



Business and Biodiversity

An introduction
to integrating
biodiversity &
nature conservation
into your business

What is biodiversity?

'Biodiversity' means the whole variety of life on earth, from the tiniest bug to the mightiest tree, and the natural systems they live in. Its not just rare plants and animals, biodiversity includes everything from the exotic rainforest to the bottom of your garden.

Why is it relevant to business?

Biodiversity plays an essential role in keeping our planet and us healthy. It makes a significant contribution to our social and economic well being.

The links between business and biodiversity may not seem immediately obvious but consider some of the positive connections.....

- **Vital natural resources**

Many businesses depend on biological resources. Our natural resources provide us with food, fuels, clothing, paper, medicines, and a vast array of other materials. We all use and depend on resources derived from biodiversity.

- **Ecological services**

Biodiversity performs many crucial environmental services. E.g. wetlands and streams can help control flooding, peat bogs help to 'soak up' carbon dioxide and filter our water, trees and woodlands help to provide clean air, and insects pollinate our crops.

- **Pounds and pence**

Consideration of biodiversity does not have to cost a lot. In fact, some actions for biodiversity can generate **cost savings**, while there are many other **no cost or low cost** options.

E.g. reducing energy consumption & waste, reducing herbicide use or leaving areas of grass uncut can help local biodiversity and reduce business costs. Other actions such as using native tree and shrub species in landscaping, or encouraging your workforce to discover what wildlife you have on your premises may incur little or no extra cost.

- **Being seen to be green**

Taking action for biodiversity will confirm to your staff, suppliers, customers, neighbouring communities and other businesses that you understand how vital biodiversity is and are taking responsibility for it locally.

- **Healthy, happy staff**

Staff get satisfaction and enthusiasm from being involved with their local environment. Action for wildlife can also help to create a nicer working environment.

- **Environmental Protection**

Successful management of biodiversity will help your business ensure that it is not only meeting minimum legal requirements for environmental protection but also creating a high quality local landscape.

Canal Business and Biodiversity

In Falkirk the newly re-opened canal system offers a prime example of how business and biodiversity can interact. Wild plants, animals and habitats are an integral part of the canal system. They help make it what it is – a rich social and economic resource as well as a wildlife habitat accessible to many local communities. The tourism and recreation business generated by the canal and the other industries that support them, all have a vested interest in conserving and enhancing the rich canal biodiversity. Wildlife tourism alone generates an annual income of £57 million to the Scottish economy, plus 2000 jobs. British Waterways have recognised that biodiversity is an integral part of the assets they own and manage. They are producing their own Biodiversity Action Plan to ensure that they conserve and enhance this valuable wildlife. The other businesses along the canal all have a role to play in conserving its vital biodiversity.

What can my business do?

- **Reduce waste**

How we use raw materials and dispose of waste impacts on biodiversity. Reducing waste can help biodiversity and cut costs. Consider reducing the amount of materials you use (e.g. in packaging), reusing materials (e.g. reusing paper that has only been printed on one side), recycling waste wherever possible. Paper, cans, plastic, mobile phones, computers, printer cartridges and glass can all be recycled, reducing landfill costs. In addition, food and other organic waste could be composted on site – reducing waste and providing a new wildlife habitat.

- **Save energy**

Reducing your energy consumption can save money and benefit the environment. Take measures to save energy in the work place. Investigate using LPG gas to power your vehicles. See if materials can be sourced locally to reduce fuel consumption and transport costs.

- **Raise awareness**

Everyone can help to conserve biodiversity. Raising the awareness of staff, suppliers and clients will help take the message outside your business's immediate sphere of influence into the wider community. Why not include your 'green credentials' in advertising and highlight biodiversity in staff newsletters.

- **Site maintenance / landscaping**

Changes to site maintenance can benefit biodiversity and need not cost much, if anything. E.g....

- Leave areas of uncut grass to encourage nectar-rich wild flowers.
- Plant native trees and shrubs.
- Retain existing hedgerows and mature trees.
- Put up bird & bat boxes and bird feeding stations.
- Reduce pesticide use and use alternatives to peat.

- **Sourcing raw materials**

Think about whether you can reduce your impact on biodiversity by altering your purchasing policy. E.g. consider buying recycled products or products that have an environmental certification.

- **Surveying**

United Distillers & Vintners near Elgin ran an 'observe as you work' survey of plants and animals on their 10 acre site. Local school children also helped. The results helped them make simple changes to benefit their resident wildlife.

- **Staff / community involvement**

Involving staff and local people in action for biodiversity helps to create an enthusiastic and motivated workforce. It can also enhance your business' profile and links with the local community. E.g. In July 2001 staff from KPMG offices in Edinburgh and Glasgow helped British Waterways plant up the new Forth and Clyde canal extension with wetland plants including the locally important tufted loosestrife.

- **Biodiversity Action Plans & EMAS**

Produce a Biodiversity Action Plan or link you action for biodiversity to an existing Environmental Management System.

Count ... Think ... Act

The Scottish Biodiversity Group has launched the 'Count, Think, Act' campaign to encourage businesses throughout Scotland to take action to conserve our biodiversity.

Count...

Find out what plants, animals and habitats live on your business site.

You could get your workforce and/or local school pupils involved in discovering the wildlife on your site.

Think...

Think about the impact of your activities on local wildlife.

Site maintenance activities and how you source and use raw materials will affect biodiversity. Could you use alternative methods?

Act...

Take positive action to help biodiversity.

Small changes can make a big difference. E.g Reduce waste or leave areas of long grass. You could even implement your own biodiversity action plan.

Who can help?

Biodiversity:

Anna Perks or Caroline Peacock
Falkirk Area Biodiversity Officer
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David's Loan
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or caroline.peacock@falkirk.gov.uk

The **biodiversity officer** can provide guidance and advice and is available to discuss the integration of biodiversity into your business. Talks and presentations to staff can also be arranged.

The Falkirk Area Biodiversity Partnership can also help to publicise local business and biodiversity projects and promote examples of good practice.

Sustainable Development:

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Sustainable Development Officer
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Abbotsford House
David's Loan
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Waste Issues:

Callum Blackburn
Waste Strategy Co-ordinator
Falkirk Council
Abbotsford House
David's Loan
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E-mail callum.blackburn@falkirk.gov.uk

Useful Information/Publications

A good introduction and more detailed advice about business and biodiversity is available on the Business and Biodiversity Resource Centre website at www.businessandbiodiversity.org

'**Make Biodiversity Your Business**', a poster, leaflet and presentation produced by the Scottish Business and Biodiversity Group. Available via your local biodiversity officer or at www.scottish.executive.gov.uk/biodiversity

Business and Biodiversity - A UK Business guide for understanding and integrating nature conservation and biodiversity into environmental management systems.

Case Studies in Business and Biodiversity - A companion volume to the above guide.

Putting a Bit Back - A guide to nature conservation for small to medium-sized enterprises.

What is Sustainability? - Biodiversity, the environment and sustainable development: a summary guide for companies.

All available at www.earthwatch.org/europe/publications or email bbrc@earthwatch.org.uk

The Falkirk Area Biodiversity Action Plan is available from the Falkirk Area Biodiversity Officer. E-mail: anna.perks@falkirk.gov.uk or caroline.peacock@falkirk.gov.uk