



**Biodiversity Action Plan
for Hart
2018-203**

Contents

Introduction.....,,,,,,,,,	3
Purpose of this Action plan	4
Biodiversity Achievements 2012-17.....	5
What is biodiversity and why is it important?	7
Overview of the biodiversity resource in Hart	9
Designated sites in Hart.....	11
Nature conservation sites managed by HDC.....	17
Action Plan 2018-23	19

I. Introduction

- 1.1 The natural environment in Hart has experienced large changes over the past century, in common with most of south eastern England. However, there remains an extremely diverse natural environment in the district, rich in different habitats and species. Hart is characterised by a mosaic of farmland, ancient woodlands, lowland heathlands and water courses. There is also a varied built environment from newer towns such as Fleet and Yateley to rural towns and villages such as Odiham and Hartley Wintney which all contain features which contribute to overall biodiversity resource.
- 1.2 The publication of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act in 2006 makes biodiversity an important consideration for all local authorities. Section 40 of this act sets out the duty to conserve biodiversity: “Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”.
- 1.3 The adoption of the first Hart Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) in 2012 helped translate national and regional targets into local action, whilst also highlighting species and areas of local importance. The first Hart BAP was implemented by the Council’s Biodiversity Officer in partnership with other groups such as the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC), Hart Countryside Services, Parish Councils, friends of groups and other council departments.
- 1.4 The BAP set various actions in the broad areas of development control and planning policy, monitoring and survey work, land management and enhancement and education and awareness.
- 1.5 The Hart District Council Corporate Plan (2017-22) commits to protecting and enhancing biodiversity through development mitigation, managing designated sites positively and working with local groups to deliver enhancements projects. Another key corporate aim is to update the 2012-17 BAP.

2. Purpose of this Action Plan

2.1 This document aims to build on the previous plan while reflecting new opportunities and areas of focus for the period until 2023. The BAP will seek to deliver specific projects, many of which will be linked to the aspirations within the Corporate Plan for protecting and enhancing biodiversity in Hart. The BAP and its associated actions is also a key part of delivering national biodiversity targets at a local level and to facilitate Hart meeting its statutory biodiversity duties.

2.2 The broad aims of this Plan are:

- To continue protecting habitats and species within the district and enhance existing areas for wildlife;
- To ensure that all council owned or managed designated nature conservation sites are managed favourably and monitored accurately;
- To action the creation of new habitats through planning policy, including investigating the feasibility of introducing a biodiversity offsetting scheme;
- To continue raising awareness of biodiversity within the community;
- To raise awareness of biodiversity among council staff and members and work to make biodiversity a key consideration in council decision making;
- To Monitor and review local biodiversity and this action plan.

3. Biodiversity Achievements 2012-17

3.1 Through the period 2012-17 covered by the first Hart BAP there have been many notable changes and achievements as a result of actions from that plan. These include:

- Around 350 planning consultations per year provided with biodiversity advice;
- Biodiversity aims and projects incorporated into the Hart Green Infrastructure Strategy (adopted in 2017);
- At the outset of the first BAP there were 262 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) across the district covering 1945 hectares. At the end of the BAP period in 2017 there were 281 SINCs covering over 2000 hectares of the district;
- “Bioblitz” events undertaken at Broad Oak Common (July 2013) and Basingbourne Heath (July 2015);
- Wildflower schemes developed across the district in partnership with Parishes and residents associations (over the course of the BAP period we have developed 20 schemes around the district);
- New pond created at Potley Primary School in 2015;
- Talks given to groups such as Fleet WI, Fleet U3A, Fleet Rotary and Camberley Natural History Society about biodiversity in Hart (generally two per year);
- Biodiversity-focused articles in each edition of “Hart News” with associated schemes for wildflower seeds and sparrow terraces (two editions annually);
- Input into biodiversity policies in the emerging Local Plan.



Pond created at Potley Primary School in 2015

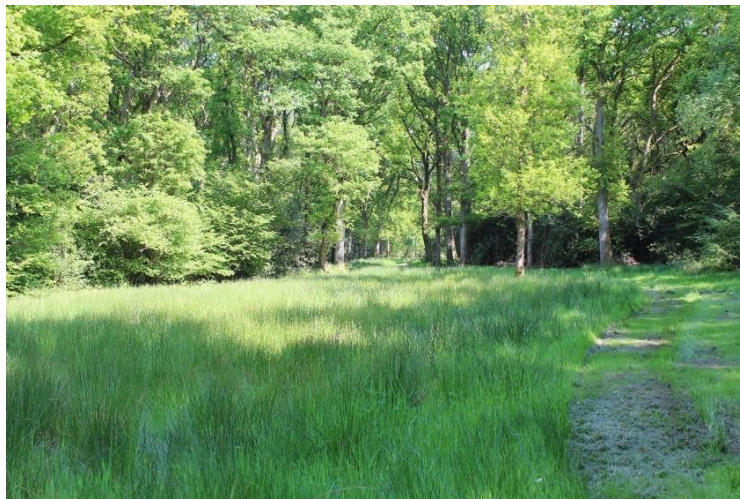


Wildflower meadow created at Zebon Copse – one of 20 schemes created over the course of the first BAP

4. What is Biodiversity and why is it important?

- 4.1 The word biodiversity was first used at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. It stands for biological diversity and is the term used to describe the variety of life on earth in all its forms. This includes variety or differences in genes and individuals of the same species, between different plant and animal species and within or between entire ecosystems. The term goes far beyond simply the number of species in a given environment or habitat.
- 4.2 Not all habitats are equal in biodiversity terms. Broad-leaved woodland and unimproved flower-rich lowland meadows are rich in biodiversity when compared to habitats such as intensive arable farmland or densely constructed urban conurbations. Even within the urban environment gardens, parks and allotments can all be relatively diverse.
- 4.3 The natural world, its biodiversity and its ecosystems are critically important to our well-being and economic prosperity, but are consistently undervalued in conventional economic analyses and decision making (UK National Ecosystem Assessment, 2011). The "services" that ecosystems deliver loosely fit into four categories: Provisioning services (food, water, fuel); regulating services (pollination, water purification, flood reduction, pollution control); cultural services (spiritual enrichment, health and wellbeing, recreation); support services (soil formation, nutrient cycling) (Defra 2011, The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature).
- 4.4 In 2012 the Government published 'Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services'. This document effectively replaced the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP). However, the species and habitats included within the UKBAP remain important conservation targets, especially at a local level.

- 4.5 More recently, in 2018 the Government published "[A green future: our 25 year plan to improve the environment](#)". This also contains a number of biodiversity targets including restoration of designated sites to “favourable condition”, creating new habitat, protecting and restoring declining species and increasing deciduous woodland cover across the country.
- 4.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that local planning authorities should set out a strategic approach to their Local Plans by planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks for biodiversity and green infrastructure. The NPPF also encourages development to achieve a “net gain” for biodiversity which can be delivered in a number of ways.
- 4.7 One mechanism for achieving biodiversity “net gain” is through the implementation of a “metric” which calculates the amount of biodiversity uplift required above standard mitigation in order to achieve this gain. This can be delivered on site or through “offsetting” – which can be through a contribution to an appropriate [off-site enhancement project](#). This action plan will provide a mechanism for net gain to be delivered in Hart.



Odiham Common SSSI – a highly biodiverse site

5. Overview of the Biodiversity Resource in Hart

- 5.1 In comparison to some other districts of Hampshire, Hart is particularly rural in character. There are five major urban areas; Fleet, Hook, Yateley, Blackwater and Hartley Wintney. Urban areas can be rich in biodiversity in comparison to areas such as intensive farmland with gardens, parks, railways and road corridors all providing opportunities for species. Urban areas should be considered as places with substantial opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.
- 5.2 The district's urban centres have substantial tree cover, especially in parts of Fleet. As well as the visual amenity value of the trees themselves, they perform vital functions in terms of climate amelioration and as a biodiversity resource in themselves.
- 5.3 A landscape character assessment based initially on a county-wide assessment identified two broad groupings of rural landscape types:
- Chalklands (open arable and chalk and clay)
 - Lowland mosaic (heathland and forest, pasture and woodland, mixed farmland and woodland and river valleys)

On a local scale within Hart district these landscape types can be further subdivided to give a more detailed local assessment of the landscape character (https://www.hart.gov.uk/sites/default/files/4_The_Council/Policies_and_published_documents/Planning_policy/Landscape%20Assessment%20Merged.pdf)

Landscape types associated with chalk occur in the southern part of the district in a broad sweeping band south of Odiham and Crondall. The chalk landscapes are typified by rolling hills, large mainly arable fields and scattered blocks of woodland. In the very southern part of the district the chalk landscape becomes more complex with increased woodland blocks and two areas of enclosed mixed farming where the field sizes are smaller and the hedgerow structure is stronger.

5.4 Aside from the chalklands in the south of the district, the remainder of the landscape is made up of a patchwork of other habitat types which reflect the underlying geology. Large areas in the north and east of the district are covered by heathland and forest. Most of the heathland areas in the district occur as part of a mosaic of heathland, grassland, scrub and woodland. These habitat types occur at Hazeley Heath, Eversley, Yateley and Hawley Commons and in the area to the east of Fleet. More open heathland habitats are found on Yateley Common. The woodland comprises a number of species but a distinction can be made between the predominantly coniferous woodland plantations and broad-leaved woodland, some of which may be semi-natural and ancient in origin. There are also some areas of farmed landscape associated with the unenclosed woodland and heathland and this retains a “heathy” character.

5.5 Three main river systems pass through Hart District: the Blackwater, Hart and Whitewater. The habitats and landscape associated with the river corridors is typically flat, low-lying pasture crisscrossed with drainage ditches which commonly floods. There has also been extensive gravel extraction along the Blackwater Valley which has created a series of wetlands. Tree species such as willow and alder are frequent along the ditches.

The Basingstoke Canal and its associated habitats passes through Fleet and across the district to the south of Odiham. The canal itself is an important site for biodiversity and it also has features such as the Greywell Tunnel which is a nationally important site for biodiversity.

5.6 The variety of landscape types within the district help to create an impressive biodiversity resource. The specially designated conservation sites in the district are described in more detail in the following section.

6. Designated sites in Hart

- 6.1 There are three main tiers of conservation designations for sites in the UK, based on their relative importance for biodiversity. Internationally designated sites include Ramsar sites, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Nationally designated sites include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs), while local sites include Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). International and nationally designated sites are often referred to as "statutorily" designated sites (see figure 1).

Internationally important Sites

- 6.2 The Thames Basin Heaths SPA was designated in 2005 under the EC Birds Directive and represents the best remaining areas of heathland in north Hampshire, Berkshire and Surrey. SPAs are comprised of nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific interest in the UK.

The areas of heathland included in the SPA within the district cover 2, 099 ha and are designated due to their breeding populations of woodlark, Dartford warbler and nightjar.

Nationally important sites

- 6.3 There are 16 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) that fall entirely or partially within the district boundary. Together they cover 2,696 ha which equates to approximately 12.5 % of the district (Table 1). Approximately 95% of the SSSI area in Hart is in either favourable or unfavourable but recovering condition.



Dartford Warbler, one of the component species of the Thames Basin Heaths SP

Table1. Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Hart

Site Name	Parish	Area in district (ha)	Designating Features
Basingstoke Canal	Fleet/Church Crookham/Crookham Village/Dogmersfield/Winchfield/ Odiham/Greywell	38	Aquatic habitats and associated terrestrial habitat i.e. flushes
Blackwater Valley	Blackwater and Hawley/Yateley	14.61	Unimproved meadows, swamps and woodland
Bourley and Long Valley	Ewshot/Church Crookham	381.52	Heathland, woodland, mire and grasslands
Bramshill	Bramshill/Hartley Wintney/Eversley	673.27	Acid ponds and associated mire
Butter wood	Greywell/Odiham	87.67	Ancient wood pasture
Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Common	Eversley/Yateley/Blackwater and Hawley	897.83	Heathland and associated fauna such as Dartford warbler
Fleet Pond	Fleet	48.34	Extensive shallow lake with diverse flora and fauna
Foxlease and Ancells Meadows	Fleet/Blackwater and Hawley	67.39	Acid grassland
Greywell Fen	Greywell/South Warnborough	38.04	Calcareous valley mire
Greywell Tunnel (Basingstoke Canal)	Greywell	38.34	Nationally important bat roost
Hazeley Heath	Hartley Wintney/Mattingley	180.52	Heathland habitats
Heath Brow	Ewshot	1.90	Geological interest
Hook Common and Bartley Heath	Hook	122.85	Heathland and woodland habitats and diverse faunal assemblage
Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw	Odiham/Dogmersfield/Winchfield	133.77	Wood pasture, meadow and common land
Warnborough Green	Odiham	4.36	Unimproved wetland meadows

West Minley Meadow	Hartley Wintney/Blackwater and Hawley	4.33	Wet, grazed acid grassland
--------------------	---------------------------------------	------	----------------------------

6.4 Castle Bottom National Nature Reserve (NNR) is an important valley mire located in the north of the district. The reserve also includes supporting heathland and woodland. The nature reserve is also part of the SPA and Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons SSSI. The site is owned and managed by Hampshire County Council.

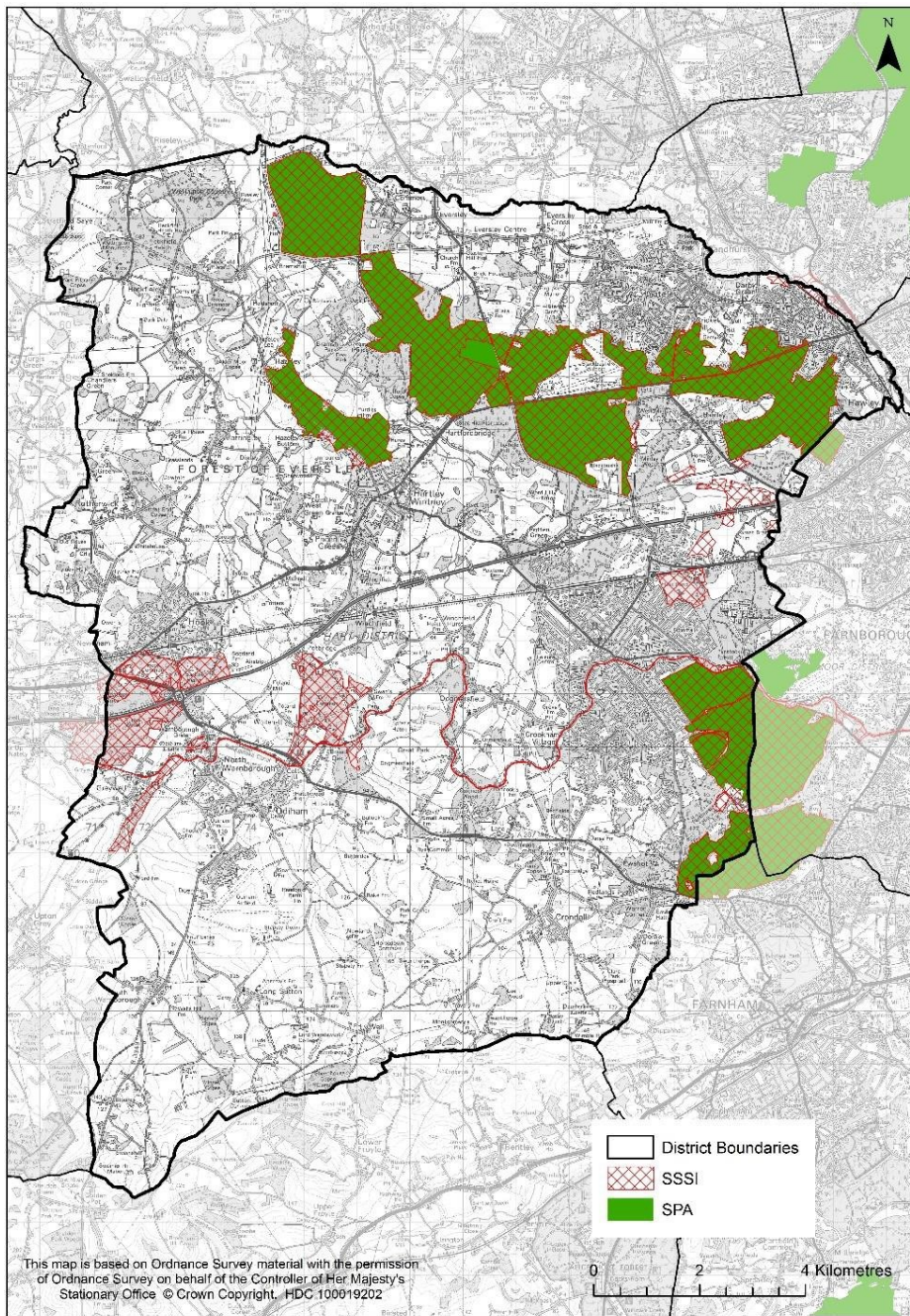


Figure 1. Statutorily designated sites in Hart

Locally Important Sites

- 6.5 Habitats and species which are regarded as important at a county level are designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). Hart works in partnership with the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) to identify, designate and monitor the sites. Sites are designated using a series of criteria created by Hampshire County Council, The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Natural England. SINCs are reviewed annually on a rotational basis and boundaries on existing sites can change while new SINCs can also be designated. Occasionally SINCs can also be deleted if they no longer hold the interest for which they were originally designated.
- 6.6 There are 273 SINCs in the District at present which cover a total of 1,986 ha. SINCs comprise a wide range of habitat types including woodland, grassland, aquatic features and heathland. All SINC's in the district can be seen on the council's online mapping <https://maps.hart.gov.uk>
- 6.7 Local Nature Reserves are designated by the Council with approval from Natural England. LNRs have an emphasis on being sites which can be enjoyed by the public for recreation and education while also being managed for nature conservation.

There are three LNRs within the District:

- Elvetham Heath (managed by HDC)
- Fleet Pond (managed by HDC)
- Zebon Copse (managed by Hampshire County Council)



Elvetham Heath Local Nature Reserve

7. Nature Conservation Sites managed by Hart District Council

- 7.1 Hart Countryside Services manages three areas of SSSI: Fleet Pond (also an LNR), Odiham Common and Hazeley Heath (south). These three sites are varied in the component habitats they support including heathland, ancient woodland and reedbeds. They require a range of specialised management regimes to ensure the features of nature conservation they support are protected.
- 7.2 Fleet Pond Local Nature Reserve covers 21 hectares and is Hampshire's largest freshwater lake. Much of the lake is designated as SSSI. As well as the open water of the lake there are associated reedbeds, woodland and small areas of heathland. Much of the woodland associated with the reserve is regarded as wet and is dominated by alder and willow.
- 7.3 Hart District Council owns and manages 51 hectares of Hazeley Heath, all in Hartley Wintney Parish. This is generally referred to as the southern section of the heath with the northern section being owned and managed by the RSPB. This is one of the largest tracts of lowland heathland in the region where 90% has been lost in the past 100 years. This endangered environment supports an array of plant and animal communities and it is because of this rich biodiversity that it has been notified a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), by Natural England. It is also part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) for its internationally important heathland habitat.
- 7.4 Odiham Common covers around 115 hectares is located in north Hampshire to the north east of Odiham and south of Winchfield and falls within the Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The site is an extensive area of wood pasture (formerly grazed by commoners' livestock), meadows and common land. The oak/hazel woodland contains abundant holly. Due to its historic management as wood pasture the ground flora is more typical of acid grassland. Given this variety of habitats the common supports a wide range of notable species.
- 7.5 In addition to the SSSI sites, HDC also own and manage Elvetham Heath LNR

and SINC which is located on the northern edge of Fleet, abutting the M3 motorway corridor. The site covers approximately 26 hectares of public open space, consisting of heathland and woodland.

- 7.6 The Countryside Service also manages a number of other sites which include SINC's within the boundaries. These include Hartley Wintney Central Commons and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) sites such as Bramshot Farm Country Park. It is likely that further SANG sites will be adopted and managed by HDC over the course of this action plan and they represent opportunities for ecological enhancement within the general SANG management objectives.



Hazeley Heath SSSI

8. Action Plan 2018-23

8.1 This updated five-year plan outlines the actions that will provide the framework for delivery of biodiversity protection and enhancement across the district during the plan period.

8.2 The Government's Biodiversity 2020 strategy for the UK highlights that "...conserving biodiversity in England has long depended on partnership, involving statutory, voluntary, academic and business sectors". Potential partners for delivering specific actions are highlighted in the plan.

8.3 The actions fall into three broad categories: Development Control and Planning Policy, Site Management, Enhancement and Monitoring and Raising Awareness of Biodiversity in the district. The plan also includes a section for review as the plan period progresses.

8.4 Development Control and Planning Policy

Development control

Action	Timescale	Responsibility /Potential Partners	Relevant habitats/sites/species
Where relevant, ensure that biodiversity is a material consideration at the pre- application stage	Ongoing 2018-2023	HDC Officers, Natural England, developers	Could potentially benefit all habitats & species
Provide biodiversity comments on planning consultations within 28-day expiry period	Ongoing as required 2018-2023	Biodiversity Officer	Could potentially benefit all habitats & species

Planning policy

Action	Timescale	Responsibility/ Potential Partners	Relevant Habitats sites/ species
Produce a "Supplementary Planning Document" for biodiversity outlining HDC expectations for applications	2018-2019	DC officers, potentially external consultants	Could potentially benefit all habitats & species with some species targeted specifically e.g. swift bricks incorporated into new builds
Investigate the potential for, and if feasible introduce, a "biodiversity		HDC Officers,	Could benefit a number

offsetting" scheme for Hart in order to deliver "net gain"	By March 2019	potentially external consultants, landowners	of targeted habitat types and associated species
Support Planning Policy with general biodiversity advice as required for the Draft Local Plan Strategy and sites Document and associated New Settlement DPD	Ongoing as required 2018-2019	HDC officers	
Work with HBIC to develop "ecological network habitat mapping" layer and investigate how to integrate this into planning policy	2018-2020	HDC officers, HBIC	Potentially a range of habitats e.g. woodland, acid grassland, heathland

8.5 Management, Enhancement and Monitoring

Site management

Action	Timescale	Responsibility/ Potential Partners	Relevant habitats/ sites/species
Ensure that HDC managed SSSI sites are managed positively in line with existing or developing management plans to protect and enhance designating ecological features and work towards achieving "favourable" condition	2018-2023	HDC Officers, HDC Countryside Service	Odiham Common, Hazeley Heath & Fleet Pond and designating species
Ensure that HDC managed SINC sites are managed positively to enhance the features of the designating criteria	2018-2023	HDC Officers, HDC Countryside Service	Could potentially benefit a range of species and habitat types
Ensure that biodiversity opportunities on HDC SANG sites are maximised where appropriate alongside SANG function	2018-2023	HDC Officers, HDC Countryside Service	Could potentially benefit a range of species and habitat type
Provide management advice to external landowners to maximise biodiversity on their sites	2018-2023	Parish Councils, Private Landowners	Could potentially benefit a range of species and habitat types

Biodiversity enhancement projects

Action	Timescale	Responsibility/ Potential Partners	Relevant habitats/ sites/species
Support existing wildflower projects and develop new opportunities	Annually 2018-2023	HDC officers, Grounds Maintenance, Highways, Parish Councils	Invertebrates e.g. butterflies/bees
Support small enhancement projects across the district	Annually 2018-2023	Countryside Services, Parish councils	Could potentially benefit a range of species and habitats

Resource monitoring

Organise site-specific monitoring surveys for SSSI sites as required by condition assessments	Annually 2018-2023	HDC officers, countryside service, external consultants	Could potentially benefit a range of species including designating species for SSSIs
Maintain SLA with HBIC and oversee SINC monitoring survey program	Annually 2018-2023	HDC Officers, HBIC	All SINC sites within the district
HDC representation on HBIC Steering Group	2019-20	Biodiversity Officer	
HDC representation on Hampshire Local Authority Ecology Forum	Annually 2018-2023	Biodiversity Officer	

8.6 Education, Awareness and Events

Action	Timescale	Responsibility/ Potential Partners	Relevant habitats/ sites/species
Provide biodiversity-based talks to local interest groups	Minimum of 2 Annually 2018-2023	Biodiversity Officer	
Contribute biodiversity related articles to Hart News	2 Annually (spring and autumn) 2018-2023	Biodiversity Officer	

Maintain relevant biodiversity information on HDC webpages	Ongoing 2018-2023 as required	HDC Officers	
Arrange "Bioblitz" at Bramshot Farm in Collaboration with other officers	August 2019	HDC officers, Countryside Service	

8.7 Review

Action	Timescale	Responsibility/ Potential Partners	Relevant habitats/ sites/species
Full five-year review of whole action plan	2023	Biodiversity Officer	



Silver-washed Fritillary, Basingstoke Canal at Odiham