

## NATIONAL LANDSCAPE WOODLAND BUTTERFLY ASSEMBLAGE SPECIES ACTION PLAN

### ***Purpose***

To present members with the fourth of the 5 National Landscape Species Action Plans, for Woodland Butterfly Assemblage, under the Colchester Declaration.

### ***Recommendations***

That the JAC endorses the Woodland Butterfly Assemblage Species Action Plan and welcomes the on-going work on the preparation of the Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan and the final Species Action Plan.

### ***Key Issues***

- The Colchester Declaration – a ‘declaration for nature’ was produced in 2019 supported by all the AONB partnerships and the National Association for AONBs (now known as the National Landscapes Association).
- Five species, or assemblage of species, were chosen as representative of the Wye Valley National Landscape Special Qualities.
- The Bumblebee Assemblage Species Action Plan (SAP) was adopted at the November JAC, prior to that Species Action Plans for Hedgehogs and Noble Chafer beetles had been adopted in July 2024 and November 2022 respectively.
- The fourth Species Action Plan is published and appended below, focusing on a Woodland Butterfly Assemblage, to encourage the sustainable management of their habitat of ancient and semi-natural woodlands.
- The National Landscape Team is working on the production of the final Species Action Plan, for *Ranunculus* Water Crowfoot in the River Wye.
- The suite of Species Action Plans accompany the Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan, which will be published shortly as a public consultation draft.

### ***Reasons***

During 2019-2022 the AONB Unit (now National Landscape Team) worked with local wildlife and conservation experts to choose 5 species, or assemblage of species, that: are representative of the AONB Special Qualities [SQ], as identified in the AONB Management Plan, and; will benefit from positive landscape scale management. The species chosen are: Noble Chafer beetle in relation to orchard habitats & Veteran Trees [SQ27, SQ18]; Hedgehog as a locally iconic species [SQ1, SQ4, SQ5, SQ26]; Bumblebee assemblage with particular focus on Shril Carder, Brown-banded Carder, and Red-shanked Carder in relation to grassland sites [SQ4]; Woodland butterfly assemblage with special interest in the Wood White and Pearl Bordered Fritillary in relation to woodlands [SQ2]; and Water Crowfoot as an indicator for river water quality and quantity [SQ3, SQ10].

### ***Implications***

The fourth of the 5 Wye Valley National Landscape Species Action Plans, has been produced and is appended below. A Woodland Butterfly Assemblage was chosen to encourage the sustainable management of their habitat of ancient and semi-natural woodlands. Being habitat focused, the Woodland Butterfly Assemblage encompasses all butterflies, but with a particular interest in locally distinctive and rare Wood White and Pearl Bordered Fritillary.

A recent 'Grassland bee identification training day for volunteers and landowners' found the first recorded Red-Shanked Carder Bee in the Wye Valley National Landscape, in Monmouthshire. This is one of the target species in the Bumblebee assemblage SAP.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Part 1) especially Section 6 Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty which requires that: "A public authority must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales".

The Environment Act 2021 introduced the requirement for local bodies to take responsibility for restoring the environment within their locale, working with local groups and the local authority. This needs to be captured in a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) that draws on ecological insights and finds natural solutions that improve biodiversity. DEFRA has asked every county in England to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This will describe where and how the development of habitats could have the greatest benefit for nature.

### ***Background***

Biodiversity is in decline. To reverse the declines in biodiversity and realise nature's recovery, we need to work together and on a landscape-scale to enact the Lawton principles of Bigger, Better, More and Joined Up. This means conserving and enhancing our existing natural habitats, but also making them bigger, creating new areas of species-rich habitat and, critically, ensuring they join up to create functional and resilient ecological networks that enable nature and people to thrive.

In 2019 the annual National AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference took place at the University of Essex, Colchester. The conference concluded with The Colchester Declaration – a Declaration for Nature. This was developed through a series of pre-conference discussion fora and workshop sessions during the conference. The Declaration is the pledge for nature of the AONB network: to protect what remains and restore what has been lost.

The Colchester Declaration has been supported by AONB/National Landscape partnerships across England and Wales. The Declaration demonstrated the readiness of AONB/National Landscape partnerships to act to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change. The ambition was pledged for every AONB to prepare a Nature Recovery Plan and deliver Species Action Plans to reverse the decline of threatened species identified on the IUCN Red List, see: <https://national-landscapes.org.uk/the-colchester-declaration>.