




AGGREGATE
INDUSTRIES



Biodiversity plan

2008-2012

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Policy on biodiversity

Since 2005, Aggregate Industries has operated a single issue biodiversity policy. However, in 2006 it was recognised that biodiversity is an integral element within a broader set of environmental and community policy commitments.

In April 2007, a new policy was issued which aligned and streamlined three separate policies: environmental, community and biodiversity into a single environment and community. Although biodiversity is not explicitly referenced in the title of the new combined policy, it is at the heart of the commitments and remains a key element of our approach to environmental management and community engagement.

Aggregate Industries was the first in the sector to develop a company-wide Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), first published in 2002 and covering a five year period. In this initial plan, the fundamental approach was to use site based BAPs to deliver biodiversity protection and enhancement. A programme of training was introduced, delivered by the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust to develop capacity within operational teams in the effective management of biodiversity. Progress against the company BAP objectives has been reported in our annual sustainability reports since 2003.

In developing this new plan for the UK business, we have engaged in a consultation in order to understand the national and local frameworks and expectations of key stakeholders. This process has allowed us to review and modify our initial approach to one which will in the next five years attempt to maximise the effort through better planned activities and targeted conservation works in our landholdings. This biodiversity plan incorporates five themes which come from our policy commitments and follow stakeholder dialogue.



Performance against biodiversity objectives 2002-2007

Overall the progress made since the start of the BAP in 2002 has been positive. 33 sites have formal biodiversity action plans, with around 20 more working towards establishing one. Aggregate Industries has continued to be recognised for this work and recent highlights of this include:

- 2006 British Trust for Ornithology Business Bird Challenge - first places for Little Paxton Quarry (large quarry) and Moorcroft (large dry quarry).
- 2006 Most Innovative Organisation - Awarded by British Standards as a part of the 10th anniversary celebrations for ISO14001, judges cited our work on biodiversity.
- 2007 Quarry Products Showcase - Cooper Heyman Cup for Restoration to Forfar Quarry (Angus, Scotland).
- 2007 The Wildlife Trusts' Biodiversity Benchmark certification at Little Paxton Quarry (Cambridgeshire).

1 Objective: To maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the managed areas of UK BAP sites so that more than 80% are achieving favourable condition as defined by Natural England.

Progress: We have made limited progress towards this objective because of the quality of survey data. This objective will continue but work is in progress with Natural England to gain better quality information.

Complete

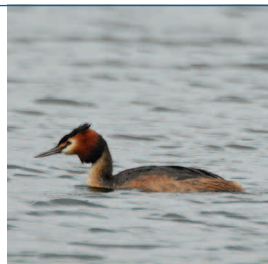
2 Objective: To agree and implement management plans for all SSSIs in company control, with the objective of achieving favourable condition as defined by English Nature.

Progress: was replaced by 1 above.

3 Objective: To improve the management of priority species and habitats on our sites.

Progress: The development of a Geographical Information System (GIS) approach has started and we have made excellent progress towards the large task of transferring information from existing paper archives to the electronic form needed for GIS.

Complete



4 Objective: To raise awareness and provide information about biodiversity within the company.

Progress: Work continues with biodiversity awareness training provided by Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, which will be further improved with the production of new and enhanced training elements.

Complete

5 Objective: To improve our relationships with external conservation organisations.

Progress: Excellent relations now exist with three principal groups. With the Royal Society for Wildlife Trusts, we have worked to revise their "Biodiversity Benchmark", which was re-launched in January 2006; we have supported The Wildlife Trusts' work in the BBC Breathing Places Campaign and supported their conferences; we are active on Defra's Business and Biodiversity Strategy Implementation Group and the Minerals and Nature Conservation Forum.

Complete

6 Objective: To raise public awareness of biodiversity in general.

Progress: Sponsored and co-authoring the production of an Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) practitioner guide on biodiversity.

One of the most frequently downloaded documents from our sustainability website is the Company BAP.

Support for the Wildlife Trusts' work in the BBC Breathing Places Campaign has delivered increased activity levels in practical nature conservation.

Complete

Themes

Themes for the second Aggregate Industries' biodiversity plan 2008-2012

A series of overarching themes has been developed at the heart of the company plan in consultation with a stakeholder panel.

Theme 1: Contribution to landscape scale conservation.

Theme 2: Prioritised site-based biodiversity action.

Theme 3: Prioritising action to specific habitats and species.

Theme 4: Effective monitoring and reporting of performance to show positive contributions to UK biodiversity strategy.

Theme 5: Raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity in conjunction with key partners to inform the broader public policy debate.

Each of these themes provides us with a framework to set objectives which will be delivered during the next five years. The themes, however, may carry over into future company plans.



Theme 1: Contribution to landscape scale conservation

Landscape scale conservation has been a concept for many years and one, which although still debated, has been adopted by many public sector organisations as a key element. The principle relates to the need to consider the interconnections between habitat and species that allow for adaptation within a landscape scale. In our densely populated islands, natural systems have become disconnected from each other resulting in pockets of high value ecology, statutorily protected areas, which are surrounded by poorer landscape elements.

By connecting these pockets together, wildlife is provided with a means to move in response to changes in the environment. This concept is becoming more relevant as a key component with climate change adaptation policy. Isolated communities of flora and fauna are less able to adapt.

Our landholdings are a part of the landscape and in some cases represent an excellent opportunity to contribute to the protection or enhancement of biodiversity by expanding existing areas of conservation value outside our control (often in public ownership or stewardship).

Where our land is adjacent to other areas of conservation value, opportunities will be explored to add value to existing landscape scale conservation. Two examples of this which have been developed over the past years are at Bardon Hill, where we have created areas of lowland acid heath habitat to form part of the Charnwood Forest; and at Blackhill Quarry in Devon, where progressive restoration is expanding the heathland habitats on Woodbury Common.

Objective 1: Integrating our site plans with landscape scale conservation programmes by the end of 2008.

Objective 2: Achieve a measurable positive contribution to relevant large scale conservation programmes annually from the end of 2009 to the end of 2012.



Theme 2: Prioritised site-based biodiversity action

In our first company BAP we made commitments to have site BAPs across all our operations. From our experience in the past five years and with the input from stakeholders, it is now not considered appropriate to apply a universal requirement to the development of individual BAPs. While the discipline of the BAP does provide impetus and control, the resources necessary to develop and maintain such a formal plan at all locations is not appropriate. Throughout the UK various regional and local BAPs exist to deliver objectives at the relevant scale, duplicating these existing plans with our own is not always necessary, themes 2 and 3 are therefore closely related.

As a consequence, we have now decided that there are sixteen high priority locations or tier 1 sites, that do require formal plans. These are sites which possess habitats with priority status and where there is genuine opportunity to enhance biodiversity within a larger scale scheme - as described in theme 1, on page 7. Also on sites with designated, statutorily protected areas within our property, where the plan becomes a part of our overarching commitment to remain legally compliant. Finally, plans are also appropriate where a site is situated in an area with high levels of local conservation activity.

Objective 3: Establish, maintain and report publicly our progress at tier 1 sites (link to objective 1) annually from 2008.

Objective 4: Establish, maintain and publicly report a set of criteria for tier 1 classification by the end of 2008.

Objective 5: Achieve certification to Biodiversity Benchmark at all tier 1 sites by the end of 2009.



Theme 3: Prioritising action to specific habitats and species

Our landholdings cover the whole UK and contain many but not all types of terrestrial and aquatic habitats. Many key sites containing important, but not necessarily designated, areas have already been working to develop new landscapes through both restoration and on-going conservation works.

While it is inappropriate to identify one or two nationally significant species and habitats, we will work closely with local conservation groups and government agencies to aid in the provision of havens for locally important species. It is clear that quarries create habitats suitable for certain types of species, notably Peregrine Falcons colonise rock faces in hard rock quarries and Sand Martins create their nests in sand and gravel operations.

On sites which are not in any of the categories in theme 2, we will link our land management practices in line with the objectives contained within local BAPs or the national BAP, when we have appropriate contributions to make. In other words, we will review all sites and assess the existence or the possibility to create habitats or conditions that encourage priority species and work with local BAP partnerships to develop these areas of land in line with the local BAP. In this way we can contribute in a meaningful way towards existing programmes at local, regional and national scale.

Objective 6: On sites without formal plans, identify key local BAP species suitable for conservation or protection by the end of 2009.

Themes

Theme 4: Effective monitoring and reporting of performance to show positive contributions to UK Biodiversity Strategy

In order that we are able to provide evidence that this plan and other initiatives are achieving the desired outcomes, we will be developing a suite of measures in conjunction with key stakeholders. Both quantitative and qualitative measures will be considered in line with technical developments and stakeholder requests. This is a hugely challenging area that many organisations have struggled with but remains vital to the effective evaluation of the success of our work.

Geographical information systems provides a powerful means to store, manipulate and analyse spatial data. It should provide us with high levels of precision and consistency in terms of classifying information.

Objective 7: Obtain 80% in favourable status on all legally designated sites by the end of 2012.

Objective 8: Use our geographical information system capability to record and show our status and work with the national biodiversity network on appropriate reporting methods by the end of 2009.



Theme 5: Raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity in conjunction with key partners to inform the broader public policy debate

Environmental concerns are many and various, although over the past year climate change has come to dominate the public conscience and policy debate. Biodiversity, its protection and enhancement, presents both an intrinsic value to society and a significant part of the approach to adaptation of the natural world to the effects of climate change in the future. We believe this to be poorly recognised and understood in the wider community.

In conjunction with key partners, we will develop and support the promotion of tools to help make the case that biodiversity has a significant role in climate change adaptation.

Through our support of The Wildlife Trusts' role in the BBC's Breathing Places campaign, we have an excellent opportunity to get people out into the environment, to inspire them and assist in the creation of places of long-term value to nature conservation.

In 2007, we co-authored and sponsored the publication of an Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment Practitioner guide to biodiversity. We are represented on Defra's Business and Biodiversity Strategy Implementation Group and the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts' Biodiversity Benchmark Steering Group and Technical Committees. Combined, these activities will provide opportunities to promote the development of effective and appropriate responses to address the challenge presented by the decline in the UK's biodiversity in the coming five years.

Objective 9: Working with key partners, support and promote biodiversity as a key environmental challenge.

This is an objective unlike those preceding it, as it is not easy to identify a clear condition when this objective can be shown to be achieved. With this in mind we will demonstrate our performance by publicly reporting our involvement with formal forums or multi-stakeholder initiatives engaged with biodiversity and where appropriate asking one or more key partner to support our role.

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