

Environment & Economy Select Committee

27 FEBRUARY 2024

Agenda

- Pre-scrutiny: Biodiversity in Stevenage
- Chalk Streams
- Approach to Environmental Strategies

Biodiversity in Stevenage

JULIA HILL, ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY & DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

TIM HILL, CONSERVATION MANAGER, HMWT

Agenda

- Context for biodiversity
- Key Achievements for Stevenage
- Funding
- Overview of draft Biodiversity Action Plan 2024 – 2028

Context: International & National

- 1992: The Rio de Janeiro 'Earth Summit'. The United Kingdom was one of over 150 countries from around the world, which signed the Convention on Biological Diversity. With each country required to produce a plan of action.
- 1994: The UK Government published a UK Biodiversity Action 'to conserve and enhance biological diversity within the UK'.
- 1995: UK Biodiversity Steering Group recommends local biodiversity action plans

Context: Local

- 1998: Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan, written by Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT)
- 2005: Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan
- 2006: Revision of Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan
- 2010: Biodiversity Action Plan for Stevenage
- 2017: Revision of Biodiversity Action Plan for Stevenage

Biodiversity Emergency

In the last 50 years:

- 76 species became extinct in Hertfordshire; more than three species every two years.
- 35 were invertebrates,
- 26 were plants,
- 13 were vertebrates and
- 2 were lichens.
- 1,446 species are currently threatened with extinction in Hertfordshire. This includes over 1,000 invertebrates and 260 plants.



Key Achievements (1 of 2)

- Only Hertfordshire local authority with a biodiversity action plan
- Biodiversity Steering Group
- Wild Stevenage
- Green Space Volunteers
- Most Local Wildlife Sites in favourable condition within Herts
- First Herts local authority to receive and deliver Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)



Key Achievements (2 of 2)

- 1500% increase meadow managed grassland since 2010
- Creation of new woodlands in Fairlands Valley Park
- Only known site in the County for Great Green Bush Cricket
- Creation of 10 new community orchards



Funding Achieved

2011 - 2013	£25k	'So Stevenage' Partnership	Wild Stevenage
2011 - 2013	£50k	Heritage Lottery Fund	Wild Stevenage
2016	£12k	Environment Agency	Floating islands
2017	£12k	Environment Agency	Floating islands
2022 - 2023	£10k	Environment Agency	Daylighting works
2024/25	£36,405	Defra	Micro-woods

Draft Biodiversity Action Plan

2024 - 2028



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Objectives

- be realistic and achievable but remaining ambitious, within the capacity of SBC and partners
- be compatible with and complement the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) BAP
- be accessible, in language terms, to the wider Stevenage community
- Prioritise protecting those sites already important to wildlife and / or identifying sites that could lose potential for wildlife if works are not delivered within the next 5-8 years.

Biodiversity & Climate Change



“The science is now clear that biodiversity loss and climate change are inextricably linked and to tackle one, we need to tackle the other.”

Ref. “Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. E. S. Brondizio, J. Settele, S. Diaz, and H. T. Ngo (editors).,” IPBES Secretariat, Bonn, Germany, 2019.

The Natural Resource of Stevenage

- 130 ha woodland (5% of the borough)
- 448 ha grassland (17% of the borough)
- 10 ha wetlands (0.38 % of the borough)
- 20 ponds <0.3 ha
- 4.6km of rivers and streams

*Source Hertfordshire Habitat Survey 1997



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Overview: Grasslands

To conserve, link and diversify the composition and structure of Stevenage's grasslands to optimise their value to wildlife *and* people



Overview: Woodlands

To conserve and enhance Stevenage's woodlands. To develop and maintain an appropriate structure within the woodlands to optimise their value for wildlife *and* people



Overview: Wetlands

To conserve and restore Stevenage's wetlands through appropriate and sensitive management to optimise their value to wildlife and people



Overview: Ancient Hedgerows

To manage Stevenage's ancient hedgerows to produce a diverse structure and to ensure their survival for the benefit of wildlife and residents



Peter Elton

Overview: Neighbourhood Nature

To maximise biodiversity in the urban environment by encouraging the design and use of our buildings, gardens and allotments to be sympathetic to the requirements of our wildlife

Swift Action!



Jens Eriksen

Next Steps

- Approval via Executive Committee in June 2024
- Ward breakdown of actions / estimated costs
- Nature Recovery Officer
- Green Space Volunteers
- Opportunities for delivery
- Partnerships
- Engagement with Nature Officer



Questions?



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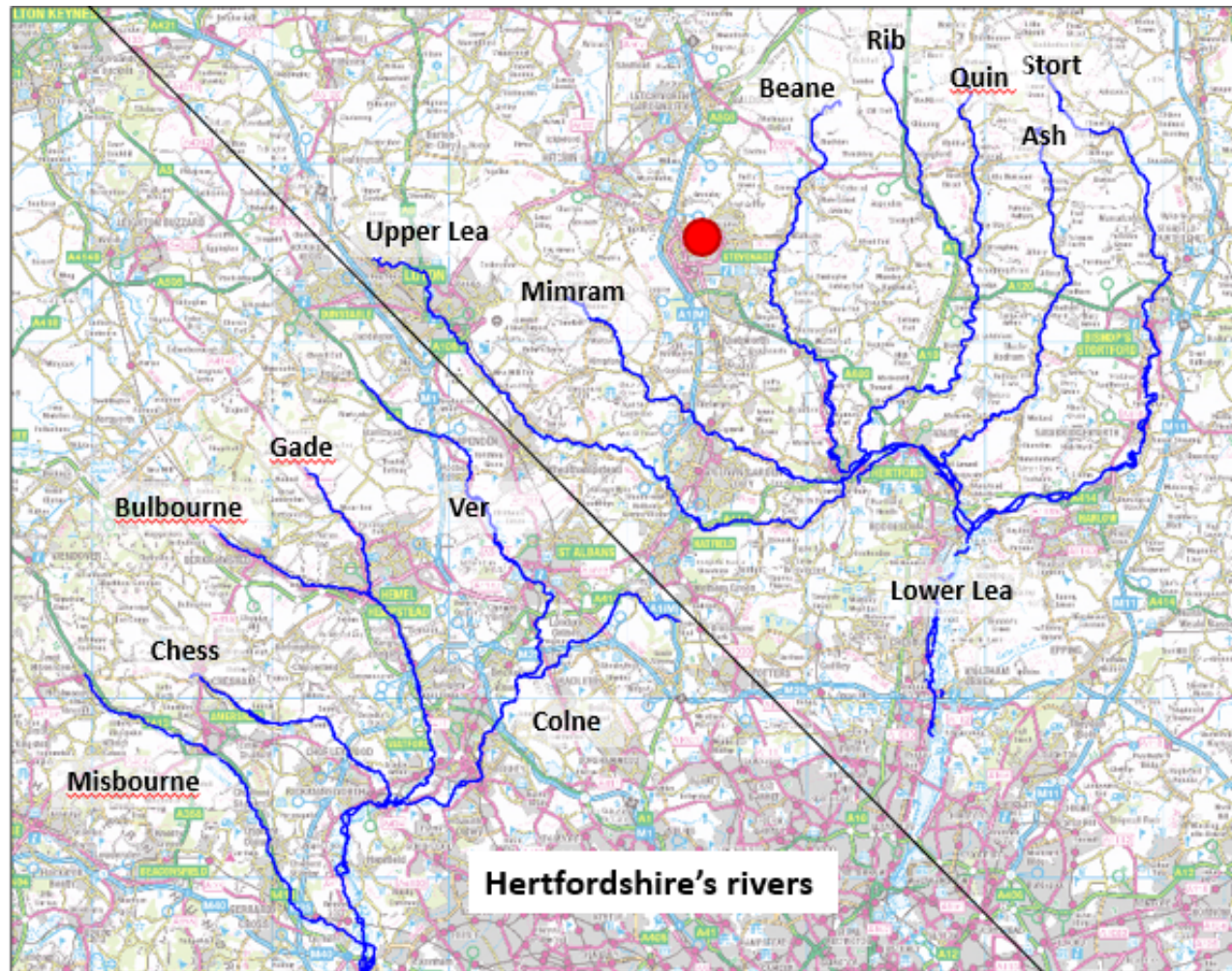
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Chalk Streams

TIM HILL, CONSERVATION MANAGER, HMWT

Rivers in Hertfordshire



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Stevenage Brook



Environmental Strategies

FEBRUARY 2024

2024/25



Tree & Woodland Strategy



Green Spaces Strategy

Timeline

- November – December 2023: phase 1 public consultation
- February 2024: focus groups
- March – May 2024: develop draft strategy documents
- June 2024: internal consultation on draft documents
- Summer 2024: phase 2 public consultation
- September 2024: finalise documents
- Autumn 2024: draft documents to E&E
- Winter 2024/25: approval of documents by Exec

Outline Content

- Introduction: benefits, threats & challenges
- Context: national, regional, local
- How We Developed the Strategy: evidence base etc
- Priorities: i.e. key findings from consultation etc
- Action Plan
- Funding and Delivery Mechanisms
- Monitoring & Review

Proposed Consultation Approach

- Proposal for 6 focus group sessions to consider the variety of green spaces within an area.
- Meetings will take place in community buildings located in each area
- Activities to help map / identify specific issues and opportunities.
- Focus groups to be held during July – September 2024
- To inform the action plans

Action Plans

- To be developed for larger open spaces
- Will be developed in consultation with community stakeholders
- Actions will be costed and can be broken down to ward level – to assist with future funding identification

Questions?
