



NATURAL ASSETS STRATEGY 2007-2012

FOREWORD

A healthy natural environment should be of concern to everyone, as the quality of human life depends fundamentally on the quality of the environment.

Since 2000, the Borough Council has been carrying out its Natural Assets Strategy. This has provided measurable improvements to the natural environment and its importance to the people of the Borough. The highlights of this work programme include a marked increase in the number of tree preservation orders, an increase in woodland management schemes, the expansion of a network of Local Nature Reserves and an enhanced system of biological recording with community involvement.

The Council has five strategic priorities for the Borough, which will help to build a better future for Halton. These were reviewed by the Halton Local Strategic Partnership during 2005/6 in its new Community Strategy. These are Healthy Halton; Safer Halton; Children & Young People in Halton; Employment, Skills and Learning in Halton; and Urban Renewal in Halton.

This review highlights the Council action on our natural assets for the next 5 years, taking the strategy forward until 2012 and cutting across all the strategic priorities. We will continue with those policies that are tried and tested, and introduce new actions that reflect the changing environmental circumstances in which we live. The document continues to provide the framework from which to develop and apply understandable and workable policies for our trees, woodlands and nature conservation resource.

(Signed by Leader of Council, when the strategy is approved)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

1.1.1 This strategy is both a policy and an action document. It provides information on the natural environment of Halton and how actions will be carried out to protect, manage and enhance this resource.

1.1.2 It is as much about people as about the resources themselves. Halton's natural assets provide an attractive and interesting setting for work and play, with known social and health benefits towards raising the quality of life for local people.

1.1.3 Since the first Natural Assets Strategy in 2000, the messages on sustainability and biodiversity have continued to be refined and kept high in the public domain. Halton's rôle remains as part of a global need to protect and improve the environment whilst also finding ways to meet social and economic needs.

1.1.4 Sustainability requires effective integration of social, economic and environmental policies, a full appreciation of environmental carrying capacities (limits and impacts) and the maintenance of our total stock of natural assets. This strategy is part of Halton's commitment to sustainable development.

1.1.5 The strategy highlights opportunities for action by a wide range of people and organisations, acting on their own or in partnership. The strategy provides a focus for actions with the overall aim of promoting Halton's natural assets resource for the future.

1.2 STATUS OF THE STRATEGY

1.2.1 The strategy is set within the context of the statutory land use policies in the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) [*ref. 1*]. It will be taken into account when determining planning applications and appeals. Sections of the strategy will be used as the basis for Supplementary Planning Documents in the Local Development Scheme, which will take over from the UDP in 2008.

1.2.3 The strategy is a firm statement of the Council's corporate policies towards its natural resources and its actions form part of Halton's Community Strategy. It has been prepared in accordance with "Building a Better Future", Halton's Corporate Plan and Community Strategy.

2.0 A REVIEW OF 2000 - 2006

2.1 NATIONAL POLICIES

2.1.1 Central government has made a firm commitment to Sustainable Development. This is taken forward through Community Strategies and Local Strategic Partnerships, [ref. 2] where local authorities have an obligation to develop an environmental programme based on the principles of sustainable development, partnership and local community involvement. This provides the opportunity to develop a comprehensive and corporate approach to protecting irreplaceable natural assets and by compensating for damage or losses through habitat replacement or enhancement. Local authorities have to demonstrate, for instance, that local biodiversity planning has been considered within their community strategy and LSP.

2.1.2 The principles of the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity, together with the UK government's Sustainable Development drive, underpin all local authority work on their natural assets. Biodiversity is the variety of life, and the overall goal of the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan is "to conserve and enhance biological diversity within the UK and to contribute to the conservation of global diversity through all appropriate mechanisms". In October 2002, the England Biodiversity Strategy was published, establishing the government's vision for conserving and enhancing biodiversity in England. It expects to secure targets for species and habitat recovery. The targets will have a role in helping to meet the Government's commitment made at the 2002 Johannesburg world Summit to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. More recently, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places greater responsibility upon public sector bodies to consider biodiversity in the work they do.

2.1.3 Recent changes in the planning system reflect these sustainability and biodiversity issues. Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (PPS9) marks a significant advance in how the planning system supports the conservation of the natural environment while delivering sustainable development. PPS9 requires planning policies to be based on up to date environmental information and acknowledges that natural asset issues have a key role to play in other policy agendas for rural renewal, urban renaissance, green space provision, quality of life and well-being. It also recognises that local wildlife sites, currently called SINC's in Halton, have a fundamental role to play in helping to meet national biodiversity targets

2.1.4 Parks and open spaces are very much back on the national agenda, so that everyone has access to attractive, well managed and safe greenspace within a short walk of home. This requires such areas to be multi functional, combing the natural environment with policies for recreation, heritage, social inclusion and regeneration agendas. CAFE Space is part of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and was set up in May 2003. It champions excellence in the design and management of parks, streets, squares and other open spaces in our towns and cities.

2.1.5 Climate change presents a series of important and immediate challenges to our natural assets. There is already clear evidence to show that plants and animals, including those characteristic of the England's countryside and seas, are being affected by climate change. This includes changes in populations, ranges, migration patterns, and seasonal and reproductive behaviour of certain species. Such effects will become more apparent and extensive as climate continues to change, with local species extinctions and habitat-loss becoming increasingly probable. Current work nationally suggests that green space may be the key to making cities liveable in future. Parks, gardens, street trees, living roofs and walls, ponds and rivers can help with overheating and the problems of both too much water and not

enough. National policies are emerging, and Halton's response will be published in due course.

2.1.6 Changes in the objectives and priorities for woodland management have been brought about by The England Forestry Strategy [ref. 3] and the introduction of a new Woodland Grant Scheme. The system of grants has been radically revised to reflect the values that are most desired by today's society. These include the creation and maintenance of habitats for wildlife, producing healthy and pleasing living and working environments for people, protecting biodiversity and aspects of our cultural heritage, and providing safe areas for recreation and sport.

2.1.7 The two British Standards which are most commonly used in arboriculture have been extensively revised to include recent advances in best practice. BS3998 recommends how tree surgery operations should be carried out in a safe and responsible manner. BS5837 gives recommendations and guidance on the principles to be applied when considering which trees should be retained on development sites and how those trees should be protected from the construction works.

2.1.8 New legislation about High Hedges was contained in Part 8 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003. This gave local authorities the power to investigate complaints made by local residents about evergreen hedges in neighbouring properties.

2.2 REGIONAL ISSUES

2.2.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West [ref 4] sets out the future framework for development, including the adoption of sustainability principles, and covers a broad range of targets for the environment. In delivering these targets, Local authorities should afford the highest level of protection and management to those resources which are important or irreplaceable; ensure there is no net loss in the value of other biodiversity resources in the region; and return key biodiversity resources to viable levels in accordance with the targets in UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans. The North West Biodiversity Forum provides a co-ordinating mechanism to assess biodiversity sustainability in the region.

2.2.2 Halton is part of a regional Natural Area put forward by English Nature called the Urban Mersey Basin [ref. 5]. This is not a formal designation but a way of combining physical features, wildlife habitats, land use patterns and culture. The Urban Mersey Basin covers approximately 2,360 square kilometres and contains all of Halton that is above the mid-tide level of the Mersey Estuary: permanently submerged marine habitats are in the Liverpool Bay Natural Area. Despite the pressures of manufacturing and service activities, agriculture still remains the most widespread use of land stretching from the Cheshire plain to the south and to the north of St. Helens. The estuaries of the Dee, Mersey and Alt are of international importance, saltmarsh and lowland heath of national importance, ancient woodland and ponds of regional importance and industrial sites with calcicole (alkaline-loving) vegetation of more local importance.

2.2.4 The Regional Forestry Framework for England's Northwest [ref. 6] was published in 1995 with the aim of helping to shape the woodland and forestry sector in the region for the next twenty years. The Framework is based on six Action Areas:-

- Enterprise and Industry
- Regional Image
- Biodiversity and Landscape
- Health, Well-being and Quality of Life
- Climate Change and Energy

- Supporting and Resourcing the Sector.

2.3 LOCAL INFLUENCES OF THE NATURAL ASSETS STRATEGY

2.3.1 The Council has five strategic priorities for the borough, which will help to build a better future for Halton. These were reviewed by the Halton Local Strategic Partnership during 2005/6 in its new Community Strategy. These are Healthy Halton; Safer Halton; Children & Young People in Halton; Employment, Skills and Learning in Halton; and Urban Renewal in Halton. The action programme of the Natural Assets strategy cuts across these priorities.

2.3.1. The Borough Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) provides a development control framework for enhancement and the current Natural Assets Strategy has been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Further changes are now required to ensure our natural assets are included in the Local Development Scheme which is taking over from the UDP.

2.3.2 Community involvement in the Natural Assets Strategy continues to grow. Area forums have been in place since 2003 and successfully and quickly tackle local issues. At the same time, our Area Forums provide a vehicle for community empowerment, engagement and participation. On specific environmental matters, Halton's Natural Environment Roundtable brings together a wide range of organisations and individuals with an interest in the local environment.

2.3.3 Participation in the national Green Flag Awards has risen, with 6 of our open spaces regularly receiving this award. The Green Flag standard includes recognition of the natural element within site management plans and has further helped to carry out the natural assets work programme.

2.3.4 The Council's web site has developed significantly over the last five years, not least with its content regarding the natural environment. Information and guidance about many local issues of interest and concern can now be accessed in this way.

3.0 A STRATEGY FOR TREES & WOODLANDS

3.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF TREES & WOODLANDS

POLICY ONE The Council recognises the important contribution made by trees and woodlands to the environment and is committed to the responsible and sustainable custodianship of this resource on any land which it owns or influences.

3.1.1 Trees and woodlands are of vital importance in maintaining and improving the quality of life for those who live or work within the Borough. Trees are the most obvious of our natural assets, by virtue of their size and prominence, but they do not last for ever and are vulnerable to changes in their surroundings. The many benefits that trees bring to the environment have been well documented [ref. 7] and it is our duty to ensure that, as well as ourselves, future generations are also able to enjoy these benefits.

3.1.2 Trees have great visual amenity value which can significantly enhance the appearance of the locality. They provide contrasts of size, colour and texture to the urban landscape and effectively reflect the changing seasons, bringing nature into towns. Prominent trees become accepted as landmarks and are often held in high regard by local residents.

3.1.3 Of increasing value to modern living is the contribution that trees make to improving the quality of the air that we breathe. As well as removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and releasing oxygen, trees also improve air quality by filtering out harmful pollutants (such as ozone, ammonia, sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxides and dust particles). A number of scientific studies have demonstrated these properties, which are of benefit to us all but are of particular importance to the growing numbers of people with respiratory ailments.

3.1.4 Trees in towns can screen unsightly structures and activities. They can give privacy and help to reduce noise from traffic and industry. They can have a limiting effect on the extremes of weather by providing shelter from wind and shade from the sun. They are effective in intercepting rainfall, thus reducing problems of rapid water run-off from hard surfaces.

3.1.5 Woodlands, and parklands which contain trees, provide essential space for quiet, informal recreation activities such as walking, jogging and cycling. The opportunity to escape briefly into these areas from the hustle and bustle of modern life is very important and should not be taken for granted. Woodlands are also important for landscape and wildlife reasons, and for the production of timber, a renewable resource.

3.1.6 Halton is situated at the heart of The Mersey Forest, the largest of England's twelve designated community forests. The Council is an active partner in this project, which was launched in 1994 with the aim of dramatically increasing woodland cover in the region over the next 30 years. In Halton, the successful outcome has been the creation of more than 100 hectares of new woodland to date.

3.1.7 This strategy concerns all trees in the administrative area of Halton; whether old or young, whether urban or rural, whether publicly or privately owned and whether they are growing in woodlands or groups, or as individual specimens. All trees should be regarded as parts of the living landscape and subject to the principles of sustainability. Following sections of this strategy will describe the characteristics of these various components of the treescape, and the Council's policies towards them. The main purpose of these policies is to raise awareness of the value of trees, so that decisions affecting them are not taken without due consideration.

3.1.8 Only 7% of England's surface area is made up of woodland (greater than 0.25 hectare in size) and Halton has less than half of this national average. The resource of smaller wooded areas (less than 0.25 hectare in size) and individual trees in Halton is very varied, with some parts of the Borough being very poor in tree cover whilst other parts have relatively high numbers of trees. Runcorn New Town has an abundance of both mature woodlands and developing semi-mature trees, and is a good example of an urban forest.

3.1.9 Ancient woodlands are of particular historical and ecological importance, requiring special attention [see 3.4.13 & Appendix 3]. Halton has a number of ancient woodland sites but very few ancient individual trees, usually termed "veteran" trees. An explanation for this could be that dramatic losses of trees were caused by pollution in the 1880's, when emissions from chemical factories at Weston killed trees within a distance of eight miles, including 5,000 trees on the Norton Estate [ref. 8].

3.1.10 In the traditional urban and suburban areas, there are a significant number of trees in streets, parks and gardens which are fully mature (more than 60 years old). These trees are mainly of large-growing species such as Oak, Ash, Beech, Horse Chestnut, Sycamore and Lime. Post-war planting of verges and open spaces has tended to use a wider variety of species, with a higher proportion of smaller-growing varieties such as Cherry, Rowan, Thorn and Birch.

3.1.11 Runcorn has expanded greatly since its designation as a New Town in 1964 and large numbers of trees have been planted since then to landscape the new roads, housing estates and industrial units. A wide variety of tree types have been planted, including the full range of native species, some decorative exotics and fast-growing species such as Poplar, Alder and Willow. These trees are now semi-mature and in need of attention, as many are still at close spacing and some are situated close to properties.

3.1.12 Most of the larger and mature woodlands in the Runcorn area are managed by The Woodland Trust. These woods are essential to the local environment and are open to public access at all times. The grounds of Norton Priory contain some fine specimen trees, some of them being of rare species.

3.1.13 Widnes is very much associated with the chemical industry and has in the past been regarded as a hostile environment for tree establishment. Tree cover is still relatively poor but, in recent years, extensive planting has been carried out on reclaimed sites and within the corridor of the new trunk road system. These trees will become more noticeable in the landscape as they grow.

3.1.14 Outside Halton's principal towns of Runcorn and Widnes, are the villages of Moore, Preston Brook, Daresbury and Hale, and the adjoining countryside. Trees are significant and characteristic features of these areas too. Changes in agricultural practices and other factors have influenced the rural landscape over the last thirty years or so, with declining numbers of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. On a more positive note, there are some good local examples where new hedges and woodlands have been successfully planted on farmland.

3.1.15 Despite a general awareness of the tree stock and the pressures it is under, there is not enough detailed information available for it to be managed effectively. Surveys need to be undertaken to record the numbers, distribution, age and health of the Borough's trees. The data gathered could then be used to assist in making decisions about how they can be managed responsibly and sustainably.

3.1.16 The key objective of management should be to establish and maintain a resource of trees and woodlands which:-

- is sufficiently high in number to meet environmental needs,
- is diverse in species, but with a preponderance of native origin,
- is suited to location,
- is in a good state of health, and
- has balanced proportions of mature, semi-mature and young trees, thus ensuring continuity of cover in the future.

3.2 TREES ON DEVELOPMENT SITES

POLICY TWO The Council will seek, through the development control process, to retain and protect trees of high amenity value, to replace any trees which are unavoidably lost, and overall to increase the number and quality of trees in the Borough.

3.2.1 Existing trees in prominent locations are usually held in great esteem by the public and it is therefore not surprising that such trees can become the subject of controversy when threatened by a development proposal. The careful retention of healthy trees can give a sense of maturity to a development and be a significant asset when selling new properties. However, there is no point in trying to keep trees which are overmature or defective and which could soon become dangerous in their new surroundings.

3.2.2 The relevant British Standard [*ref. 9*] should be regarded as an essential reference for all those concerned with the development of sites where trees are present. It gives valuable guidance, following a logical sequence of events from the initial survey through the design period to the protection of retained trees from site works by the provision of temporary fencing. All developers of land in Halton where trees are present should be expected to adopt these principles when submitting applications for planning permission.

Action 1 The Council will require developers of sites containing trees to demonstrate that the principles of BS 5837 are being followed during the planning process, and will not grant permission if this is not the case.

3.2.3 The input of an experienced arboriculturalist at an early stage of the planning process is strongly recommended and, whenever the opportunity arises, the Council should encourage pre-application discussions with developers about the relative importance of existing trees. An information leaflet giving further advice on this topic is available from the Council, which will be updated and formally adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

Action 2 The Council will publish a Supplementary Planning Guidance document about trees on development sites.

3.2.4 An essential first stage of planning a development should be to carry out a thorough survey of existing natural features. Such a survey should plot all trees accurately and record details of species, size, approximate age and physical condition. The trees should then be categorised in accordance with the BS5837 guidelines and the information taken into account when designing possible layouts for the site.

3.2.5 Where significant trees are present, developers should engage a specialist consultant to prepare a detailed report about the arboricultural implications of the development and any special methods of working which need to be applied to ensure that important trees are retained in a healthy condition. Such a commitment may be necessary to show that all the factors relating to trees have been properly considered and that the granting of planning permission will not result in a net loss to the environment.

3.2.6 The Council has the opportunity to protect existing trees on a development site by making new tree preservation orders (TPOs) and by attaching conditions to any permission granted. The Council should take this responsibility seriously by carrying out surveys of potential development sites to assess the amenity value of any trees present and taking appropriate action.

Action 3 The Council will seek to protect trees of high amenity value on development sites by making tree preservation orders where appropriate and by attaching conditions to planning consents.

3.2.7 Under certain circumstances, trees can cause structural damage to buildings with inadequate foundations. To eliminate any potential threat of this type of damage, the National House Building Council (NHBC) has produced guidelines for determining the appropriate depth of foundation when building near to trees [ref. 10]. These standards should be applied to all new building operations, hopefully allowing trees and buildings to co-exist in the future without conflict.

Action 4 The Council will ensure that adequate foundations are provided for new buildings when they are constructed close to trees, in accordance with NHBC Standards, Chapter 4.2.

3.2.8 In situations where it is determined that the needs of development outweigh the amenity value of existing trees, there should be adequate compensatory planting. If there is insufficient space to plant suitable replacements within the site, the developer should be asked to fund planting on Council land in the vicinity.

3.2.9 The Council's minimum arboricultural target for development sites should be to maintain the number and quality of trees, in accordance with the principles of sustainability. However, where appropriate, opportunities to increase tree cover in the Borough should be taken and high quality landscaping schemes should be required as a condition of all planning permissions.

Action 5 The Council will seek to at least maintain, and wherever possible increase, the tree cover of the Borough as part of the development control process.

3.2.10 In summary, the Council's policies towards trees on development sites should aim to:-

- Retain wherever possible all trees which are of value to the environment, ensuring that they are fully protected from site works and successfully incorporated into their new.
- Ensure that appropriate replacement planting is carried out to compensate for any unavoidable loss of trees.
- Overall, to increase the quantity and quality of trees in the Borough.

3.3 THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF TREES & HEDGES

POLICY THREE The Council will manage its own stock of trees and hedges in a sustainable manner which takes into account both safety and amenity issues, and encourage other landowners to do likewise.

Council owned trees

3.3.1 The environmental benefits of trees and woodlands are great, but so are the responsibilities of management and the possible consequences of negligence. Trees are

living, changing entities and can sometimes develop into potentially dangerous structures which can cause serious damage to people and property [ref. 11].

3.3.2 Under Common Law, all landowners have a duty of care to manage trees in their ownership, in the interests of the safety of their neighbours and the general public. Where the owner is a large organisation such as a local authority, it is clear from past court judgements that a high level of expertise is expected in the management of trees in public places. The Council thus has an obligation to have its trees inspected on a regular basis by a qualified person, in order to detect any indications of disease, decay or structural defects, and to take any action found to be necessary.

3.3.3 The Council has set up a system for recording information about trees, but the process of data collection has been constrained by the limited availability of qualified staff. During the next five years, it is proposed to allocate funds for the appointment of an arboricultural consultant to assist with this task. To demonstrate that the available resources are being used as effectively as possible, trees in areas of high public usage (such as those in proximity to buildings and principal roads) will be designated as a high priority for regular inspection.

Action 6 The Council will continue to monitor the trees in its ownership by carrying out regular inspections and by storing information about their quantity, distribution, size, species, age, health and condition.

3.3.4 As well as the removal of trees which are found to be diseased or dangerous, trees which are unsuitable for their position should also be felled. Otherwise, they will become more of a problem in the future and more expensive to deal with by then. Thinning of groups of trees to promote healthy growth of the better ones should be regarded as an important investment for the landscape of the future.

Action 7 The Council will, subject to available finance, carry out all work recommended by the tree survey programme. Priority will be given to any works deemed necessary for safety reasons.

3.3.5 By inspecting trees and carrying out any recommended work proactively, the Council should be better placed to demonstrate that it is fulfilling its duty of care. In time, this should also help to reduce the number of complaints and emergency call-outs, as developing problems are dealt with at an earlier stage. However, with human nature and the weather being what they are, it will never be possible to remove this reactive type of work completely.

3.3.6 The Council regularly receives letters and telephone calls complaining about its trees, usually from those living nearest to them. Some complaints seem to be of a trivial nature, but others have more substance and are made with good justification. Trees can obstruct light and views, interfere with TV reception, and generally become troublesome because of honeydew drip and falling leaves. However, the positive benefits of the tree should always be weighed against any cited problems before deciding what action, if any, to take.

3.3.7 Requests to fell trees which are in a healthy condition and of high amenity value should usually be resisted; conversely, trees which are in poor condition or clearly unsuited to their location are best removed. Requests to reduce the height of trees should in most cases be turned down, but crown lifting or thinning may be an acceptable alternative. The Council has the technical knowledge and experience to make these judgements, including the priority and seasonal timing to be given to each agreed task.

Action 8 The Council will treat all communications about trees courteously and in compliance with the published standards of the Council. However, there will

be a presumption against felling or reducing the height of trees which are owned by the Council without good justification.

3.3.8 Whenever work is carried out on trees owned by the Council, it should be in accordance with good arboricultural practice [ref. 12]. Any pruning undertaken should not be detrimental to the general health, shape and character of the tree concerned. All work should also be carried out in compliance with all the current health and safety regulations.

Action 9 The Council will carry out all tree work in accordance with British Standard 3998 (latest revision) and all relevant health and safety regulations.

3.3.9 Street trees are probably the most prominent category of trees of the urban forest, but are usually the ones which face the most stressful growing conditions. As well as having to function in poor and compacted soils, often beneath hard surfacing, the roots have to share this space with the various utilities. This means that trenches are regularly dug by the statutory undertakers to install new services or to maintain existing ones. This ground disturbance, particularly when roots are severed, is a real threat to tree health and stability. National codes of practice have been produced to describe the best working methods to be adopted when carrying out excavation or other highways works close to trees [ref. 13]. The Council should insist that these standards are adhered to by all the utility companies and by its own contractors.

Action 10 The Council will expect and require all utility companies to carry out any essential trenching work close to trees in accordance with NJUG 10. The Council will apply the same principles when planning or undertaking its own work close to trees.

3.3.10 Claims are frequently made against the Council because of alleged damage to property by tree roots. Roots can cause damage either directly or indirectly. Direct damage can occur when an expanding trunk or root is in contact with hard surfacing such as paths and lightly-loaded structures such as garden walls. This type of damage is relatively common but remedial work is usually straight-forward and can often be carried out without felling the tree.

3.3.11 Indirect damage can occur when trees extract water from shrinkable soils, leading to subsidence of nearby buildings with inadequate foundations [ref. 14]. This type of damage is much less common, but potentially has more serious consequences. The interaction between trees, soils and buildings is complex and, unfortunately, assumptions that the trees are responsible for any damage are too often made before a proper investigation has been carried out. The Council should ensure that important trees are not needlessly felled because of unproven accusations.

Action 11 The Council will refer any claims of damage by trees to its insurers, together with a full report on the incident. The report will include recommendations for appropriate tree work, or for further investigation if necessary.

Privately owned trees

3.3.12 Trees are always the responsibility of the owner of the land on which they are growing. The Council can thus only influence the management of privately owned trees by giving advice when requested or by using legislation when applicable.

3.3.13 The Council does not have the resources to give detailed advice about privately owned trees, even if it were considered to be a proper function of local government. This is rightly the role of private consultants, and should remain so, particularly in cases where the trees may become a matter of dispute between two adjacent landowners. However, the

Council regularly receives enquiries from tree owners and should continue to offer initial guidance about good arboricultural practice and about the importance of choosing a reliable specialist contractor to carry out any work.

3.3.14 A proportion of the trees which were planted as part of the development of Runcorn New Town are now owned by various housing associations. Trees of certain species may not be suitable for long-term retention close to houses and it is accepted that some may have to be removed. However, such work should ideally be prioritised and phased over a number of years, in accordance with a set of agreed environmental principles. It is particularly important that trees which are well suited to their location and have the potential to develop into key landscape features of the future should be protected, either by designation in a management plan or by making them subject to a tree preservation order.

Action 12 The Council will, subject to staff resources, encourage and assist any housing association which is preparing a strategy for the management of its trees in the Borough.

3.3.15 Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Council has the power to protect trees in the interests of amenity by making tree preservation orders (TPOs). The effect of a TPO is to prohibit the felling or pruning of the trees concerned without the permission of the Council. Trees in conservation areas which are not protected by TPOs are subject to other controls. Generally, anyone who proposes to fell or prune a tree over a certain size in a conservation area must give the Council six weeks notice. This is intended to give the Council a chance to make a TPO if it sees fit.

3.3.16 Although there are limitations to the TPO system, in that it is mainly preventative and can therefore be seen as a disincentive to positive management, it has been in existence for more than fifty years and has stood the test of time. A thorough review of the legislation was carried out in 1994 and this indicated widespread support for TPOs as an effective means of protecting trees which make a significant impact on the amenity of local areas. The Government believed that this review struck a good balance between the need to deliver effective protection of trees and the need to retain public confidence in a system which directly affects the freedom of the individual.

3.3.17 Following the 1994 review, new TPO Regulations came into force in 1999 [ref. 15]. The Government then published a document which gives guidance to local authorities about TPO legislation [ref. 16].

Action 13 The Council will make tree preservation orders to protect healthy trees which are of significant amenity value to the general public, particularly those considered to be under threat.

3.3.18 There are more than 100 TPOs, covering more than six thousand trees, in operation in Halton. The Council should administer these orders in a positive manner and not unreasonably refuse consent to carry out work. When deciding applications to fell or prune trees which are subject to a TPO, the issues to be considered should include both safety and public amenity. When requested, free advice about principles and procedures should be given to owners of protected trees.

Action 14 The Council will give free advice on the management of protected trees and will aim to issue a decision on all applications to carry out work on them within six weeks. However, there will be a presumption against granting consent to fell without good justification.

3.3.19 Anyone who cuts down a tree without consent is liable to a maximum fine of £20,000 in the Magistrates' Court (or an unlimited fine in the Crown Court). A lower fine of up to £2,500 may be imposed on anyone who deliberately damages a tree without destroying it. Failure to give the required notice to carry out work on a tree within a conservation area could result in penalties similar to those for contravening a TPO. To maintain the credibility of this legislation, the Council must be prepared to take the necessary action when there are any infringements.

Action 15 The Council will investigate all unauthorised work on protected trees and, if considered appropriate, prosecute those responsible.

3.3.20 Where privately owned trees are in such a condition as to present an imminent danger to persons or property, or where overhanging branches obstruct the highway, the Council has powers to serve notice under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1974 or the Highways Act 1980. This legislation should be used when necessary to make sure that action is taken, but with discretion and with the offer of free advice in the first instance.

Action 16 The Council will take appropriate action to ensure that privately owned trees which are in a dangerous condition or which obstruct the highway are felled or pruned to remove the danger or obstruction.

Hedges

3.3.21 Hedgerows are the most traditional form of field boundary in the local countryside and are important for historical, landscape and nature conservation reasons. They form distinctive visual features which contribute positively to the rural landscape. They often contain a great diversity of plant and wildlife species in their own right, but perhaps their greatest value to nature in this area are the links that they provide between habitats. A good network of hedgerows can enable wildlife to move freely along these corridors.

3.3.22 The loss of hedgerows from the countryside over the last thirty years or so has been a continuing cause for concern throughout England. A survey carried out by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology [ref. 17] revealed that between 1984 and 1990 the total hedgerow length in England had fallen by more than 20%. However, a later survey [ref. 18] showed that the rate of hedgerow removal had slowed down to approximately 3,600 kilometres per year and that the rate of new planting had increased to 4,400 kilometres per year. The gains therefore now appear to be outweighing the losses in numerical terms, but there are still concerns about the dramatic losses of the past and the protection of those important hedgerows for which no amount of replanting can substitute.

3.3.23 The Environment Act 1995 included an enabling clause to allow the introduction of regulations to protect certain categories of hedgerows. These were then defined in The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 and guidance given to local authorities about the administration of the system [ref. 19]. In essence, a farmer or landowner must notify the local authority before removing a rural hedge which is at least 20 metres long, at least 30 years old and which meets at least one of a set of archaeological, historical, landscape or wildlife criteria. The local planning authority generally has 42 calendar days from receipt of notification in which to give or refuse consent. If the authority does not respond within this period, the hedgerow may be removed. Removal in contravention of these regulations is a criminal offence and liable to a fine of up to £5,000.

3.3.24 It is fair to say that the 1997 Regulations have been widely criticised by environmental organisations as being too weak, probably only giving some degree of protection to less than 20% of hedgerows. The present Government has acknowledged this

and announced that the regulations will be reviewed in due course. It is anticipated that any revision will extend the number of hedgerows which can be protected.

Action 17 The Council will administer and enforce the Hedgerow Regulations in the Halton area. In doing so, the Council will ensure that the procedures used are in accordance with the current legislation.

3.3.25 Irrespective of any legislation, the most effective means of protecting hedgerows remains in the hands of the farmers and landowners. They should be encouraged to manage their hedgerows in an environmentally sympathetic manner, including the use of traditional hedge laying. There are examples of good practice in hedgerow management, including renovation by laying operations, on the Daresbury Estate and adjoining the Runcorn Expressway.

Action 18 The Council will promote the management of hedgerows with landowners, colleges and voluntary groups, including the use of traditional hedge-laying techniques when and where appropriate.

3.3.26 In residential areas, conifer hedges which have been allowed to grow unchecked can reach excessive heights and thereby become a source of annoyance to neighbours. Since 2005, local residents have been able to complain to the Council about such hedges, provided that all other avenues for resolving the dispute have been tried and exhausted.

3.3.27 The role of the Council is not to mediate or negotiate between the complainant and the hedge owner, but to adjudicate on whether (in the words of the Act) the hedge is adversely affecting the complainant's reasonable enjoyment of their property. In doing so, the authority must take account of all relevant factors and must strike a balance between the competing interests of the complainant and hedge owner, as well as the interests of the wider community.

3.3.28 If the circumstances justify it, the Council will issue a formal notice to the hedge owner which will set out what action must be taken to remedy the problem, and by what date. Failure to carry out the works required by the local authority is an offence which, on prosecution, could lead to a fine of up to £1,000. The Government has published a document which gives guidance to local authorities about the administration of this legislation [ref. 20].

Action 19 The Council will investigate and determine all complaints made about high hedges under Part 8 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003.

3.4 THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WOODLANDS

POLICY FOUR The Council will manage its own woodlands in a sustainable manner which takes into account all landscape, silvicultural, recreational and nature conservation issues, and encourage private landowners to do likewise.

Council owned woodlands

3.4.1 The Council does not own extensive areas of woodland; most of the urban woodlands in Runcorn are owned by the Woodland Trust and the rest of the district is relatively poorly wooded. It is therefore all the more important that the woods which are owned by the Council are managed in a sustainable manner to maximise their benefit to those who live or work within the Borough.

3.4.2 The principal areas of mature woodland owned by the Council are at Daresbury Firs, Norton Priory, Pickerings Rough, Runcorn Hill and Clington Wood. The Council has in the last twenty years also created substantial new areas of developing woodland at Boston Wood, Beaconsfield Wood, Moore Meadows, Pickerings Pasture, Sunnybank, Arley Wood, Hale Road Woodlands and the extension to Clington Wood.

3.4.3 In addition to these woodlands, the Council is also responsible for substantial areas of structure planting which were established as part of the development of the New Town. These small wooded areas can be found on open spaces and road embankments throughout the Borough and are already very important in landscape terms.

3.4.4 Daresbury Firs is the largest Council-owned woodland (approx. 11ha.) and consists mainly of Corsican, Scots and Lodgepole Pine. It was established as a commercial forestry plantation in 1978 and acquired by the Council in 1996, since when it has been successfully managed on behalf of the Council by Groundwork Mersey Valley. The path network has been improved, bracken has been controlled and a programme of thinning has been started. A comprehensive management plan was produced in 2005 to guide future works.

Action 20 The Council will, in consultation with the Forestry Commission and other appropriate bodies, manage Daresbury Firs and its other principal areas of woodland in accordance with good forestry practice.

3.4.5 The woodland areas at Norton Priory have many valuable and interesting characteristics, such as the rare tree species within a woodland garden setting and the rejuvenated orchard area. The Council should sustain its support for the Museum and Gardens Trust in their management of these priceless natural assets for the benefit of visitors and the environment generally.

Action 21 The Council will sustain its support for the work of the Norton Priory Museum Trust in managing the grounds of Norton Priory, including the provision of forestry and arboricultural advice on a regular basis.

3.4.6 The maintenance of recent woodland planting and the selective thinning or coppicing of semi-mature groups of trees should be regarded as important investments for the future environment. This work can too easily be neglected in favour of projects which may appear to be of a more immediate priority. If this were allowed to happen, then the result would be an unacceptable failure rate of new planting (with consequent liability to pay back any grant) and a new generation of poor spindly trees (probably of the wrong species and more vulnerable to disease and windblow). The areas of structure planting need management of a specialist nature if they are to realise their full potential.

Action 22 The Council will, subject to budget limitations, carry out the maintenance, thinning and coppicing work necessary to establish new multi-purpose woodlands for the future, in accordance with good forestry practice.

3.4.7 Where semi-mature trees are felled as a thinning operation, replacement planting is not needed for reasons of sustainability because the remaining trees will exploit the extra space and increase in size accordingly. There will thus be no net loss in leaf area and all the environmental benefits will be retained, but the individual trees will be larger, healthier and more stable.

Privately owned woodlands

3.4.8 Mature woodlands are relatively scarce in Halton and therefore of all the more significance. Woodlands can provide timber and generate employment. They can enhance

the beauty of the countryside, reduce pollution, improve health and provide wildlife habitats. They can also provide opportunities for sporting and recreational activities, and improve the quality of life in and around towns by screening development and improving the setting for housing and industry. Few other land uses can provide such a diverse range of benefits to society and the Council's policies towards them should reflect this value.

3.4.9 Control over woodland management in general, including tree felling, is exercised by the Forestry Commission through the voluntary Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) and the statutory felling licence regulations. Anyone proposing to fell more than five cubic metres of timber in a three month period must, with few exceptions, first obtain a felling licence.

3.4.10 All new applications to enter the WGS or to obtain a felling licence are listed by the Forestry Commission in a public register. After inclusion in the public register, there is a consultation period of 28 days for any comments to be submitted for consideration. All applications must meet the Forestry Commission's own published environmental standards, but it is right that any local concerns such as the effect on landscape or nature conservation are also taken into account at this stage. Any proposal which involves clear felling, inappropriate restocking or which would result in a net loss of woodland should be subject to particular scrutiny.

Action 23 The Council will object to, or seek revision of, any application appearing on the Forestry Commission's public register which is considered to be unjustifiably detrimental to the local landscape or to nature conservation.

3.4.11 The Council should welcome the sensitive and sustainable management of private woodlands for multipurpose objectives, mindful that it is the woodland as a whole which is important, not the individual trees within it. There is nothing wrong with cutting trees down for timber at the right time, provided that it is done in accordance with an approved plan which takes into account all the environmental constraints. In fact, the introduction of an uneven age structure usually benefits wildlife and is often the best way of conserving a woodland for the future. The Mersey Forest team can assist landowners in the Halton area to draw up plans for their woodlands and this should be welcomed by the Council.

Action 24 The Council will encourage private landowners to prepare management plans for their woodlands, and to seek advice from the Mersey Forest team if required.

3.4.12 In Runcorn most of the town's woodlands are managed by the Woodland Trust, a very large and successful charity organisation which is dedicated to acquiring and managing woodlands for the benefit of amenity and wildlife. The public has free access to all of its woodlands at all times and the Council recognises the importance of this natural resource for informal recreation, as well as all the other environmental benefits it provides.

Action 25 The Council will support in principle the objectives of the Woodland Trust in the management of its woodlands in Halton.

3.4.13 Ancient semi-natural woodlands (defined as those sites which have been continuously wooded since at least the year 1600) are a precious natural asset deserving particular attention. This is recognised by central government in the England Forestry Strategy [ref. 3]. The Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership has prepared a Biodiversity Action Plan for Ancient Woodlands in this region and the Council is represented on the Working Group. The known ancient woodland sites in Halton are listed in Appendix 3.

Action 26 The Council will seek to prevent any loss of ancient semi-natural woodland and will assist Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership in the implementation of a Biodiversity Action Plan for ancient woodlands in Halton.

3.5 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW TREES & WOODLANDS

POLICY FIVE The Council will seek through its own actions, and in partnership with others, to establish new trees and woodlands in appropriate locations.

3.5.1 Trees are part of a living landscape which is not constant, but is changing with time. It is inevitable that some trees will be lost each year, for one reason or another, and a sustained effort is therefore needed to establish enough young trees to keep the numbers at an acceptable level. This is fundamental to the concept of sustainability and should be regarded as our responsibility to future generations. Just as we are able to enjoy the trees which our forefathers planted, so must we ensure that our successors will have the opportunity to appreciate trees which were planted during our era of land custodianship.

3.5.2 Where individual trees owned by the Council are felled, appropriate replacement planting should be carried out within the ward boundary. This need not necessarily be of the same species in the same location, as unsuitability may well have been the reason for removing the tree in the first place. However, it should be the intention to at least maintain, preferably increase, the number of trees overall within the Borough.

3.5.3 In all tree planting schemes, the choice of species is important. Planting trees of large ultimate size in confined locations can only be of short-term benefit and will produce a management problem and a financial burden for the future. Conversely, planting trees of only modest ultimate size in large open spaces can be a wasted opportunity. To create natural assets for the future which maximise the benefits and minimise the potential problems, any trees planted as individual specimens should be suited to the site and have sufficient space to grow to maturity.

Action 27 The Council will carry out suitable planting to replace every mature tree that has to be felled, thereby sustaining the number of trees on Council land.

3.5.4 Acting alone, the Council cannot hope to achieve the levels of planting needed to realise an increased tree cover for the future. The efforts of other organisations and private landowners are required, acting independently or in partnerships. Nationwide campaigns such as the annual “National Tree Week” are helpful in raising public awareness and the Council should support these locally, as far as resources allow. A good example of this is the work done at Norton Priory in raising seedlings from local seed sources, to be used in new planting schemes throughout the Borough.

3.5.5 The involvement of local communities and schoolchildren in tree planting schemes should be encouraged wherever possible. A welcome development in this respect would be an increase in the number of tree wardens in the Borough, to represent the urban areas as well as the areas covered by parish councils. The tree warden scheme is organised locally by the Cheshire Landscape Trust.

Action 28 The Council will support the aims of the Tree Warden Scheme and will encourage communication with any appointed tree wardens based in the Halton area.

3.5.6 The Mersey Forest is one of twelve community forests in England to be promoted by the Forestry Commission and the Countryside Agency. Halton Borough Council is one of the nine local authority partners in the project, which aims to substantially increase the woodland cover of the Merseyside and North Cheshire area over the next 30 years or so. The Forest Plan was first published in 1994 and reviewed in 2001 [ref. 21] and set out six central themes for creating the Forest:-

- Converting wasteland to woodland
- Creating networks of wooded greenways
- Greening key transport routes
- Returning farmland to forestry
- Weaving woodland into new development, and
- Capitalising on the existing woodland assets.

3.5.7 The guiding principles for The Mersey Forest in Halton are:-

- Provide a woodland buffer around the urban edge and create a wooded edge to the Mersey Estuary.
- Extend planting into the urban area using all appropriate and available land, including derelict land.
- Provide a new woodland structure for surrounding agricultural areas.
- Protect and manage the existing resource of urban trees and woodlands in a sustainable manner.

3.5.8 Following on from the guiding principles, the Plan contains a list of specific policies and opportunities which make up the “Halton planting strategy”. These policies are linked to areas of the Borough and have been incorporated into the Unitary Development Plan.

3.5.9 Since the concept of The Mersey Forest was adopted, more than 100 hectares of new woodland has been created in Halton. The Council should continue to play its part in the partnership and pursue the policies contained in The Mersey Forest Plan.

Action 29 The Council will remain an active partner in The Mersey Forest and maintain its input into the project.

4.0 A STRATEGY FOR BIODIVERSITY

4.1 PROTECTING THE BEST SITES & AREAS FOR WILDLIFE

POLICY SIX The Council will identify and protect the most valuable wildlife resources in Halton.

Protecting the best sites

4.1.1 A most important issue for Halton is to protect established habitats of greatest value. Recognition of some of the best sites has already taken place including the internationally important Mersey Estuary, designated as a RAMSAR site and a Special Protection Area. Halton has three nationally important SSSI's, including the River Mersey, Floodbrook Clough which is an example of a steep sided old wooded valley and Red Brow Cutting, designated for its geological formations. Hale Duck Decoy, part of the Mersey Estuary SSSI is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. There are also locally designated non-statutory sites in the Borough, called Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's). 47 SINCs are recognised in the adopted Unitary Development Plan. [ADD MAP] Annual biological recording takes place to ensure that all local site designations are up to date and reflect their nature conservation value. Halton additionally has 10 Local Nature Reserves (LNR's), designated for their wildlife and educational value, and form the cornerstone for policies connecting people with wildlife.[ADD MAP OF LNR'S].

Action 30 The Council will identify all wildlife sites defined against clearly stated criteria that are relevant to Halton and including locally rare or outstanding wildlife habitats and sites of special community, amenity, access and educational value for their natural features.

4.1.2 The most important sites for biodiversity are those identified through international conventions and European Directives. In Halton, the Mersey Estuary is both a RAMSAR site and a Special Protection Area and is Halton's single most important natural asset.

Action 31 The Council will protect and preserve the Mersey Estuary RAMSAR and Special Protection Area through statutory protection in the Habitats Regulations.

4.1.3 Allied to this is also a need to maintain the level of the other sites, habitats and species which make up Halton's stock of environmental capital. They also contribute so much to local biodiversity and public enjoyment and the overall quality and character of the environment. Halton is a relatively densely populated and urban area in need of extensive regeneration. Sustainability principles must therefore include the need for evolution and change in the natural assets of the Borough, as with all its land uses. In April 2006, new national guidance from DEFRA will help to review the successful SINC system as part of the process to maintain the balance of environmental capital and to assist in their management wherever possible. PPS 9 recognises

Action 32 The Council will review the Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) system in line with DEFRA guidance

4.1.4 The Mersey Estuary is a particular case in point. The Borough Council is promoting a Second Bridge Crossing - the Mersey Gateway - over the Upper Mersey Estuary. Baseline survey data that has been gathered as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment for the Bridge Crossing is invaluable in shaping the ideas for an associated nature reserve. The information shows that the Upper Mersey Estuary is already of value for estuary wildlife, in

terms of its terrestrial and aquatic ecology and birdlife. This is an opportunity to create an Upper Mersey Estuary nature reserve in conjunction with the required mitigation as part of the planning process.

Action 33 The Council will create a significant new nature reserve which supports the council's efforts to deliver urban renewal through the Mersey Gateway.

4.1.5 Brownfield sites and post industrial land are being recognised as valuable for wildlife, often providing a refuge for species that can no longer thrive in the countryside. Research by English Nature reveals that such land supports 194 invertebrate species of conservation concern, often can be very important for urban birds and is where you find ordinary plants that have been tidied away from the countryside. Brownfield sites are the new flower-rich meadows and areas brimming with diversity: they have much more in common with the historic wildlife-rich countryside than the most of the intensively farmed modern landscape. Most of Halton's best grasslands are associated with its industrial past, and 13 of the 47 designated SINC's have an industrial connection. Some brownfield site can be viewed as the nature resource of the future, as an important habitat in their own right. As part of the continued re-use of post industrial sites in Halton, there are more extensive opportunities for sites of brownfield biodiversity.

Action 34 Biodiversity interests on brownfield sites are to be investigated through biological survey work as part of the overall re-use of land policies.

Protecting the best areas

4.1.5 While protecting the best sites helps those species that need relatively small areas of habitat, they do little to sustain those species that range over wider areas, for example, birds and mammals. If sites alone are protected without corridors or wedges, then less mobile species are prevented from appearing in the urban areas. Isolated sites increasingly become under threat and their attractiveness to both wildlife and to human visitor's declines.

4.1.6 There is a parallel need to protect a network of open spaces linking together sites of quality and special habitats. Such a network can also provide easy access to recreational facilities and recreational footpaths of great value to people.

4.1.7 This network has been partly identified in Halton's Biodiversity Action Plan as a series of wildlife corridors. In Halton, this includes the Mersey Estuary, river valleys, farmland, canals, highways, disused railway lines, public open space, allotments, golf courses, school playing fields, gardens and cemeteries. Areas of public open space are particularly important for wildlife management. These areas are an essential component of urban wildlife planning and a necessary complement to the protected sites.

4.1.8 The adopted Unitary Development Plan has a comprehensive Greenspace system that identifies key open areas of the Borough. The protection and enhancement of this infrastructure is important to conserve natural assets, protect local distinctiveness and minimise habitat fragmentation.

Action 35 The Council will develop and refine the nature value of the Greenspace system through the Halton Biodiversity Action Plan, in particular land within the ownership of Halton Borough Council, to assess its potential and to identify any areas of deficiency.

Action 36 The Council will seek to safeguard wherever possible the intrinsic value of any land or natural features having a corridor function, in terms of nature conservation value and associated access and amenity.

A Sound evidence base: habitat and species information

4.1.19 The evidence base for the above policies has been based largely around a Biodiversity Audit which was carried out in 1999 using habitat information from the 1990's. It is increasingly recognised that up to date information and regular monitoring is required to make sure the right actions are taken.

Action 37 The Council will maintain an up to date evidence base of its natural assets. This will include a review of the Borough's Phase 1 Habitat survey to be complete by 2007/8.

4.1.10 Halton has made a solid start to build up a biological recording database in partnership with RECORD, the Cheshire Local Records Centre. The number of individual species records has risen from 33,000 at the start of the Biodiversity Audit in 1999 to 83,000 by the end of 2005. Ultimately, this information will be linked to the National Biodiversity Network to improve access to reliable wildlife information and to ensure that decisions affecting wildlife are based on sound, quality data. Through the use of the Halton web site, the analysis of this data can be made widely accessible to Halton residents.

Action 38 The Council will remain a partner of RECORD, the Local Record Centre for Cheshire and develop a Halton database of biological information.

Action 39 The Council will continue to implement a regular and co-ordinated programme of biological recording.

4.2 HALTON'S BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

POLICY SEVEN The Council will implement the Halton Biodiversity Action Plan in conjunction with its partners.

4.2.1 A key action from the first Natural Assets Strategy has been Halton's Biodiversity Action Plan, published in February 2003. This is a detailed contribution to the Cheshire region Biodiversity Action Plan and contains a series of over 50 actions for two habitats and seven species, as well as information on wildlife corridors and action areas for People & Nature. This is not a static document and progress against the actions is reviewed every two years. This review can now be carried out in conjunction with the revised Natural Assets Strategy. Progress towards the targets in the Biodiversity Action Plan is also monitored by Halton's Local Strategic Partnership as part of the Community Strategy.

4.2.2 The emphasis is on practical delivery and some of the targets are specifically within the responsibility of the Borough Council. It is not, however, just a local authority document. It has been produced in conjunction with the Halton Natural Environment Roundtable which brings together up to 18 environmental organisations and individuals.

Action 40 Implement the Biodiversity Action Plan habitat and species targets as part of the work programme of the Natural Assets Strategy and carry out regular monitoring of progress.

4.2.3 The habitat and species targets stand alone in their own right but are also linked to other exciting initiatives that are taking place in Halton, in particular the creation of Local Nature Reserves and the involvement of local schools and people in their local environment.

Species protection

4.2.4 Urban nature conservation has an important role to play in protecting rare and declining species and in providing conditions that will help maintain their populations. Runcorn Hill Local Nature Reserve, for example, has regionally important heathland communities, which are being managed to maintain a stable population. The great crested newt, bats and badgers are protected species under Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, and may be found in both rural and urban areas. Many species have become dependent upon buildings for roosting or nesting, such as, swifts, house martins and bats.

Action 41 The Council will seek to ensure that laws in relation to protected species are implemented.

4.2.5 The growth of our biological record database has already highlighted other species which are locally important to Halton. In both Runcorn and Widnes, we now know there are significant breeding populations of swifts, a bird which spends the winter in the southern hemisphere. Buildings are vital to this hole-nesting bird, but repairs and renovations can threaten their breeding. Fortunately, plenty can be done to ensure that swift colonies continue to thrive, requiring the goodwill and co-operation of planners, architects and developers, and solutions to help breeding swifts are relatively straightforward and inexpensive. The introduction of nest boxes to a new housing development in Widnes is underway and if successful, it will pave the way for similar schemes.

Action 42 The Council will promote all aspects of species protection and will adopt the swift as a flagship species for suitable new development schemes and housing renovation projects.

Geodiversity

4.2.6 Recent national interest in geology, now termed geodiversity, has allowed Halton to look again at its earth science resource. Halton has a wealth of geological outcrops in both Widnes and Runcorn, each with a different story to tell about the local landscape of former times. More work needs to be carried out to identifying our best geodiversity assets. Halton is a partner of the Cheshire region Geodiversity Action Plan Action Group, who is able to assist in evaluating our resource. This is in line with PPS9 advice on protecting the best geodiversity areas, with the possible inclusion of Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) in the Local Development Framework.

Action 43 The Council will promote all aspects of geodiversity, in partnership with the Cheshire region Geodiversity Action Plan Action Group.

Making the most of Halton's ponds

4.2.7 Ponds are a valuable aquatic habitat as well as a traditional landscape feature. Over 250 ponds were identified during the Biodiversity Audit in 1999, varying between 1 square metre and 2 hectares in size. Some were excavated on the Cheshire Plain to extract marl or boulder clay for spreading on surrounding fields. Many of these pits have since filled with water to form ponds. Elsewhere in Halton, ponds have been dug for a variety of reasons, including amenity and educational purposes.

4.2.8 Making the most of Halton's ponds has been a successful project during 2003-2006, involving 36 ponds, professional ecologists, volunteers and local residents and community groups. All the ponds have been surveyed for their wildlife value, followed by a management prescription and practical conservation work. Over time, this approach to pond management

can result in Halton having a representative selection of the different stages of the pond cycle, from open water through to damp, overgrown shaded areas, each having their own mix of wildlife species.

Action 44 The Council will continue to make the most of its ponds through projects to encourage biological recording and practical management.

4.3 PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

POLICY EIGHT The Council will continue to promote the interest and involvement of local people in issues and projects concerning Halton's natural assets.

Local Nature Reserves

4.3.1 The Borough Council has adopted a successful policy of creating Local Nature Reserves (LNR's). LNR's have an important part to play in biological conservation, the protection and interpretation of wildlife features and the Borough wide strategic approach to nature conservation. The designation equally is about contributing to the quality of the environment to local people, the part they can play in community development and to providing space and resources for environmental education.

4.3.2 The Borough Council has 10 LNR's which are listed in Appendix 2. This amounts to 143 hectares of land or the equivalent of 1 hectares per 833 head of population. This figures exceeds the English Nature / Natural England standard of 1 hectare per 1000 head of population and makes Halton one of the top urban local authorities in achieving LNR's.

Action 45 The Council will continue to develop a programme of Local Nature Reserves.

4.3.3 Designation of Local Nature Reserves is one thing: managing them to a high standard for both people and wildlife is another matter. Between 2002 and 2005, three Local Nature Reserves under the English Nature funded Wildspace! scheme were funded to great affect. This money from English Nature has allowed Halton to employ a Wildspace Officer to "do things that local authorities don't normally do". This Wild About Halton programme has been extended up to 2009 with grant aid support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and landfill tax credits from WREN. This has firmly put the role of Local Nature Reserves and the Wildspace officer on the map

4.3.4 Wild About Halton is about reconnecting people with nature. The Wildspace Officer works with schools and community groups through a variety of mediums, including the web, to explain the environmental role of the reserves. This includes school visits to the Local Nature Reserves, with follow up work on the web. There is an emphasis on developing an educational resource centred around Key Stages 3 & 4 of the school curriculum. The Wildspace Officer encourages community involvement in the management of the reserves through the development of an Advisory Groups, Friends Groups and Halton's Natural Environment Roundtable. Regularly information is presented in the continuously evolving interactive web site at www.halton.gov.uk The project has seen the development of a web cam network and mpeg movie resource to enable people visiting the web site to view highlights from the natural environment of the reserves.

Action 46 The Council will continue to employ a Wildspace Officer and to deliver the Wild About Halton programme beyond 2009.

Participation

4.3.5 People's knowledge and understanding of the natural world are key factors in shaping their attitudes and responsibility towards it. Environmental education can play a vital role in building up knowledge and skills, helping people to make informed decisions in relation to nature conservation and enabling them to look after the environment.

4.3.6 Halton Borough Council has an important role in the delivery of environmental education, through the Wild About Halton project working alongside other key services.. These include:

- Education and Social Inclusion Directorate, including the Parks & Countryside Service and the Science Advisors
- Environment and Development Directorate, including Landscape Services, Waste & Recycling and Environmental Health

Action 47 The Council will seek to ensure that biodiversity continues to play an important part in the environmental education elements of schools, colleges and adult education centres.

Action 48 The Council will encourage the voluntary and private sectors to play a full and active part in the delivery of biodiversity related, environmental education services.

4.3.7 People can greatly benefit from close contact with nature. The environment is too important to be left to the environmental professionals: equally, the environment is too important to be conserved and managed without them. Since 1996, Halton's Natural Environment Roundtable (NER) has become firmly established as a community led body working with the local authority on all biodiversity issues in the borough. The NER chooses six projects a year for practical involvement and has an important part to play in identifying locally distinctive features of biodiversity interest.

Action 49 The Council will continue to act as the secretariat for the Natural Environment Roundtable.

4.3.10 Support by the council is provided through Service Level Agreements to a number of organisations with a wildlife and public involvement interest in Halton. These Agreements are important acknowledgement that partnership working is a key way forward on biodiversity issues.

Action 50 The Council will, through Service Level Agreements, support the activities of environmental groups such as Cheshire Wildlife Trust, RECORD and British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

Awareness

4.3.11 A lot is already happening to promote the Natural Assets of Halton, through the Borough Council and its partners. The Borough Council has a Nature Conservation Officer, a Tree Officer, a Wildspace Officer and a Parks & Countryside Service whose role includes introducing children and adults to Halton's natural heritage. Groundwork Mersey Valley is committed to the conservation of the natural environment and works in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors. Norton Priory Museum Trust has an events and activities programme and active voluntary groups cover a wide range of interests; despite this, there are still people who do not realise what they have on their doorstep.

Action 51 The Council will promote awareness, understanding and enjoyment of nature in Halton.

4.4 NEW OPPORTUNITIES

POLICY NINE The Council will promote suitable new initiatives and projects to further Halton's biodiversity resource.

4.4.1 Much of urban nature conservation is concerned with the protection of existing sites. However, dynamic situations in urban areas give many opportunities to add to the nature conservation value within Halton. Planning for wildlife offers many opportunities for creative thinking. The Mersey Forest and Wild About Halton are projects that are making a significant impact in Halton.

4.4.3 The creation of new places for wildlife, such as ponds and wetlands, can bring it into new areas. This is especially valuable in those parts of the strategic Greenspace network and in areas of deficiency. Moore meadows at Moore village is a recent example of new wildflower meadows especially created in conjunction with local consultation. Creative conservation can also add to existing sites of quality or special habitats, for example at Pickerings Pasture Local Nature Reserve.

4.4.4 Responsibility for the management of sites of quality, special habitats and other open spaces rests with a variety of owners and agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The role of Halton Borough Council in managing its own land is very significant. Nearly 700 hectares of land is owned and managed as open space, including grassland, woodland and street trees, allotments and cemeteries

4.4.5 The management of Council owned open space within the Greenspace network is important for both nature conservation and people. It is this land which provides the most important experience of nature for the greatest numbers of people. Recent land at Manor Park that has come over to the Borough Council from English Partnerships has a high biodiversity potential. With suitable planning, consultation, design and management, there is scope for considerable biodiversity benefits with a new change of use.

Action 52 The Council will promote the biodiversity potential of land coming into its ownership, including a significant area of land at Manor Park.

4.4.6 Under the umbrella of Halton Natural Environment Roundtable, there is great scope in Halton for getting involved in biodiversity projects. Recent examples include

- bluebell recovery project,
- biological recording including a 5 year bird atlas
- wild flower meadows,
- geology in Halton
- bird box making
- Charcoal burning
- Making the most of Halton ponds

Action 53 The Council will continue to promote suitable new initiatives and projects to further Halton's biodiversity resource.

4.4.7 It is almost impossible to create high quality nature sites such as ancient woodlands and heathland in terms of their habitats, species and human experiences. It is possible

however to plant new woodlands, hedges and street trees, to encourage natural regeneration of scrub, to plant wild flower meadows and to create ponds and wetlands. Even something as simple as erecting a bird nestbox creates a feature for wildlife. [ref. 22].

4.4.8 The varying nature conservation value within Halton leaves room for habitat creation measures. These add to and support the existing wildlife resource. There is also a need to replace habitats lost or damaged through development, poor management or neglect. For instance, Halton constructed its first “green roof” at Victoria Park pavilion, Widnes in 2006. Green roofs are no longer a novelty item for specialist buildings and are becoming more mainstream for architects and engineers. Green roofs offer several benefits including providing habitats for plants and animals, reducing stormwater runoff and the risk of short term flooding, and the preservation and cooling of surface roof membranes, avoiding the “urban heat island” effect. There is great scope for the use of more green roofs in future developments

Action 54 The Council will seek through its own actions and through influencing others, to promote the use of green roofs in new developments.

4.4.8 As with green roofs, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) aim to use nature to provide a solution to a development issue. Natural drainage of new developments can reduce the impact on potential flooding and pollution to rivers, streams and ponds. Such systems offer the chance to enhance the urban environment and provide wildlife habitat. As yet, there has not been an uptake to SUDS in Halton but recent design advice may be able to remove perceived barriers that relate to technical and management issues.

Action 55 The Council will seek through its own actions and through influencing others, to promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems.

Exotic species control

4.3.22 Some species are not wanted! Most areas of the United Kingdom have species that exotic species and provide varying degrees of harm to our native species. In Halton, the biggest problem is the spread of Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam on land, and the introduction of different pond species, including Mink, *Crassula helmsii* and floating Pennywort that damage our native pond species. Some work is carried out annually on Council owned land to control problem species but more is required to prevent a significant loss of our more valuable habitats and species.

Action 56 The Council will develop systems for the control of unwanted exotic species

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PROGRAMMES 2007 - 2012

Action no.	Implementation & Action	By whom	Timescale	Budget
	TREES ON DEVELOPMENT SITES			
1	Require developers of sites containing trees to demonstrate that the principles of BS 5837 are being followed during the planning process.	Planning Officers, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
2	Publish a Supplementary Planning Guidance document about trees on development sites.	Planning Officers, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	2008	Existing
3	Protect trees of high amenity value on development sites by making tree preservation orders and by attaching conditions to planning consents.	Planning Officers, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
4	Ensure that adequate foundations are provided for new buildings when they are constructed close to trees, in accordance with NHBC Standards, Chapter 4.2.	Building Control Officers, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
5	Seek to at least maintain, and wherever possible increase, the tree cover of the Borough as part of the development control process.	Planning Officers, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
	SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF TREES			
6	Continue to monitor the trees in its ownership by carrying out regular inspections and by storing information about their quantity, distribution, size, species, age, health and condition.	Trees & Woodlands Officer, Arboricultural Consultant, Officers in Landscape Services	All trees in high priority areas to be inspected before 2012 and a system for reinspection set up.	Meeting the timescale will be dependant on additional funding.
7	Carry out all work recommended by the tree survey programme. Priority will be given to any works deemed necessary for safety reasons.	Officers in Landscape Services, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
8	Treat all communications about trees courteously and in compliance with the published standards of the Council.	Officers in Landscape Services, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
	Carry out all tree work in accordance with British	Officers in Landscape Services,		

9	Standard 3998 (latest revision) and all relevant health and safety regulations.	with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
10	Require all utility companies to carry out any essential trenching work close to trees in accordance with NJUG 10. The Council will apply the same principles when planning or undertaking its own work close to trees.	Highways Officers, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
11	Refer any claims of damage by trees to its insurers, together with a full report on the incident. The report will include recommendations for appropriate tree work, or for further investigation if necessary.	Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
12	Encourage and assist any housing association which is preparing a working plan for the management of its trees in the Borough.	Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Dependant on staff time available
13	Make tree preservation orders to protect healthy trees which are of significant amenity value to the general public, particularly those considered to be under threat.	Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
14	Give free advice on the management of protected trees and will aim to issue a decision on all applications to carry out work on them within six weeks. However, there will be a presumption against granting consent to fell without good justification.	Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
15	Investigate all unauthorised work on protected trees and, if considered appropriate, prosecute those responsible.	Trees & Woodlands Officer, with advice from Legal Services	On-going	Existing
16	Take appropriate action to ensure that privately owned trees which are in a dangerous condition or which obstruct the highway are felled or pruned to remove the danger or obstruction.	Highways Officers, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
17	The Council will administer and enforce the Hedgerow Regulations in the Halton area. In doing so, the Council will ensure that the procedures used are in accordance with the current legislation.	Trees & Woodlands Officer, with support from Nature Conservation Officer and Planning Officers	On-going	Existing
	The Council will promote the management of			

18	hedgerows with landowners, colleges and voluntary groups, including the use of traditional hedge-laying techniques when and where appropriate.	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing
19	The Council will investigate and determine all complaints made about high hedges under Part 8 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003.	Planning Enforcement Officer, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
	SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WOODLANDS			
20	Manage Daresbury Firs and its other principal areas of woodland in accordance with good forestry practice.	Trees & Woodlands Officer, with support from Groundwork Mersey Valley & other partners	On-going	Existing, supported by external grants
21	Sustain its support for the work of the Norton Priory Museum Trust in managing the grounds of Norton Priory, including the provision of forestry and arboricultural advice on a regular basis.	Trees & Woodlands Officer and Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing
22	Carry out the maintenance, thinning and coppicing work necessary to establish new multi-purpose woodlands for the future, in accordance with good forestry practice.	Landscape Services	On-going	Existing
23	Object to, or seek revision of, any application appearing on the Forestry Commission's public register which is considered to be unjustifiably detrimental to the local landscape or to nature conservation.	Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
24	Encourage private landowners to prepare management plans for their woodlands, and to seek advice from the Mersey Forest team if required.	Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
25	Support in principle the objectives of the Woodland Trust in the management of its woodlands in Halton.	Landscape Services	On-going	Existing
26	Seek to prevent any loss of ancient semi-natural woodland and will assist Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership in the implementation of a Biodiversity Action Plan for ancient woodlands in Halton.	Trees & Woodlands Officer and Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing
	ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW TREES &			

	WOODLANDS			
27	Carry out suitable planting to replace every mature tree that has to be felled, thereby sustaining the number of trees on Council land.	Landscape Services	On-going	Existing
28	Support the aims of the Tree Warden Scheme and encourage communication with any appointed tree wardens based in the Halton area.	Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
29	Remain an active partner in The Mersey Forest and maintain its input into the project.	Landscape Services	On-going	Existing
	PROTECTING THE BEST SITES & AREAS FOR WILDLIFE			
30	Identify all wildlife sites defined against clearly stated criteria that are relevant to Halton and including locally rare or outstanding wildlife habitats and sites of special community, amenity, access and educational value for their natural features.	Nature Conservation Officer, with Local Wildlife Sites Partnership	On-going	Existing
31	Protect and preserve the Mersey Estuary RAMSAR and Special Protection Area through statutory protection in the Habitats Regulations.	Nature Conservation Officer, with Natural England	On-going	Existing
32	Review the Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) system in line with DEFRA guidance.	Nature Conservation Officer, with Local Wildlife Sites Partnership	2007	Existing
33	Create a significant new nature reserve which supports the council's efforts to deliver urban renewal through the Mersey Gateway.	Nature Conservation Officer and Wildspace Officer	2009	Mersey Gateway project, and external sources
34	Biodiversity interests on brownfield sites are to be investigated through biological survey work as part of the overall re-use of land policies.	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing
35	Develop and refine the nature value of the Greenspace system through the Halton Biodiversity Action Plan, in particular land within the ownership of Halton Borough Council, to assess its potential and to identify any areas of deficiency.	Planning Officers, with advice from Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing

36	Seek to safeguard wherever possible the intrinsic value of any land or natural features having a corridor function, in terms of nature conservation value and associated access and amenity.	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing
37	Maintain an up to date evidence base of its natural assets. This will include a review of the Borough's Phase 1 Habitat survey to be complete by 2007/8.	Nature Conservation Officer, with consultants	2008 for the Phase 1 Habitat survey, then on-going	External grants may be required
38	Remain a partner of RECORD, the Local Record Centre for Cheshire and develop a Halton database of biological information.	Nature Conservation Officer and Planning Officers	On-going	Existing
39	Continue to implement a regular and co-ordinated programme of biological recording.	Nature Conservation Officer, with Local Wildlife Sites Partnership	On-going	External grants are required when current funding runs out in March 2009: Natural England to be approached
HALTON'S BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN				
40	Implement the Biodiversity Action Plan habitat and species targets as part of the work programme of the Natural Assets Strategy and carry out regular monitoring of progress.	Nature Conservation Officer, with Local Wildlife Sites Partnership	On-going	External grants are required when current funding runs out in March 2009: Natural England to be approached
41	Seek to ensure that laws in relation to protected species are implemented.	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing
42	Promote all aspects of species protection and adopt the swift as a flagship species for suitable new development schemes and housing renovation projects.	Nature Conservation Officer and Wildspace Officer	On-going	Existing, working with development partners
43	Promote all aspects of geodiversity, in partnership with the Cheshire region Geodiversity Action Plan Action Group.	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing, supported by external grants
44	Continue to make the most of Halton's ponds through projects to encourage biological recording and practical	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Seek external funds to replace lottery

	management.			funding
	PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE			
45	Continue to develop a programme of Local Nature Reserves.	Nature Conservation Officer and Wildspace Officer	On-going	External grants are required when current funding runs out in March 2009: Natural England and other bodies to be approached
46	Continue to employ a Wildspace Officer and to deliver the Wild About Halton programme beyond 2009.	Wildspace Officer and Nature Conservation Officer	2009	To be approved as a growth item
47	Seek to ensure that biodiversity continues to play an important part in the environmental education elements of schools, colleges and adult education centres.	Wildspace Officer and Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing, with external grants required by 2009
48	Encourage the voluntary and private sectors to play a full and active part in the delivery of biodiversity related, environmental education services.	Wildspace Officer and Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing, with external grants required by 2009
49	Continue to act as the secretariat for the Natural Environment Roundtable.	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing
50	Through Service Level Agreements, support the activities of environmental groups such as Cheshire Wildlife Trust, RECORD and British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.	Nature Conservation Officer and Wildspace Officer	On-going	Current funding needs to be secured
51	Promote awareness, understanding and enjoyment of nature in Halton.	Nature Conservation Officer and Wildspace Officer	On-going	Existing
	NEW OPPORTUNITIES			
52	Promote the biodiversity potential of land coming into its ownership, including a significant area of land at Manor Park.	Landscape Services	On-going	Existing, supported by external grants
53	Continue to promote suitable new initiatives and projects to further Halton's biodiversity resource.	Nature Conservation Officer and Wildspace Officer	On-going	Existing, supported by external grants
54	Seek through its own actions and through influencing others, to promote the use of green roofs in new	Nature Conservation Officer and Wildspace Officer	On-going	Existing, supported by external grants

	developments.			
55	Seek through its own actions and through influencing others, to promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems.	Landscape Services and Highways Division, Maintenance.	On-going	Existing, supported by external grants
56	Develop systems for the control of unwanted exotic species.	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing, supported by external grants

APPENDIX 1 SITES OF IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

1. International Designations

RAMSAR and Special Protection Area	These are good examples of:
Mersey Estuary	Intertidal ecosystems

2. National Designations

Sites of Special Scientific Interest	These are good examples of:
Mersey Estuary, including Hale Duck Decoy	Intertidal ecosystems
Floodbrook Clough	Ancient woodland
Red Brow Cutting	Triassic sandstone outcrop

3. Local Designations

Local Wildlife Sites	These are good examples of:
Barkers Hollow Wood, Preston Brook	Ancient Woodland
Beechwood, Runcorn	Ancient Woodland
Big Boar's Wood, Hale	Woodland
Big Wood, Runcorn	Woodland
Clifton Cloughs, Runcorn	Ancient Woodland
Clifton Lagoon, Runcorn	Grassland of industrial origin
Clincton Wood, Widnes	Woodland, grassland, ponds
Clough Wood, Runcorn	Ancient Woodland
Daresbury Firs LNR	Conifer Woodland
Disused Railway Line, south of Warrington Rd, Widnes	Grassland
Dorchester Park, Sandymoor	Woodland, grassland
Dutton Hospital Wood, Dutton	Ancient Woodland
Green Wood and Pitts Heath, Runcorn	Woodland
Haddocks Wood Pasture, Runcorn	
Haddocks Wood, Runcorn	Woodland
Hale Road Woodland LNR	Woodland
Haystack Lodge, Runcorn	Woodland, grassland
Hopyard Wood, Hale	Ancient Woodland
Land adjacent Preston Brook Marina	Grassland
Land north of Hallwood Park, Runcorn	
Land off Lunts Heath Road, Farnworth	
Little Boar's Wood, Hale	Woodland
Lodge Plantation, Runcorn	Woodland
Manchester Ship Canal Bank, Astmoor	Grassland of industrial origin
Manor Park 3 Woodland, Moore	Woodland
Mill Wood LNR, Hale	Ancient Woodland
Morts Wood, Daresbury	Woodland

Murdishaw Wood and Valley LNR	Ancient Woodland, grassland
Norbury Wood and Marsh, Runcorn	Woodland
Norton Priory, Runcorn	Woodland, grassland, ponds
Old Plantation, Hale	Woodland
Oxmoor Wood and ponds, Runcorn	
Pickerings Pasture LNR, Widnes	Grassland
Pond at Delphfield, Runcorn	Pond
Pond off Meadway and adjacent grassland, Widnes	Pond
Ramsbrook Plantation, Hale	Woodland
Rows Wood, Daresbury	Ancient Woodland
Runcorn East railway station area	Grassland, woodland
Runcorn Hill LNR	Heathland
Sandymoor Wood, Sandymoor	Ancient Woodland
Southern verge embankment A533, Brookvale	Grassland
St. Helens Canal, (reclaimed), Widnes	Open water
Stenhills Open Space, Runcorn	Grassland, heathland
The Glen, Runcorn	Ancient Woodland
Upper Mersey Estuary	Intertidal ecosystems
Weston Marsh lagoons	Grassland of industrial origin
Windmill Hill Wood, Runcorn	Woodland

APPENDIX 2 LOCAL NATURE RESERVES

Local Nature Reserves	These are good examples of:
Runcorn Hill	Heathland
Pickerings Pasture	Wildflower meadows
Clincton Woods	Woodland, grassland, ponds
Dorchester Park	Birch –oak woodland, grassland
Oxmoor	Grassland, reedbed, lagoon
Wigg Island	Grassland, open water, saltmarsh
Hale Road Woodland	Grassland, woodland, reedbed
Mill Wood	Woodland
Murdishaw Wood And Valley	Woodland, grassland
Daresbury Firs	Conifer woodland

APPENDIX 3 ANCIENT WOODLANDS

Mill Wood, Hale	Flood Brook Clough, Runcorn
Hopyard Wood, Hale	The Glen, Runcorn
Old Plantation, Hale	Murdishaw Wood, Runcorn
Clifton Cloughs, Runcorn	Sandymoor Wood, Runcorn
Clough Wood, Runcorn	Rows Wood, Daresbury
Beech Wood, Runcorn	Barkers Hollow, Preston Brook
Dutton Hospital Wood, Runcorn	

APPENDIX 4 ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
British Waterways
CDS Housing Association
Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society
Cheshire County Council
Cheshire Landscape Trust
Cheshire Wildlife Trust
Council for the Protection of Rural England
Daresbury Parish Council
Daresbury Properties Ltd
English Partnerships
Environment Agency
Environment Forum, Natural Environment
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
Forestry Commission
Groundwork Mersey Valley
Hale Conservation Group
Hale Estate
Hale Parish Council
Halton Friends of the Earth
Ineos Chlor
Knowsley MBC
Liver Housing Association
Liverpool City Council
Liverpool Housing Trust
Mersey Basin Campaign
Mersey Conservancy
Mersey Estuary Conservation Group
Moore Parish Council
Natural England
North West Naturalists Union
North West Water
Norton Priory Museum Trust
PondLife Project
Preston Brook Parish Council
Riverside Housing Association
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
St. Helens MBC
The Mersey Forest
The Woodland Trust
Vale Royal BC
Warrington Borough Council

APPENDIX 5 USEFUL CONTACTS

Arboricultural Advisory & Information Service, Alice Holt Lodge, Wrecclesham, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 4LH (tel Tree Helpline £1.50 per minute 09065 161147)

Arboricultural Association, Ampfield House, Romsey, Hants, SO51 9PA (tel 01794 68717)

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Trafford Water Mill, Warrington Road, Mickle Trafford, Chester, CH2 4EB (tel 01244 300230)

Cheshire Landscape Trust, Fountains Building, Upper Northgate Street, Chester, CH1 4EF (tel 01244 376333)

Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Grebe House, Reaseheath, Nantwich, CW5 6DA (tel 01270 610180)

Natural England (Area Office), Pier House, Wallgate, Wigan, WN3 4AL (tel 01942 820342)

Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, Reaseheath College, Nantwich, CW5 6DF (tel 01270 627938)

Forestry Commission (Area Office), Linnere, Delamere, Northwich, CW8 2JD (tel 01606 889912)

Groundwork Mersey Valley, Phoenix House, Spring Street, Widnes, WA80NL (tel 0151 257 2720)

Halton BC Landscape Services, Picow Farm Depot, Picow Farm Road, Runcorn, WA7 4UB (tel 01928 583900)

Halton BC Parks & Countryside Division, Town Hall, Heath Road, Runcorn, WA7 5TD (tel 0151 424 2061)

The Mersey Forest, Risley Moss, Ordnance Avenue, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6QX (tel 01925 816217)

The Norton Priory Museum Trust, Tudor Road, Manor Park, Runcorn, WA7 1SX (tel 01928 569895)

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