Glamorgan Bird Club report no positive records in the last few years. The bird is also associated with the Dare Valley Country Park (the ring ouzel is the Park's emblem), but no recent records from Cwm Dare are known.

The ring ouzel is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and has been identified through the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process as a locally valued and characteristic bird of crags, cwms and scree slopes.

Threats

1. Climate change may prove to be the primary reason for the northward retreat of breeding ring ouzel.
2. Upland forestry and over-grazing may have peripheral impacts on ring ouzel sites, but the classic breeding locations are generally very inaccessible.

Current Action

1. The presence of breeding ring ouzel is a SINC selection feature.
2. For many years, bird watchers have regularly visited known sites in the County Borough.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Seek to designate areas of nesting and feeding habitat as part of ffridd, crags and scree SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage the recording of ring ouzel (including traditional sites) in RCT and the submission of records to the LA and Glamorgan Bird Club.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: Undertake sufficient consultation and assessment to ensure that commercial forestry and Woodland Grant Schemes do not adversely affect breeding ring ouzel sites.</p> <p>Organisations Forest Enterprise Forestry Commission Lead Partner Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>4: Evidence of illegal killing, trapping or egg taking of ring ouzel should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>5: Use the ring ouzel as an emblem for upland conservation.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004

Song thrush

Current Status

A familiar songbird in RCT. Nationally, song thrush is another bird species which has experienced a frighteningly severe decline (73% reduction on farmland since 1970). Although the song thrush is still a common species in RCT, we do not know if it is declining in line with national trends. Bird monitoring work by the BTO is skewed towards the parts of England where most bird watchers live. An increase in monitoring across Wales is important if we are going to be able to monitor the local fluctuations of our bird populations. The song thrush is protected under the EC Birds Directive; the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and it is a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Farming change is certainly responsible for the massive national loss of farmland song thrush (this may not be so relevant in RCT).
2. In the past, cold winters have affected song thrush populations (again not a big problem in RCT).
3. Fox and crow predation is cited in some circles. However BTO and RSPB monitoring work has not identified predation as a major cause of songbird decline.
4. Early in the 20th Century, song thrush were nationally more numerous than blackbird. Until recently blackbird numbers were increasing and inter-specific competition has been suggested. However, even blackbird numbers now appear to be falling nationally and it is not likely to be a significant factor.
5. Hunting of migratory birds, in southern France, may have an un-quantified impact.
6. Garden and agricultural use of molluscides (like slug pellets) is thought to be a major factor in the loss of song thrush.

Current Action

1. Hedgerow regulations control loss of hedges in the County Borough.
2. Breeding bird surveys are regularly required for planning applications.
3. In 1999 the BTO annual Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) monitored all or part of seven 1km squares in RCT and 28 in the whole of east Glamorgan. The BTO reports that sufficient song thrush monitoring sites exist to monitor song thrush populations at a south Wales (Glamorgan and Gwent) level.
4. A number of song thrush sites are incidentally protected as pSINC or by TPOs.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Continue to monitor song thrush populations through the BBS at a south Wales level and encourage participation in the Garden Bird Survey.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	on-going
<p>2: Produce a good practice guide for gardeners to encourage the responsible use of 'slug pellets' and recommend alternatives.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Keep Wales Tidy Llantwit Fardre Friends of the Earth Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	2004
<p>3: As and when opportunities arise, assist the BTO regional representative to increase the number of BTO BBS monitoring stations in east Glamorgan.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	2000-2004
<p>4: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage the recording of song thrush in RCT and submission of records to the LA and Glamorgan Bird Club.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p>	2001
<p>5: Evidence of illegal killing, trapping or egg taking of song thrush should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p>	on-going

Tree sparrow

Current Status

A species which has undergone a major population decline nationally. Always more common in the east of Britain, the population has historically fluctuated on the western fringe. The population decline currently experienced however is exceptional and the species status in the south Wales valleys is perilous. A breeding population is known on the Cynon floodplain, where mature white willows offer nesting habitat, and rough grassland supports important seed sources. Elsewhere no regular breeding sites are known.

The tree sparrow is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the EC Birds Directive. It is also a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Changes in agricultural practice have led to a decline in seed sources and breeding sites. Both have affected the tree sparrow.
2. In RCT, upland areas are not suitable for tree sparrow and lowland areas have experienced habitat losses to agricultural improvement and urbanisation.
3. Long-term changes in climate may also be a factor in the eastward retreat of the species.

Current Action

1. Breeding populations of tree sparrow is a selection criterion for SINC designation.
2. The mid Cynon floodplain is a pSINC.
3. Breeding bird surveys are regularly required for planning applications.
4. In 1999, the BTO annual Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) monitored all or part of seven 1km squares in RCT and 28 in the whole of east Glamorgan. Currently tree sparrow can be monitored at a UK level.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Undertake a breeding bird survey and assessment of the tree sparrow colony at the Cynon Valley site.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2002
<p>2: Through the planning process, seek to protect mature white willows on the Cynon floodplain when threatened with development. Where trees become unsafe, and advice is sought from the Council by landowners, promote pollarding as an alternative to felling.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>3: Continue to monitor tree sparrow populations through the BBS.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Seek to designate areas of regular tree sparrow nesting habitat as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify landowners.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>5: As and when opportunities arise, assist the BTO regional representative to increase the number of BTO BBS monitoring stations in east Glamorgan.</p> <p>Organisations British Trust for Ornithology Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004

Actions	Timescale
<p>6: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage recording of tree sparrow in RCT and submission of records to the LA and Glamorgan Bird Club.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Bird Club Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>7: Evidence of illegal killing, trapping or egg taking of tree sparrow should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Bullfinch

Current Status

A familiar species of orchards and gardens. Bullfinches thrive in areas of mixed scrub and mature hedgerows where there is an abundance of berries and seed sources. The bird is also associated with wet woodlands. In common with many finches and buntings, the bullfinch population has undertaken an alarming national decline from 300-350,000 pairs in 1984 to 190,000 by 1988/9. As with many bird species, there are no data to accurately estimate the trend in south Wales. The general consensus is that the bullfinch is still a common species in RCT.

The bullfinch is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the EC Birds Directive. It is also a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Loss of breeding and feeding habitat through the removal of hedgerows, loss of traditional hedgerow management and rationalisation of agricultural land.
2. The on-going loss in farmland biodiversity (including buds, seeds and fruits) due to agricultural intensification.
3. The loss of urban fringe and open country habitat to the urbanisation of the southern part of Taff Ely and valley floors throughout the County Borough.

Current Action

1. Suitable habitat, including scrub, woodland and wetlands are SINC selection criteria.
2. The new hedgerow protection legislation protects ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows within the planning process.
3. The Planning Authority regularly requests the planting of native hedgerows and trees in landscape proposals for new developments. These may help create suitable bullfinch habitat.
4. Breeding bird surveys are regularly required for planning applications.
5. In 1999, the BTO annual Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) monitored all or part of seven 1km squares in RCT and 28 in the whole of east Glamorgan. The BTO reports that sufficient bullfinch monitoring sites exist to monitor populations at a south Wales (Glamorgan and Gwent) level.

Hedgehog

Current Status

The hedgehog is familiar to everyone. Associated with a wide range of habitats, this mammal is well adapted to suburban and urban life and regularly visits gardens. Its approachable and confiding nature makes it the most popular species of British mammal. It therefore has a role to play in encouraging and fostering the interests of the general public in mammal conservation. Although widely distributed in the County Borough, very little recording has been undertaken. Although apparently macabre, road kills provide an opportunity to record hedgehog distribution. The hedgehog has been identified by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan process as a locally valued mammal.

Threats

1. There is no clear indication that hedgehog numbers are declining, although localised losses undoubtedly accompany a host of agricultural improvement schemes and residential/employment developments.
2. Road kills.
3. Every year, hibernating hedgehogs are killed through garden bonfires (especially on Guy Fawkes night).

Current Action

1. Records of hedgehog road kills are kept by the Council's Ecologist.
2. Unknown numbers of RCT residents put food out for hedgehogs.
3. A Hedgehog Awareness Week was held in Spring 2000.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Promote hedgehogs as an emblem of urban biodiversity conservation.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>2: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage hedgehog recording (including road casualties) within the County Borough, and the submission of records to GWT and LA.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>3: Raise awareness of hedgehogs through school programmes, biodiversity awareness campaigns and membership of wildlife organisations.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Mammal Society Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004

Pipistrelle bat / all bats

Current Status

The pipistrelle bat has been afforded its own National Biodiversity Action Plan, but virtually all of the issues, concerns and actions are universal for all species of British bat. Rhondda Cynon Taff has not benefited from any systematic survey or assessment work and very few bat records are known (although five species have recently been recorded as part of assessment work for the Church Village Bypass). It is possible that including the two species of pipistrelle bat, up to twelve species might occur in the County Borough. This list includes 8 fairly common species (including brown long-eared bat, noctule, Natterer's bat, whiskered bat, Brandt's bat, and Daubenton's bat) and four uncommon/rare species (serotine, Leisler's bat and greater and lesser horseshoe bats). All bat species are vulnerable to land-use changes and many are very susceptible to building development, restoration and recreational activities. The wet grasslands, unimproved pastures, woodlands, river valleys and mine workings of the County Borough represent ideal bat habitat. It is frustrating that we still do not know how many species occur in the authority and which areas and sites are most important, sensitive and vulnerable. All species of bat are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Bat species are further listed on Appendix III of the Bern Convention, Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive and Appendix II of the Bonn Convention.

The pipistrelle, greater and lesser horseshoe bat are National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Reduction in insect prey, due to agricultural intensification and pesticides. This is cited as a major impact in much of the UK. It is likely to be less significant in RCT, where agriculture is not intensive and pesticide use is not widespread.
2. Loss of habitat, such as wetlands, hedgerows and woodlands. This is a major problem in much of lowland RCT.
3. Loss of winter roosts in old trees, caves, tunnels, buildings, mine adits and cellars. Many street and parkland trees are old. For safety reasons these are being felled instead of coppiced.
4. Disturbance and loss of roosts due to loft conversions or timber treatment.

Current Action

1. The National Biodiversity Action Plan for the pipistrelle bat contains a number of actions relating to national bat work. These include JNCC National Bat Habitat Survey, DOE National Bat Monitoring Programme, National Bat Colony Survey, SNH design briefs for incorporating bat mitigation into house designs, and investigations into the physiology and biology of bats.
2. The Planning Authority requires planning applications which affect potentially important structures, trees and woodlands to include bat assessment and mitigation.
3. The Planning Authority requires barn conversions to include bat surveys and mitigation.
4. The Planning Authority has also managed to secure the provision of bat boxes in other new developments and structures.
5. All species of bat are strongly protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and EC Habitats Directive and the Agreement on the Conservation of Bats (which arose out of the Bonn Convention).
6. CCW provides advice and guidance on bat-related issues.
7. Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) has successfully installed bat boxes at their Cilfynydd Environment Centre.
8. In parts of Wales DCWW is using 'Belfry'-type boxes as integral features on new bridges and in trees.

Brown hare

Current Status

Nationally, hares are most common on the arable lands of eastern England. However, they appear to have undergone a major nation-wide population decline since the 1960's. In RCT, the brown hare is an uncommon species. It is, however, associated with open areas of upland grassland and will use wetland sites for day-time cover. The present status of the brown hare in the County Borough is very unclear although recent records exist for the Llantrisant area.

The brown hare is a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Agricultural change including the shift from grassland to arable, the intensification in cropping and harvesting, and the general loss of biodiversity.
2. In RCT, the area of upland habitat has declined with forestry and may have been further damaged by intensive sheep grazing of upland pasture.
3. Wet weather is particularly injurious during the breeding season (killing the young) and if trends to wetter weather are confirmed this may have long-term implications for the local population.
4. Poaching, lamping and coursing with greyhounds may be a problem.

Current Action

1. Brown hare is listed in the SINC selection criteria. Evidence of regular breeding is a selection criterion.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: The lack of survey information in RCT is a major constraint to any further action. Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage all sightings and records of brown hare to be forwarded to GWT, LA and CCW.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>2: As and when opportunities arise, support agri-environment incentives to promote brown hare conservation in Glamorgan.</p> <p>Organisations Country Landowners Association Countryside Council for Wales Farmers Union of Wales Glamorgan Wildlife Trust National Farmers Union Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: Through an article in the relevant NFU, FUW and CLA newsletters, encourage landowners and managers to submit brown hare records for RCT (see Action 1).</p> <p>Organisations Country Landowners Association Farmers Union of Wales National Farmers Union Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000
<p>4: Evidence of illegal poaching, lamping or hare coursing for brown hare should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Red squirrel

Current Status

This native British squirrel was once associated with lowland deciduous woodland, but is now restricted in southern Britain to conifer plantations. Although CCW have a few old records for the upland forestry plantations in RCT, there are no recent, confirmed sightings. There has been no systematic survey work. However, considerable areas of potential red squirrel habitat exist in the mature conifer plantation of the County Borough. Two recent (post 1997) unconfirmed records have been made in Llantwit Fardre.

Red squirrel is listed in Appendix III of the Bern Convention and is protected by Schedules 5 and 6, Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The red squirrel is a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Spread of grey squirrels has certainly had some direct or indirect consequences.
2. Habitat fragmentation has reduced the suitability of some sites.
3. Disease has also been cited as a major problem.

Current Action

1. RCT Planning Department has requested assessment of red squirrel for a number of land reclamation schemes which impact upon mature conifer plantations.
2. Neath and Port Talbot CBC, CCW and FE have commissioned a red squirrel survey for the Neath Valley.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Through the LBAP and the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage the recording of red squirrel in RCT (both recent and old records).</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>2: Continue to require all planning applications affecting mature conifer plantation to include an assessment of red squirrel.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: Evidence of illegal killing or harming of red squirrel should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Actions	Timescale
<p>5: Inform FE of the dormouse colony on one site and investigate management opportunities. Ensure that dormouse conservation is integrated into the Forestry Plan for the site.</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Forest Enterprise Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Vincent Wildlife Trust</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2001
<p>6: Continue to require dormouse surveys and mitigation for all developments infringing upon or isolating potentially suitable woodlands, hedgerows or scrub.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>7: As and when opportunities arise, promote biodiversity management schemes, through Coed Cymru, for suitable dormouse woodlands.</p> <p>Organisations Coed Cymru Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>8: As and when opportunities arise, encourage and advise appropriate management for dormice at all known and potential sites. Set-up a pilot scheme at the Ty Rhiw Key Countryside site.</p> <p>Organisations Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service Coed Cymru Countryside Council for Wales Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>9: Evidence of illegal killing or harming of dormouse should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Water vole

Current Status

The water vole is traditionally associated with lowland streams and rivers, canals and ditches. Until very recently it was regarded as a common riparian mammal. It is estimated that by 2000, 94% of former sites will have been lost and a recent Wildlife Trust report has warned of the threat of extinction. Within the last thirty years records exist for the Ely valley and ditches on the River Cynon, at Tirfounder Fields. No confirmed post-1990 records exist in the RCT area. Much of the Cynon and Ely catchment would appear to support potentially suitable habitat but no systematic survey information exists.

Fully protected under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and is a National Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Predation by mink is thought to be the principal reason for the post 1980's national decline.
2. In the recent past, many rivers and watercourses in the industrial valleys of mid Glamorgan were probably too polluted for water vole. Existing poor water quality in streams in the Church Village area may account for the species apparent absence from that area. Elsewhere, water quality has dramatically improved in the last twenty years and in County Borough terms is not a limiting factor.
3. The use of rodenticides (presumably to control brown rats) is cited as a factor in the national decline.
4. Development on the floodplains in the County Borough has significantly reduced the areas of undisturbed riverine habitat and has led to habitat fragmentation.

Current Action

1. The Environment Agency has produced Local Environment Action Plans for the whole river catchment area covering RCT. These include water quality controls, habitat creation proposals and controls on floodplain development.
2. Some survey and assessment work has been undertaken for the Church Village by-pass but no water voles have yet been found.
3. The Cynon is identified as a River Park in the Cynon Valley Local Plan. The concept is to maintain the environmental corridor.
4. 'Water Vole - Conservation Handbook' published by Environment Agency, English Nature and The Wildlife Conservation Research Unit was produced in 1999.
5. The Environment Agency has commissioned a water vole survey in the Ely and Vale LEAP area. It may extend the surveys to cover other areas of RCT if this is considered worthwhile.
6. In 1997 Wildlife Watch launched 'Water Vole Watch' to encourage children to survey and record water voles. It is an excellent introduction to the species and survey methodology.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Continue to require water vole surveys for all planning applications potentially affecting water vole habitat.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>2: Through the RCT Recorders' Newsletter, encourage River Care groups (and others) to report sightings of water vole in RCT to the LA.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>3: Provide training for River Care groups in identifying evidence of water vole and mink.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Lead Partner</p>	2000-2002

Actions	Timescale
<p>4: Where opportunities arise, promote the watercourse management techniques identified in the Water Vole Conservation Handbook to retain and enhance bank-side cover and habitat.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>5: If water vole colonies are identified, inform landowners and promote active riparian management and monitoring.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>6: Seek to designate rivers and streams with water vole as SINC, through the UDP process.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001-2004
<p>7: Discuss with the Environment Agency the suitability of extending a water vole survey into RCT.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001
<p>8: Evidence of illegal killing or harming of water vole should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going

Otter

Current Status

Although one of the largest mammals in RCT, the otter is a seldom-seen inhabitant of rivers, streams, wetlands and wet woodlands. Once regarded as ubiquitous, the otter virtually disappeared from lowland Britain in the 1980's. It has since experienced something of a recovery and in south Wales it has returned, or is returning to all of the major river systems. Reports of otter in RCT have been made on the rivers Taff, Cynon and Ely. The current RCT status is however not fully known.

Listed on Appendix I of CITES, Appendix II of the Bern Convention and Annexes II and IV of the Habitats Directive. It is protected under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 and Schedule 2 of the Conservation Regulations, 1994 (Regulation 38). The European sub-species is listed as globally threatened on the IUCN/WCMC RDL. The otter is a National Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Threats

1. Pollution of watercourses, especially from PCBs, was responsible in large part for the post 1960's decline.
2. Insufficient prey associated with poor water quality.
3. Loss of bankside habitat features required for breeding and resting.
4. Incidental mortality, primarily by road deaths.
5. Disturbance of resting and breeding sites in urban and suburban areas.

Current Action

1. Major rivers and important streams, wetlands and wet woodlands are recognised as pSINC.
2. The designation of Cynon River Park is a planning policy in the Cynon Valley Local Plan. This offers an opportunity to protect and conserve the river Cynon and its environs.
3. The objectives, actions and targets of the National, Regional and Action Plans for wet woodland, purple moor-grass and rush pasture, coastal and floodplain grazing marshes, and rivers and streams are all of direct relevance to otter.
4. RCT Highways Department have incorporated an otter tunnel into a new road bridge over the river Rhondda.
5. Incorporation of an otter holt into a riverside school in Taff Ely is under investigation.
6. Otter surveys are requested for large scale planning applications which affect watercourses or wetlands.
7. As part of 'Working for Wildlife' an otter training day was held in spring 1999 for local River Care Groups.
8. The Wildlife Trusts of Wales have an 'Otters and Rivers Project' and an appointed Officer. The intention is to develop a network of otter recorders across Wales.
9. EA provide advice on otter conservation, have produced a otter handbook and are currently funding a survey of otter road-deaths on black spots in Wales.
10. The Mammal Society are undertaking a survey of mammal and birds of prey road casualties.
11. Dwr Cymru Welsh Water is the species champion in Wales, supporting the Otters in Rivers project and providing artificial holts.

Actions	Timescale
<p>1: Repeat the Otter Training Day through the continued 'Working for Wildlife' biodiversity training programme.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Groundwork Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2002
<p>2: Through the Recorders' Newsletter, encourage the submission of all otter records to the 'Otters and Rivers Project' .</p> <p>Organisations Countryside Council for Wales Environment Agency Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>3: Through the planning process and land drainage consents, continue to require all new river bridges, highways schemes and other riverside development proposals to incorporate otter mitigation.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>4: Seek to designate streams and rivers with important otter habitat as SINC, through the UDP process, and identify land ownership.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2000-2004
<p>5: Continue to require otter surveys and mitigation for planning applications potentially affecting otter.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>6: As and when opportunities arise, encourage interested individuals to train as Otters and Rivers Project surveyors.</p> <p>Organisations Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>7: Evidence of illegal killing or harming of otter should be reported to the South Wales Police Wildlife Liaison Officer promptly, for appropriate action.</p> <p>Organisations South Wales Police</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>8: Dwr Cymru Welsh Water to continue to investigate the potential for artificial otter holt construction on Sewage Treatment Works and other sites.</p> <p>Organisations Dwr Cymru Welsh Water Keep Wales Tidy Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	on-going
<p>9: The Environment Agency is proposing an otter survey to be undertaken in 2001.</p> <p>Organisations Environment Agency Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	2001

Actions	Timescale
<p>5: Where survey and assessment work has identified badgers or their setts, ensure that design and construction work for all new bridges, highways schemes and other development incorporates effective mitigation measures.</p> <p>Organisations Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lead Partner</p>	<p>on-going</p>

The Plan has been produced by the Rhondda Cynon Taff Local Biodiversity Steering Group, reporting to a wider partnership.

The Steering Group included Rob Seymour (to April '99), Ryan McClusky (to Nov '99) then Chris Tucker, Forest Enterprise; Karen Yates, National Farmers Union; Owain Williams, Country Landowners Association; Celia Thomas, Coed Cymru; Peter Cloke and Matthew Easter, Groundwork Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taff; Alex Coxhead, Glamorgan Wildlife Trust; Paul Marshman, local naturalist; Cullen Morris, Group for Environmental Awareness in Rhondda; Glenn Evans, Tonyrefail Community Council (to May '99); Andy Wilkinson and Tim Orrell, Glyncornel Environmental Centre; Suzanne Davies, Keep Wales Tidy (to June '99), CSV (from July '99); Janet Lintern, Llantwit Fardre Friends of the Earth; Richard Gotheridge (to May 2000), Bernard Jones, Keep Wales Tidy; Rob Hathaway, Richard Wistow and Liz Dean, Rhondda Cynon Taff Planning Department (to August 2000) then Environment Division.

The text can be viewed at <http://www.rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk/planning>

A large print version of this document is available on request.

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