

## Further information

The national guidance on the NERC Biodiversity Duty (two documents -one for Local Authorities, and one for all Public Authorities) is available from [www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/biodiversity/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/biodiversity/index.htm)

To find out the species which have been recorded on a particular site, and to send in more records, please contact:

### ■ The Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Record Centre

Elm Tree Court, Long Street, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 1NJ  
01380 725 670, [www.wsbrc.org.uk](http://www.wsbrc.org.uk)

For advice relating to protected species and designated sites contact:

### ■ Natural England, Devizes Office

Prince Maurice Court, Hambleton Avenue, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2RT  
01380 726344, [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

To get involved with the local Biodiversity Action Planning (LBAP) process, contact the **Wiltshire (01380 725670) or Swindon (01793 526228) Biodiversity Action Plan Coordinators.**

Go to [www.bioportal.org.uk](http://www.bioportal.org.uk) for more information

For any other queries concerning what to do next, or for advice on how to fulfil the NERC duty please contact:

### ■ Sarah Wilkinson or Charlotte Rose

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Elm Tree Court, Long Street, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 1NJ

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# Public authorities & Biodiversity



**Biodiversity (noun):** Biodiversity is a term used to describe the variety of living things. It includes all species of plants and animals, the genetic variation amongst them, and the complex ecosystems of which they are a part. Biodiversity is what makes the planet, and your county, a healthy and beautiful place to live.

# Public authorities & Biodiversity

## 1. The importance of Biodiversity

A large body of research now exists to show that maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in a given area is the cornerstone to sustainable development, enhancing the quality of life for everyone.

### **BIODIVERSITY...**

- › Contributes to our health and wellbeing and has been proven to help reduce the number of work days lost through sickness
- › Provides essential products and materials
- › Helps to sustain local economies
- › Provides the foundations of our natural life support systems – living organisms are responsible for regulating the air we breathe, the climate we live in and the quality of the water we drink.

If biodiversity levels fall, the ability of natural systems to adapt to change, or the potential resource available for humans to make use of, declines. Therefore protecting and enhancing biodiversity is in all of our interests.

## 2. The NERC Act

In October 2006, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act ('the NERC Act') came into force. Section 40 of this Act states that all public authorities must have regard to biodiversity, as far as is consistent with the proper exercise of their functions. This is part of a wider commitment by the European Union to halt biodiversity loss by 2010 ('Countdown 2010').

This new 'Biodiversity Duty' relates to all public authorities and their statutory undertakers, and it means that they must make efforts to conserve biodiversity in all of their activities.

# Your duty under the NERC Act, 2006

## 3. What does this new duty mean for you?

As a public authority you should ensure that biodiversity is at the heart of the organisation: that all departments, every team and every individual, are aware of this duty. Biodiversity should be incorporated into all of the following areas:

- › Policies and strategies (e.g. sourcing of materials)
- › Management of land and buildings (e.g. limit use of pesticides)
- › Planning, infrastructure and development (e.g. inclusion of bat/bird boxes in new developments)
- › Education, advice and awareness (e.g. provision of environmental training for staff/contractors)

This guidance leaflet is designed to complement the national guidance issued by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), and to work in conjunction with the poster "Doing your Duty for Biodiversity" also produced by the Trust.

## 4. Where do you go from here?

To fulfil the Biodiversity Duty, Public Authorities should:

- › Ensure there is no net loss in the biodiversity of a site
- › Always aim to enhance biodiversity
- › Ensure no loss in habitat connectivity
- › Implement policies to ensure that biodiversity is at the heart of the organisation and all of its operations

We have provided you with a few pointers, a starting point in developing a strategy to incorporate biodiversity into your organisation. Further guidance and advice should now be sought, and details are contained within the following section.

