Green Shoots 2009
A celebration of our work since 2000 and our future strategy for progressing the UK BAP
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Executive summary

With the signing of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1992 and the publication of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) in 1994, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) saw that it was vitally important for the shooting community to be directly engaged. Therefore BASC's Green Shoots programme was launched in 2000, and it has been extremely successful. One of its key benefits has been establishing a unique mechanism for involving the shooting community in the biodiversity process, be that through local or national biodiversity action plans.

This mechanism has been used to create five projects which cover counties (Cheshire, Dorset), regions (North Wales, Somerset Levels) or country (Northern Ireland). The first phase is a biological audit of shooting land, performed by our members. Over 7,700 sq km have been audited since 2000 and the number of biological records generated exceeds 52,000. Each audit's high coverage of their project area (between 16% and 43%), combined with the number of biological records, has vastly increased the knowledge of the conservation and wildlife recording community.

This data, collected by BASC, can then be used with both statutory and voluntary conservation partners to target effort on biodiversity priority species and habitats. These projects have been successfully funded from a mixture of sources including public money, private charities, partner bodies, BASC and the shooting community.

Green Shoots has instigated many hundreds of small-scale biodiversity projects on privately held land which, collectively, have produced big gains for biodiversity. In addition there have been some headline successes such as:

- native dormice discovered in Cheshire after a 100-year absence
- establishing the Environment Agency's cordon sanitaire of mink detection and removal from the Bristol Channel to the Dorset coast to assist water vole recovery in the South West
- linking habitats to mitigate the effects of climate change in North Wales

The value of the shooting community for biodiversity conservation is now better understood through the work of Green Shoots, and BASC's long-standing reputation as a key partner for conservation in the wider countryside has been strengthened further. However, satisfied as we are with these great achievements, we will continue to develop and extend our Green Shoots programme, with our partners, for the benefit of shooting for society and, in particular, for the UK's wildlife.
Introduction to Green Shoots and biodiversity conservation

BASC is the largest representative organisation for shooting in the UK with 130,000 members. Our prime interests are to safeguard shooting sports and to maximise shooting's value for nature conservation. Managing land for game, waterfowl, deer and wildlife, means that those who practice shooting sports in the UK are one of the largest forces for protecting habitat and the wildlife it supports.

The variety of life in the world, or biodiversity as it is now known, has long been recognised to be in decline. In response to this the CBD was agreed in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. The UK was one of the 150 countries signing the convention in 1992 which committed them to provide and deliver a plan for the conservation and sustainable use of their biodiversity. Consequently the UK BAP was produced in 1994 and set targets for the conservation and sustainable use of the UK’s threatened biodiversity.

With over two thirds of the rural land area shot over, and shooters spending over £250 million on conservation each year, those who practise shooting sports are key partners for biodiversity conservation. In July 2000 BASC launched Green Shoots - The Contribution of Shooting to Biodiversity in the UK in the Palace of Westminster to show how BASC responded to the challenge of the CBD and the UK BAP. It aimed “to recognise, build upon and co-ordinate the shooting community's considerable contribution to wildlife and biodiversity conservation.”

Since its launch Green Shoots has demonstrated how the shooting community can achieve biodiversity targets in the wider countryside. This is precisely the area which statutory conservation agencies and non-governmental organisations find most difficult to reach and influence. However these projects are not run in isolation; BASC believes in working with others and all our projects benefit from strong partnerships with the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The UK BAP has evolved since 1994 to address new factors such as climate change, the EU commitment to halt biodiversity loss by 2010 and the advice of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA). Therefore the current strategy for the UK is reversing habitat degradation at the landscape scale which will protect biodiversity and the ecosystem services a healthy environment provides.

The shooting community and BASC's Green Shoots programme are good partners for the current strategy as they operate at the landscape scale, creating and connecting habitat. This provides wildlife populations with the capacity to increase and move in response to our changing climate. This management also supports ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, reducing flood risk and providing food, clean air, water and raw materials.

This document not only celebrates the achievements of our Green Shoots programme for public benefit and biodiversity since 2000, but also provides BASC's strategy for increasing shooting's integration with the biodiversity strategies in each home country to deliver aims of the current UK BAP strategy.
The original publication, Green Shoots - The Contribution of Shooting to Biodiversity in the UK, was launched in 2000. It explained how shooting contributes to biodiversity and how, in many situations, shooting pays for biodiversity conservation. The aim of Green Shoots has stood the test of time well and remains -
In short, these mechanisms helped BASC set the framework for direct delivery of targets set in the UK BAP.

Of the actions 79% have been achieved or are in hand, like the action "To protect prime biodiversity sites", such as designated sites (Ramsar, Natura2000, SSSI, ASSI). To achieve this we have used direct mechanisms such as providing assistance to shoots to formulate management plans that integrate sustainable shooting and biodiversity objectives. For example, on Crown Estate land, which is primarily coastal and regularly holds Natura2000 designations, BASC assist with writing management plans for wildfowling which are agreed with the relevant statutory conservation agency.

Other mechanisms to advise those shooting on protected sites include targeted conservation advice to branches of the sport such as game shooting, deer management and wildfowling through our specialist staff and educating all members through BASC magazines, our website, advice notes, and codes of practice.

Additionally 7% of the actions are underway but not complete. Only 6% of actions have not been started yet but will be undertaken in due course. Finally 8% of actions are now out of date. An example of this would be gaining a seat on the National Saltmarsh Steering Group, which no longer exists.

Although these actions helped BASC engage effectively with the UK BAP we did not forget our main strength, our members' management of land. The problem we faced was that we were not aware exactly where they were shooting and what biodiversity occurred there.

Therefore we needed a new and ambitious way to get this information, share it with our partners and then encourage conservation work on that land.
The current UK BAP identifies 1,149 species and 65 habitats as priorities and every one requires local action. In order to stimulate this local action, Local Biodiversity Action Plans, or Local BAPs, have been formed. They aim to build a partnership of governmental, non-governmental organisations and volunteers who then select the relevant priorities listed in the UK BAP for their local area and undertake or encourage their conservation and sustainable use.

In the last decade Local BAPs have been recognised to be so important that most of the UK is covered by at least one plan - in fact there are more than 160 in total. Local BAPs are acknowledged to be one of the prime delivery mechanisms for the targets set in the UK BAP.

What was needed to capitalise on shooters’ unique potential for the Local BAP process was vision, co-ordination and trust. The following action in Green Shoots placed us on the road to realising shootings’ potential -

“DEVELOP A SYSTEM FOR COMMUNICATING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SHOOTING COMMUNITY WHICH AFFECT KEY HABITATS AND SPECIES TO LOCAL BAP GROUPS.”

Our approach has been to concentrate on integrating BASC members’ land management for shooting with targets set in selected Local BAPs. Focussing our efforts in this way is still an enormous task; many hundreds of members shooting over large areas of land are involved. However, by using our members’ knowledge of the priority species on their land, and by recording and augmenting the conservation work that they are undertaking, we can ensure that local biodiversity targets are reached.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan partnerships - The need for Green Shoots local projects

BASC supports many Local Biodiversity Action Plans (Local BAPs) through consultation and partnerships. It is now recognised that we represent a community, or stakeholder group, which can make a significant contribution to biodiversity. With 130,000 members all acting locally, usually on privately-held land, BASC has a major impact on the management of land for quarry species and wildlife. In effect BASC members are an army of unpaid conservation volunteers.

Typically, Local BAPs can gain access to nature reserves, public places and school grounds easily; however, access to privately-held land, where the bulk of our biodiversity is found, is a greater challenge. The shooting community can provide that access. Shooters are also a group of people who have a genuine interest in wildlife and its conservation, who can act as a trusted link to the landowner, and can volunteer to undertake specific conservation work.

Local BAPS - A BRIEF HISTORY

The current UK BAP identifies 1,149 species and 65 habitats as priorities and every one requires local action. In order to stimulate this local action, Local Biodiversity Action Plans, or Local BAPs, have been formed. They aim to build a partnership of governmental, non-governmental organisations and volunteers who then select the relevant priorities listed in the UK BAP for their local area and undertake or encourage their conservation and sustainable use.

The Scottish Executive used the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Government used the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) to give public bodies in Scotland, England and Wales a duty to have regard for the conservation of biodiversity in all their functions. In practice, this formalises previous commitments on biodiversity and many local authorities will look to Local BAPs to fulfil this duty.
BASC’s blueprint for biodiversity gain

Local BAPs have a number of requirements to achieve their targets; three of the most valuable are:

- Recent and good data on where priority species and habitats are located
- Access to relevant land to undertake surveys and conservation work
- The willing assistance of someone on the land

BASC’s blueprint for biodiversity gain meets these requirements. We work in partnership with Local BAPs from the outset and make sure the local project meets their particular needs over and above the three general requirements listed above.

BASC has three Green Shoots local projects with full-time project officers helping to achieve biodiversity targets with our members and partners. Two other projects have completed the survey stage and await funding to move into the second phase. The following pages highlight each project, their partners and their successes.
The Cheshire Biodiversity Project was the first local initiative to integrate shooting's conservation value with a Local BAP. The project is based on a strong partnership with the Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership which is responsible for Cheshire’s highly successful Local BAP, called the Countdown Programme.

Two key organisations from the partnership joined BASC to form a project steering group, namely the local biological record centre, rECOrd, and the Cheshire Wildlife Trust. The result is an extremely successful project that has exceeded expectations and set an example for other Local BAPs.

The project uses BASC’s blueprint for biodiversity gain described previously. The survey agreed by the steering group was completed by nearly 300 BASC members in 2001 and the resulting database has provided vital biological records and the means to undertake targeted conservation effort on privately-held land.

Key results of the survey were:

- Over 690 sq km of land was surveyed by our members for priority biodiversity species (15) and habitats (23). This is equivalent to 28% of Cheshire
- We created a database of our members who have this access to privately held land
- We generated more than 7,700 new biological records which the majority of BASC members (79%) allowed us to share with our partners, making more than 6,600 available through rECOrd

The importance of the records cannot be overstated; it allowed us to significantly increase the data held by rECOrd on key biodiversity species and habitats such as reedbeds, heathland, dormice, brown hare, skylark and great crested newts. In many cases the data provided through BASC more than doubled or even tripled the number of sites known to have certain key species and habitats. This is typical of the data collected in subsequent Green Shoots local projects.

The bar chart on page 11 shows that the area BASC members shoot over, and provided records for, is a far greater proportion of Cheshire than is covered by recognised wildlife sites. Therefore the records collected are primarily coming from undesignated land, which is of key importance to biodiversity professionals as well as general users such as planning departments.
HOW THE PROJECT IS FUNDED

BASC funded the survey stage of the project, with our partners providing their time and expertise. BASC then effectively funded a part-time project officer, drawn from its existing staff, as we started to select members for conservation projects and help them meet local biodiversity targets.

However, it became clear that this required a full-time post, and in 2004 we made a successful application to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for a project officer on a three-year contract. The Foundation has agreed to continue to part-fund the post until 2010, based on the successes we have enjoyed. BASC’s own members have financially supported the project providing much needed match funding.

Specific project work has been funded by other partners:

- The Wildlife Habitat Trust provided up to £60,000 for specific land management for grey partridge in Cheshire
- The Cheshire Landscape Trust has given BASC 2,000 hedgerow plants for each year of the project to gap up hedges
- Chester Zoo provided £900 and the Environment Agency provided £500 to buy materials needed to detect and remove mink from Cheshire watercourses

“BASC members have access to privately-held land in Cheshire which amounts to four times the area of wildlife sites and reserves.”

BASC’S ACCESS IN CHESHIRE COMPARED WITH PROTECTED WILDLIFE SITES

Designated (SSSI, Natura2000) and non-designated wildlife sites (county wildlife sites)

Area that BASC members can access and from which they have provided records of biodiversity

% of Cheshire’s land area

28%

7%

0
5
10
15
20
25
30
Conservation Action in Cheshire by Green Shoots

The survey, and the database that it created, have allowed us to offer BASC members conservation projects which are relevant to their shoot and target areas where the Cheshire BAP needs action to take place. This approach has paid dividends. To date more than 150 conservation projects have taken place on BASC members’ shooting ground in Cheshire – all of which contribute to targets set in the Countdown Programme. Here are some of the successes the project has achieved:

THE FIRST RECORD OF DORMOUSE IN A WILD STATE IN CHESHIRE SINCE THE EARLY 1900s.

BASC provided access to seven sites in Cheshire selected by Sue Tatman, local expert from the Cheshire Wildlife Trust, for dormouse surveys. In 2005 Sue and BASC discovered a nest of this rare mammal in tubes we had placed in woods to provide good locations for autumn and winter nest building. The unique construction of a dormouse nest confirms the animal’s presence. Survey work in December 2006 has resulted in the discovery of four additional nests in a nearby wood. This result is a major breakthrough for the species. Positive management for dormice and a continuation of the survey are under way.

HEDGEROWS

Thousands of trees and shrubs are planted by BASC members each year to gap up hedgerows in Cheshire. Two thousand plants are provided annually by one of our partners, the Cheshire Landscape Trust. In total BASC members gap up in the region of 6km of hedgerow each year, a large proportion of which is funded privately, and this means we provide the primary contribution towards the local gapping up target in each year.

The Cheshire BAP aims to identify species-rich hedgerows in the county by means of volunteer surveys. BASC members have surveyed over 1km of hedgerow to an agreed methodology. Critically these surveys are on privately held land, where other volunteers are unable to survey.

BARN OWL

BASC has used the barn owl data from the survey in phase one to introduce local barn owl groups to new sites that they were not aware of, thus linking the known populations in the west and east of the county.
LAPWING

Lapwings are included in the Local BAP farmland bird action plan and BASC provided 28 sites for inclusion in the RSPB’s skylark and lapwing lifeline project. Seven sites were of high value for lapwing and two went into countryside stewardship to assist in conserving the birds. As a consequence, Cheshire has a better network of sites with suitable habitat for this iconic species.

WATER VOLE

One of the main targets of the water vole action plan is to confirm the range of the species.

BASC found a key site for water vole on land managed by Frodsham and District Wildfowlers on the marshes to the south of the Mersey estuary. This population is highly significant and has prompted the water vole action plan to consider it a key site for their strategic conservation plan.

This strategy has begun on the River Gowy, which feeds into the Frodsham marshes area. BASC has worked with the Mersey Basin Campaign’s Paul Corner and the North West Lowlands Water Vole Officer Richard Gardner to survey the entire river for voles and to establish an effective mink trapping programme. This is primarily manned by BASC members. BASC was successful in obtaining £900 from Chester Zoo’s native species fund to buy the mink raft materials and traps. This partnership, combined with habitat work, will start the recovery of water vole on the Gowy. The project is to extend to the larger River Weaver, with financial support already gained from the Environment Agency for mink raft materials.

CONCLUSION

This project has been extremely successful at bringing together people who shoot and those working on the Local BAP, the Countdown Programme. BASC members provide access to huge amounts of privately-held land and bring an honest interest in nature conservation. The partners in the Local BAP bring the knowledge of what needs to be done and certain specialist skills. Combining these two resources has made a significant difference to Cheshire’s biodiversity and provided BASC with a blueprint for conservation gain which we have rolled out into other Local BAP areas.
The Somerset Levels Project is the second local biodiversity project resulting from the Green Shoots initiative. The then English Nature Team covering the Somerset Levels read Green Shoots and approached BASC to see if a joint project was possible on the Levels. In 2002 a full-time project officer was appointed working for BASC, directed by a steering group consisting of BASC and English Nature, with the Environment Agency joining in 2005. English Nature was succeeded by Natural England in 2006.

The project followed the blueprint described earlier, except that the officer directly contacted BASC members and met them on their land to fill in the survey forms individually.

This had the advantage of immediately establishing a personal relationship between the project officer and the BASC member which enabled projects that attained Local BAP targets to be agreed at the outset. The project has not only contributed to the Somerset Local BAP but has been recognized as an integral component of the Avon BAP due to work programmes extending beyond the Somerset Levels.

The project steering group agreed four aims for the project.

**AIM 1: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF LOCAL WILDLIFE AND HABITAT RECORDS**

When the project officer surveyed the land he categorised the main habitats using the Phase 1 habitat classification system. The officer also gathered data on the presence of barn owl, grey partridge, water vole, skylark, yellowhammer, bat and brown hare. He then looked at the shooting interests on the land and was able to approach members and propose relevant conservation projects which met habitat and species targets.

In total over 1,800 records of species and habitats have been generated and with every member giving us permission to share their records everything is available through the Somerset Environmental Record Centre.
AIM 2: INCREASE THE BIODIVERSITY ON LAND MANAGED BY THE SHOOTING COMMUNITY

BASC members, some of whom are farmers or landowners, have carried out hundreds of conservation projects. Many have paid for the work themselves, while others have used the various agri-environmental grant schemes to provide funds. The table below summarises the breadth and amount of conservation activity since 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservation activity</th>
<th>2003-2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gapping up/renovating old hedges</td>
<td>8.5km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Planting new hedgerows</td>
<td>12.4km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Planting hedgerow trees</td>
<td>578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tree planting, either as specimens or within 5 below</td>
<td>7,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Planting spinneys or other small woodland</td>
<td>30 (7.7ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Coppicing/pollarding mature trees</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Creating woodland butterfly glades</td>
<td>1.5ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Cutting/maintaining woodland rides</td>
<td>25.2km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Renovating derelict ponds</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Creating new flight ponds</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Creating grass-strip field margins</td>
<td>305.8km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Planting cover crops/wild bird mixes</td>
<td>153.3ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Creating wild flower meadows</td>
<td>43.8ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Sympathetic ditch and rhyne clearance</td>
<td>28.7km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Erecting nest boxes/bat boxes</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Creating new reed bed</td>
<td>200m²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These projects are taking place on privately held land on the Levels in exactly those places which the partners in this project had previously found difficult to access but where they knew that it was important to conduct surveys and undertake conservation work.
AIM 3: TO TARGET CONSERVATION EFFORT

Mink control results in water vole recovery

It is now accepted that habitat management and control of the non-native American mink are both required if we are to see the recovery of the water vole. This project has created an effective mink trapping network which has both controlled American mink numbers on the Somerset Levels and established a trapping line which isolates the West Country from further colonisation by mink. This is of key importance nationally as it fulfils the Environment Agency’s plan to throw a cordon sanitaire of mink control across the West Country from the Bristol Channel to the Dorset coast.

In 2003 it was clear that the Somerset Levels could support a higher population of water voles, but it was seriously reduced by an abundance of mink. To preserve the rapidly declining numbers of water vole, the project officer trained people to trap mink1, supported them in the field and sent information to the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit at Oxford University for analysis.

Those trained were mainly BASC members but a significant number included RSPB wardens, LNR volunteers, county wildlife trust staff, NNR wardens, fishery owners and university research teams.

Despite the need to cover 5,000km of waterways on the Somerset Levels and Moors, this volunteer trapping and monitoring team has been responsible for significant benefits for the water vole. To date over 407 mink have been trapped and there is evidence that some areas are now mink-free, with a corresponding increase in water vole activity.

Two independent reports corroborate this. Both indicate that water voles are re-colonising areas on the Somerset Levels in which they have previously been absent. One report is from the Environment Agency and the other is from Royal Haskoning Ecology Consultants. In addition, further surveys by the Somerset Environmental Record Centre have indicated that water voles are now widespread across the Levels - a marked contrast with their data in 2003.

The outstanding success of the water vole project on the Somerset Levels means the project can focus on increasing the density of volunteer trappers within the cordon sanitaire.

Lessening predation on vulnerable ground-nesting waders

Predation on ground-nesting birds’ eggs or chicks by crow species (corvids) can be so efficient that few young are fledged, leading to a sharp decline in their population. Therefore BASC has co-ordinated the corvid control activities of BASC members on SSSIs and interlinking areas where key populations of nesting waders exist.

To encourage breeding wader populations BASC has arranged for two local wildfowling clubs to undertake corvid control on lowland wet grassland SSSIs owned by Natural England. In addition, BASC members are actively involved with the RSPB, FWAG and Natural England in a multi-agency project to monitor and conserve the remaining lapwing nest sites in the area. Preliminary findings indicate that a significant proportion of the nesting lapwing population uses non-reserve land, which is managed for sporting purposes. These areas will be the target for future work which will be made possible through BASC’s relationship with its members and the shooting community.

1BASC use the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust mink control methodology and mink raft concept which is a well-accepted and effective method for mink detection and control.
AIM 4: TO ESTABLISH CLOSE WORKING LINKS BETWEEN THE SHOOTING COMMUNITY AND OTHER CONSERVATION BODIES

In 2003 the relationships between the shooting community and non-shooting conservation agencies were poor. The project was tasked with breaking down these barriers and promoting better relationships. It has been very successful in this and a number of working partnerships have been established since the start of the project, including:

- First meeting in 15 years between Avon Wildlife Trust and a local wildfowling club resulting in them holding a joint mink-control workshop and co-ordinating conservation activities
- BASC members working with the Royal Holloway University Biological Research Unit, the East Devon District Council and others on water vole conservation
- BASC are an integral part of the Avon Biodiversity Partnership working on the Avon BAP
- BASC clubs and syndicates working closely with the Cornwall, Dorset and Wiltshire Wildlife Trusts
- BASC working closely with the Somerset Environmental Record Centre on the revision of the Somerset BAP
- BASC members working closely with the Natural England Raised Water Levels Project to monitor breeding waders and to control mink and corvids
- BASC affiliated wildfowling clubs participating in annual Wetland Bird Survey counts
- BASC members assisting the Environment Agency in wildlife management activities where flood defence works are being carried out

CONCLUSION

The Somerset Levels Project proves that shooters are a key link in reaching biodiversity targets. The project has turned the fortunes of water vole around and built a wide partnership of bodies working on a range of projects. The critical factor has been the BASC project officer who brought together those on the ground with those responsible for biodiversity conservation.

This project shows the unique value of Green Shoots; the ability to recruit people with an interest in conservation who have access to privately held land to work on specific biodiversity targets.
GREEN SHOOTS IN NORTH WALES

Following the success of Green Shoots in Cheshire and Somerset, FWAG Cymru approached BASC to see if a similar local project could be run across North Wales. Discussions soon included the Countryside Council for Wales who were very supportive, then the Environment Agency. Green Shoots in North Wales was launched in September 2004 by Carwyn Jones, Environment Minister for the Welsh Assembly Government.

With help from partner organisations, a survey booklet requesting records of twenty-three species and nine habitats was sent out to BASC members across the seven Local BAP areas of North Wales in 2004. The results returned from this survey were extraordinary, with over 9,000 new biological records of species and habitat made by 331 members and approximately one-fifth of the land in North Wales being covered. Some records included rare species such as red squirrel, pine marten, black poplar and dormouse.

A full-time project officer was appointed in the summer of 2006 and has developed an excellent relationship with a great number of conservation organisations and others as the projects have developed. All projects directly contribute to achieving Local BAP targets in North Wales.

The project has four key objectives:

- To create practical projects aimed at implementing national and local biodiversity action plans
- To manage a mink raft control network with the Environment Agency and other partners
- To use the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) to hold and share information about the project
- To gather additional records for the North Wales Local Records Centre, COFNOD

HOW THE PROJECT IS FUNDED

The Countryside Council for Wales has provided significant funding for the project since 2004 and the Environment Agency has also contributed. The shooting community has donated several thousand pounds from the joint BASC and GWCT Welsh Game Ball and generous BASC supporters. BASC and FWAG Cymru have matched those funds by providing specialist staff time to complete the funding package.
The table below summarises the conservation work undertaken by BASC members in the project. The data combines the results of postal surveys on members’ conservation work with the actions of the BASC project officer.

### AN OVERVIEW OF CONSERVATION WORK COMPLETED BY BASC MEMBERS IN 2006-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of project</th>
<th>2006-2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New hedges</td>
<td>11 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gapping Up</td>
<td>3.2 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedge laying</td>
<td>2.4 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees planted</td>
<td>33,237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees planted as woodland</td>
<td>119 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New ponds</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restored ponds</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cover crops</td>
<td>115 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating field margins</td>
<td>36 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing of rivers/streams</td>
<td>21 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General bird boxes</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barn owl boxes</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bat boxes</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mink rafts in operation</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mink caught</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are eight species specific or group specific Green Shoots conservation projects in North Wales. These are dormouse, bats, barn owl, farmland birds, marsh fritillary, black poplar, water vole and pine marten. The last two are discussed in detail below, along with one of the habitat based projects we have run.

### The Conwy Habitat Improvement Project (CHIPS)

BASC worked in partnership with Conwy County Council in 2007 and 2008 to utilize their funding scheme called CHIPS. The project officer visited BASC members’ sites to decide which projects could be undertaken to create or improve habitat to help Conwy’s priority species.

In 2007 £26,000 was spent on BASC members’ land for the benefit of biodiversity and the figure in 2008 was £24,675. The projects included linking upland and lowland woodland using shelter belts which will help species move to higher ground in response to climate change. Other projects created a buffer zone by streams to provide continuity of habitat for more sensitive animal species as well as room for plants to extend their range and increase their abundance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of project</th>
<th>2007-2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife corridor (tree planting and fencing)</td>
<td>2.1 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streamside corridor (fencing) to connect habitats</td>
<td>3.1 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renovating ponds</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees planted</td>
<td>8075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodland created</td>
<td>2.7 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing off woodland to limit grazing and promote regeneration</td>
<td>20 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetland created</td>
<td>3 ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PINE MARTEN
Pine martens in North Wales are elusive; no physical evidence of them has been found for more than a decade, and some people fear they have become extinct. Yet regular sightings are reported to the Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT) every year. They are difficult animals to find, and even where there is believed to be a high population, and field signs suggest their presence, they are rarely seen.

From the survey, 23 sightings were recorded by BASC members across North Wales. Each member who recorded a sighting was interviewed using a technique developed by the VWT to assess the validity of the claim. Several scored very highly. Breeding boxes have been erected on two shoots, one in Snowdonia National Park and one in Conwy.

The site in Conwy also has two types of monitoring device deployed. The first is tubes set in trees, which are baited with meat at the upper end. This forces the marten to climb into the tube past a sticky pad which will catch loose hairs. Samples of hairs collected are sent to the Waterford Institute of Technology for genetic analysis. The second device is a remote camera trap overlooking a covered platform baited with meat.

To date the work has produced conclusive data for otter presence but not pine marten. However, sightings continue to be submitted and it is hoped that these sites can provide physical evidence of the marten’s existence in North Wales.
WATER VOLE AND MINK
Following the success of Green Shoots on the Somerset Levels it is accepted that BASC members are proficient at the control of mink, so reducing their effective predation on water vole. In North Wales the project officer has trained 70 people in Anglesey and Gwynedd to manage water vole habitat sensitively and remove mink using mink rafts. Those trained are mainly BASC members but also fishing club members, wildlife trust and RSPB staff. Anglesey has one of the most significant water vole populations in the UK, which is why a mink clearance programme on the island has been spread to Gwynedd to act as a barrier to their further colonisation.

Partner organisations are Menter Môn who manage the network of volunteer trappers on Anglesey and the EA. We have over 150 rafts in place and we will assess the response of the water vole population. In addition the North Wales Trunk Road Agency has funded the purchase of 250 rafts for use in the rest of North Wales. This means we can extend the area of mink detection and control to benefit water voles in the entire region.

CONCLUSION
Green Shoots in North Wales further underlines the value of our local projects. The biological data from the survey has significantly increased the understanding of the distribution and status of those species and habitats regarded as biodiversity priorities.

It has progressed the work programmes of the Local BAP and other partner organisations through its ability to open up the privately held land of our members. The results of this project clearly show that this model delivers biodiversity gain. It is particularly effective in connecting landscape features which helps mitigate the effects of climate change.
BASC started to discuss a Green Shoots project with the Environment and Heritage Service in Northern Ireland (now the Northern Ireland Environment Agency) in 2005 and gained funding from them to run the survey of our members in 2006. Their position was similar to that of others trying to achieve BAP targets, in that there was limited information on biodiversity in the wider countryside in comparison with designated sites and there was not an efficient mechanism to get access to private land for the Local BAP process. A BASC Green Shoots project offered a solution to both of these issues.

A high number of members took part in the survey, over 400, and they provided 16,800 records of biodiversity priorities. In addition 95% of members allowed us to share their biological data with our partners, which means that nearly every record is publicly available.

The survey covered 25% of Northern Ireland, which was an excellent result considering that, in comparison with the other home countries, there are a great deal more landowners, each holding smaller parcels of land which are often not connected.

As with every Green Shoots project, this biological data can be shown geographically which enables us and our partners to produce dot maps for species and habitats, and modern computer analysis allows us to create maps that show hot spots for records from the survey.

One of the priority species we asked about was curlew, whose breeding success has diminished to the point that there were some discussions about removing it from the quarry list. However, given the volume of data provided by Green Shoots and the acceptance that shooting provides a strong motivation for land management suitable for quarry species, the advice from BASC and other conservation bodies is that they remain on the quarry list.

BASC are now in discussions to secure funding to move the project into the second phase of achieving biodiversity targets.
When BASC was in discussion with the South West of England Regional Development Agency in 2005 they showed interest in our Green Shoots programme, especially with the success demonstrated by Green Shoots on the Somerset Levels. The result was they provided funds for BASC to run the survey phase for a project in Dorset in 2006.

The species selected for the project were agreed between BASC and the Dorset Wildlife Trust and the 12 habitats and 41 species comprised the highest number put in a survey to date. However BASC members responded exceptionally well and recorded the highest coverage of a Local BAP area to date with 43% coverage.

Records generated and shared with partners was high with 88% of members giving us permission to share the biological data with our partners, including the Dorset Environmental Record Centre. The production of dot maps for species and habitats, and maps showing hot spots for records means we are in a strong position to target conservation effort.

For example we can concentrate efforts on BASC members whose land supports a particular priority species. Alternatively we can select sites geographically for projects which achieve, for example, the extension of the range of population. In Dorset this could be introducing the correct land management for adonis blue butterflies on a piece of land near an existing population.

In Dorset, Green Shoots’ potential to benefit the Local BAP is vast. BASC is talking to the South West of England Regional Development Agency to secure funding to extend the initiative to cover the entire region. This would move the project into the second phase, taking it from the desk to the field and achieving real biodiversity targets.
Green Shoots has established itself as a unique method of engaging the shooting community en masse with action for biodiversity conservation. We have the potential to work on just about any biodiversity priority because our members have access to areas where those priority habitats, species and issues are found. Additionally, our members have a strong interest in conservation which means that they are willing to help.

The five local projects in progress at the start of 2009 demonstrate the following key benefits of BASC’s Green Shoots programme:

• Generation of vast numbers of records of biodiversity priority species and habitats from privately held land. This improves our knowledge of status and trends for habitats and species

• Sharing of those records with local record centres and the National Biodiversity Network, where they can be used to help others make informed decisions

• Creation of a volunteer network of members willing to work on biodiversity projects, which BASC makes available to partners

• Vastly increasing targeted action for biodiversity conservation in the wider landscape

• The potential to work on large-scale projects as our members can allow access to wide stretches of the countryside

• Development of new partnerships with a range of organisations and groups to achieve projects with common goals

Our local projects are located in each of the home countries with the exception of Scotland - something BASC intends to remedy as soon as possible. The successes of the current Green Shoots local projects have been many and varied. Some might rightly perceive the projects to have high potential to control non-native species like the American mink. Although the damage non-native species can do to indigenous wildlife and habitats is a major priority, Green Shoots has a much wider conservation portfolio than this.

Green Shoots in North Wales is working with Butterfly Conservation on marsh fritillary recovery and Green Shoots in Cheshire has been helping to locate ponds which contain the very rare lesser silver water beetle. We have enabled many partner organisations, from the RSPB to Chester Zoo, to engage with the shooting community and thereby increase the effectiveness of their conservation programmes. In return we benefit from their specialist expertise.

In a world where the challenge of meeting our biodiversity targets outstrips any one group’s capacity, partnerships are essential. Through the Green Shoots programme BASC has shown that the shooting community will make those partnerships and has the ability and will to drive forward large scale initiatives, thus achieving the biodiversity targets to which all who care for wildlife and the countryside are committed.
FUNDING GREEN SHOOTS

BASC cannot meet the cost of a UK-wide network of Green Shoots projects from its own funds alone. This means that we need external funding to implement the programme, but we do match the funding in terms of staff time. So far we have been successful in gaining financial support from public bodies, private charities and from the shooting community.

**Key funders include:**
- **Charitable foundations and trusts:** Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.
- **Publicly funded agencies:** Natural England (formerly English Nature), the Environment Agency, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (formerly the Environment and Heritage Service in Northern Ireland) and the South West of England Regional Development Agency.

**Supporters of BASC:** BASC members’ fundraising and those providing substantial personal donations.

Green Shoots local projects provide a cost-effective way to engage managers of the wider landscape in biodiversity conservation. Costs for a typical county-sized project are only around £140,000 for three years. This provides the biodiversity records, the database of BASC members and the land they manage, and a project officer to link those members with the local biodiversity process.

Success in gaining funding for Green Shoots to date has been good. However to help shooting fulfil its unique role in delivering local and ultimately national biodiversity targets, it is crucial that BASC continues to gain significant financial support from public bodies, charitable trusts and the shooting community.

**If you or your organisation can help with funding in any way then please contact BASC.**
The potential of shooting sports and Green Shoots for biodiversity conservation

The local projects reviewed in this publication have significantly increased the level of biodiversity delivery. However, in spite of good media coverage, many people are simply not aware of the true extent of what shooting does for conservation or, indeed, its potential for achieving specific biodiversity targets. In 2006 a report entitled the *Economic and Environmental Impact of Sporting Shooting* assessed the impact of shooting in the UK and its value for conservation.

**ITS MAIN FINDINGS WERE:**

- 480,000 people shoot live quarry
- Shooting supports 70,000 full-time equivalent jobs
- Shooters spend £2 billion each year on goods and services
- Shooting is worth £1.6 billion to the UK economy
- Shooting is involved in the management of two-thirds of the rural land area
- Two million hectares are actively managed for conservation as a result of shooting
- Shoot providers spend £250 million a year on conservation
- Shooters spend 2.7 million workdays on conservation - the equivalent of 12,000 full-time jobs

**HOW THIS TRANSLATES TO GREEN SHOOTS**

Although land management for shooting is of high benefit to wildlife in general, it is not necessarily targeted specifically on species or habitats prioritised in the UK BAP. Additionally, any losses or gains for priority biodiversity are not recorded.

This is where Green Shoots can have a massive impact; BASC has the trust of the shooting community and conservation partners. Therefore we can guide their efforts to go beyond the conservation work that routinely happens on shooting land and achieve specific biodiversity targets set in Local BAPs. As our membership is UK-wide we have the potential to work anywhere.

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1 The report was prepared by PACCEC on behalf of BASC, the Country Land and Business Association, the Countryside Alliance and in association with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust based on shooting activity in 2004.
2 This is greater than the total area of land designated as National Nature Reserves.
SHOOTING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Shooting is an excellent example of sustainable land management because it provides:

- Financial value, £1.6 billion pa - benefiting the economy, especially in rural areas
- Social value - for the people who enjoy shooting there is companionship and the benefits for health and wellbeing from being active in the countryside
- Conservation value, £250 million pa - in the form of good land management for quarry species and wildlife

Uniquely in shooting these three key elements are natural and equal partners. In most other activities or businesses one element is generally a very junior partner, and all too often that is conservation.

FOOD AND BIODIVERSITY

Besides recreation, shooting also provides something for the table. Game meat is the ultimate free-range food - wild, healthy and, above all, delicious.

It also contributes to a more sustainable lifestyle in which food is locally sourced and produced in harmony with the countryside, whether it is game, such as pheasant and partridge, is the sustainable harvest of a wild population, like waterfowl, or comes from legal pest control, like pigeon or rabbit.

BASC has been promoting the consumption of shot food since the 1960’s. Our current initiative, Game’s On, (www.gameson.org.uk) has been highly effective in encouraging more people to eat game, not just among shooters themselves but in the wider community.

And in promoting shooting BASC is doing more than simply increasing the amount of quality, locally produced food being consumed in the UK. It is directly contributing to biodiversity because land managed for shooting benefits all wildlife and conserves the wild places.
The future of biodiversity conservation and the need for Green Shoots

The need to enhance biodiversity will continue to be the principal driver for nature conservation. The Government’s credibility in meeting international commitments for conservation and sustainable development will be measured by its success in achieving the targets set.

The UK Government has to report on two important targets in 2010. The first of these is to significantly reduce the current rate of biodiversity loss\(^4\). The second is to halt biodiversity loss in the EU and to restore habitats and natural ecosystems\(^5\).

The Government’s Environmental Audit Committee published their thirteenth report - *Halting Biodiversity Loss* - in 2008, which the Government accepted in January 2009. In it they concluded that, despite some notable successes, many 2010 biodiversity targets for England will be missed and they laid out recommendations for action to hit 2020 targets. Assessments made for other home countries predict a similar result against the 2010 targets.

It is accepted that the achievement of biodiversity targets within designated wildlife sites (ASSI/SSSI/Natura2000 sites) are on track but greater action is needed in the wider countryside. The UK BAP Biodiversity Partnership’s strategy is made clear in the 2007 publication *Conserving Biodiversity – the UK approach*. Practical management should be based around the ecosystem approach. This seeks to promote the sustainable management of habitats at the landscape scale, not based around protected sites, because this will meet biodiversity targets and provide the ecosystem services\(^6\) which underpin human life.

At governmental level, the biodiversity agenda cannot just be left to the statutory conservation agencies. It will require a much wider engagement with all aspects of government so that the environmental impacts of all policies are correctly identified and addressed. In addition a wide range of non-governmental organisations and private individuals will be required to significantly increase the amount of joint working and shared vision if biodiversity targets, and the benefits of the ecosystem approach, are to materialise.

Clearly, in this new era of greater targets and lessening timescales, it is increasingly important and urgent to gain the co-operation of landowners and managers to manage for wildlife.

BASC’s Green Shoots programme provides an efficient system to make those connections and to promote extensive land management through the shooting community. The projects celebrated in this publication show how shooting seriously increases the capacity of those working to achieve biodiversity targets and that the priorities of the shooting community are much wider than simply conserving quarry species.

\(^1\)Agreed at the sixth meeting of the Conference of Parties and endorsed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002.
\(^2\)Agreed at the EU summit in Gothenburg in 2001.
\(^3\)These benefits - often referred to as ecosystem services - are what we need from the environment such as soil protection, flood attenuation, carbon sequestration and the ability to find plants that can provide new medicines or resistance to diseases that threaten our agricultural crop varieties.
CHANGING CLIMATE

The effect of climate change is an additional challenge for biodiversity conservation. It is agreed that the primary response involves wide-scale projects to provide interconnected habitat. This will enable wildlife to redistribute as its needs require. As the Government commissioned Stern Review in 2006 stated; “Climate change will require nature conservation efforts to extend out from the current approach of fixed protected areas. Conservation efforts will increasingly be required to operate at the landscape scale with larger contiguous tracts of land that can better accommodate species movement.”

To meet the challenges posed by climate change and biodiversity targets, ready access to privately held land with those who are sympathetic to these aims is critical. Therefore partners who can offer this will be of high value – and this is precisely what Green Shoots offers.
It is important to always remember that shooting has been a major force for conservation through the retention and creation of habitat; that contribution has been well recognised and accepted for many decades. What Green Shoots can do is focus that contribution to achieve specific biodiversity targets. BASC and its partners know that our Green Shoots programme has high value. Our aim is to extend that family and grow more Green Shoots local projects to increase the co-ordinated contribution of the shooting community to the UK BAP and help counter the effects of climate change.

There are four strands to our strategy:

• To continue the Green Shoots 2000 actions
• To develop existing projects
• To create new Green Shoots projects
• To adapt projects to meet new challenges
TO CONTINUE THE GREEN SHOOTS 2000 ACTIONS

Many of the 153 actions set in Green Shoots 2000 are ongoing tasks which we need to continue in order to maintain an environment where wildlife can flourish. Therefore BASC will continue to monitor and respond to policies and consultations, both in the UK and the EU that could affect biodiversity and shooting. We will continue to support and advise the shooting community on biodiversity and sustainable shooting. We will continue to engage with topics such as non-native species and managed realignment of coastal sea defences.

TO DEVELOP EXISTING PROJECTS

BASC and its partners are keen that existing projects should continue because they clearly demonstrate the benefits for biodiversity and the importance of working with rural land managers and owners.

For our projects in Dorset and Northern Ireland we want to secure funds to employ dedicated project officers so that the excellent data collected at the survey stage can be used to produce real gains for biodiversity.

TO CREATE NEW GREEN SHOOTS PROJECTS

Increasing the number of Green Shoots projects is the best way to engage the shooting community to achieve specific biodiversity targets. With access to two-thirds of the UK’s rural land area they are a powerful ally for promoting biodiversity conservation. We wish to grow Green Shoots as fast as we can.

We see a project in Scotland as a priority so that each home country has at least one Green Shoots initiative in place. Interest from Local BAPs to run Green Shoots projects is excellent because they can see the benefits they offer, so the biggest challenge is to secure funding.

TO ADAPT PROJECTS TO MEET NEW CHALLENGES

Our local projects provide access to as much as 43% of an area through our members, who are keen to work on biodiversity projects. Therefore we have an excellent opportunity to connect habitat together. Where our partners agree, we will strategically increase the connections in key habitat within our projects, thus achieving habitat creation and maintenance targets in addition to contributing towards the mitigation of climate change.

AND FINALLY...

BASC is proud of its members and partners that have made the Green Shoots programme a highly successful contributor to biodiversity conservation. Green Shoots significantly increases the capacity of the BAP process to achieve biodiversity targets by engaging with a sector of society with a direct interest in conservation and an ongoing commitment to individual areas of land.

Increasing support for the programme will not just achieve biodiversity objectives. It will increase the health and happiness of all those that enjoy the countryside, including the half a million people who enjoy shooting sports as recreation or as a profession, as they see and experience a richer environment.

GREEN SHOOTS 2009
Green Shoots - Increasing biodiversity conservation through the shooting community

We need to expand our network of funders and partners so if you can help us in any way please contact Ian Danby on 01244 573024

For more information on any of the issues raised in this booklet please contact the conservation and land management team.

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