

# AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT

*People in all sectors of society should play their part in conserving biodiversity. Ultimately, successful implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan will depend on this widespread understanding. The Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership will develop a programme to increase awareness and involvement in biodiversity conservation.*

Biodiversity conservation cannot just be left to people involved in land management and nature conservation. It involves many sectors of society and people in all walks of life. Although many people are aware of the need to conserve biodiversity, they do not always appreciate that it concerns them directly: their actions can make a difference.

An action plan will be prepared to specifically address awareness and involvement issues. A working group will assess current initiatives and their effectiveness, identify gaps, and agree objectives, targets and appropriate action. The group will fully consider methods of spreading the biodiversity message. Some initial ideas are sketched out here.

## **Key Sectors**

One of the central aims of the Biodiversity Action Plan is to increase understanding and support for biodiversity throughout the county. This will involve key sectors of society: farmers and land managers, all levels of government, business and industry, media and education, youth and community groups and the professions. Successful implementation of the action plan will depend on widespread understanding.

Biodiversity messages and initiatives can be geared to the particular interests of each sector. For instance, the success of the biodiversity programme is very dependent upon action by farmers. Farm managers and industry will be keen to know how to promote biodiversity without losing long-term profitability. Youth leaders may wish to know how to interest young people in the natural world, and in education, schools need to be aware of all the opportunities for integrating biodiversity into the curriculum.

Getting the biodiversity message across will involve guidance from the Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership and the support of people in each sector who can communicate in terms that are both relevant and understandable to the sector concerned. Leaders in each sector should be invited to take an active role.

## **The Public's Role**

Messages on biodiversity should reach everyone as individuals too. Here, messages should focus on the benefit of biodiversity conservation to us all: the enjoyment of contact with nature; the need to protect wildlife for our children; and our moral duty to protect wild species. Action for biodiversity will improve the quality of everyone's life in their own neighbourhoods and communities.

Building awareness can be done in many ways. Information can be distributed through a variety of media and materials such as publications, illustrated talks, displays in shopping centres and libraries, guided nature walks, adverts or programmes on radio and television, the internet and marketing of biodiversity alongside popular products. Messages need to be simple, relevant and easily accessible.

People can also be given opportunities to play a more active part: improving their own gardens for wildlife; helping to clear the village pond of debris; setting up a wildlife corner in their local park; and celebrating local plants and animals in festivals and other events. These types of initiatives give people a greater understanding and a stake in the well-being of their local biodiversity. Direct experience builds appreciation of biodiversity conservation.

## chapter 7

**Education and Training**

Integrating biodiversity conservation into formal education is one of the most important vehicles for raising awareness. Young people form their attitudes to the environment at a very early age, and if children understand and respect nature they are more likely to grow into environmentally-aware adults. Education of school children can also have an important knock-on effect to parents and the wider community.

Several national initiatives are examining how biodiversity can be better integrated into the National Curriculum and teacher training. On a practical level, biodiversity education can be promoted through ensuring that all schools have access to nature areas, preferably within their own school grounds. Hampshire County Council's Schools Landscape Project and the national organisation Learning Through Landscapes are two of the many groups that advise on ways to enrich school grounds.

Other initiatives could help to spread awareness. Visitor centres provide a focus for practical activities and field studies, offer equipment and teaching materials, house exhibitions and libraries of information. Nature reserves in the community give people access to wildlife at first hand. Projects which promote a rich biodiversity in the neighbourhood are vitally important in every community, rural or urban.

**Co-ordinated Programme**

Widespread understanding is crucial for successful implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan. Action must be underpinned by greater public awareness and support, and a heightened awareness within those sectors that can have an influence on biodiversity conservation. Many excellent initiatives already exist: for example, the Hampshire Wildlife Trust's Parish Tree Wardens Scheme, Local Environment Initiative and WATCH project for children; district council initiatives such as Eastleigh Borough Council's Pond Rescue Campaign and Southampton City Council's Hawthorn Urban Wildlife Centre; and Hampshire County Council's Community

Action Fund and Country Parks. However a strategy is needed to co-ordinate efforts, identify gaps, and greatly increase popular support.

A marketing strategy should aim to get the key messages of biodiversity conservation across to both the general public and to key sectors. Leaders in society will be needed to champion the cause, and more examples of good practice will be needed to illustrate what can be accomplished. Biodiversity should become a household word and an issue that transcends all levels of society.

**AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT:  
ACTION**

- *establish a working group to prepare an action plan to address awareness and involvement in biodiversity conservation*
- *ensure that information on biodiversity and how to get involved in conserving biodiversity is readily available to the public. Local authorities and voluntary conservation organisations in particular can promote awareness and provide opportunities for involvement through mechanisms such as grant-aid for community projects and the management of nature reserves*
- *promote the Biodiversity Action Plan for Hampshire and publicise the main objectives and programme of action*
- *develop a strategy for marketing biodiversity which targets key sectors such as business and industry, all levels of government, the public, land managers and education*
- *encourage and support organisations in developing their corporate awareness and commitment to biodiversity, for example within all departments of local government*
- *ensure that biodiversity is a central component of Local Agenda 21 programmes and that Agenda 21 initiatives help to generate awareness and involvement in biodiversity*
- *support the integration of biodiversity conservation into formal education*



69. Environmental education



70. School grounds