

## Habitat Action Plan: Rivers, Riverine Corridors and Associated Habitats

### Current status and Importance

- Prior to the industrial revolution, river corridors would have included rivers with multiple channels, sand and shingle banks, wet woodlands, marshes, oxbow ponds and a range of other habitats on drier elevated areas within the flood plain.
- Some artificially created habitats, such as mill ponds and canals, have helped offset some of the losses but essentially, the disruption of natural river processes, largely connected to modern industry, agriculture and settlements, have much reduced diversity of habitats adjacent to and within rivers (see also Wet Woodland and Reedbed habitats).
- Rivers and riverine corridors still provide a basic framework of ecological networks in the Kirklees district. There are around 100km of river corridor, with potential for developing and linking habitats across Kirklees. The extent of the actual floodplain (i.e. flat valley floors prone to flooding), however, is less extensive.
- All watercourses within Kirklees form part of the River Calder catchment, with the exception of the River Dearne in Denby Dale which flows into the Don.
- The corridors are, to a greater extent, urban in nature and in one case - Batley Beck - canalised and culverted for much of its length.



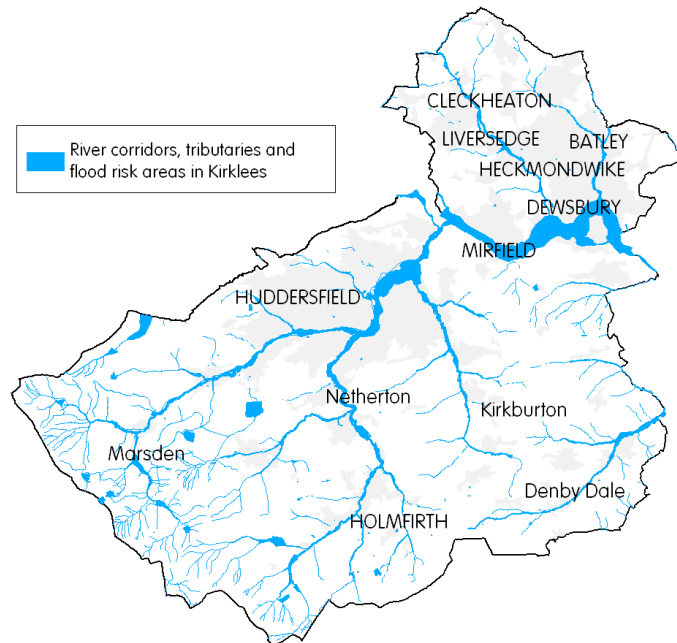
### Species Use

A number of Biodiversity Action Plan priority species are strongly associated with aquatic habitats along river and stream corridors. They include:

- Various fish species
- White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*);
- Water Vole (*Arvicola terrestris*),
- Otter (*Lutra lutra*);
- Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubenton*).
- Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*);
- Floating water plantain (*Luronium natans*).

Others benefit from the presence of semi-natural habitats along river corridors including:

- Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*);
- Song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*).



## Conservation Issues

- Pollution of the waterways, which has impacted greatly upon life within the rivers and other water bodies. This has lessened considerably following the decline of traditional textile industries in the area, the introduction of legislation and improved treatment of waste water.
- Altered drainage patterns due to urban development and agricultural intensification, which increases peak run-off and reduces low water flows in rivers, exacerbating the impacts of pollution and flash-flooding.
- Direct loss of associated habitats due to urban development and agricultural intensification.
- Flood defence works which have resulted in canalisation of water courses, removal of bank-side vegetation and, indirectly, loss of in-stream habitats such as sand banks, side channels and dead wood habitats.
- In-stream barriers to migration of fish, mainly weirs.
- Abstraction of water for industrial or domestic use which can reduce flows. However, this has also resulted in the creation of some wetland habitat such as ponds and reservoirs.
- Alien plant and animal species like Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) which out-compete natural vegetation and impact on native species populations. Increased flooding makes the spread of these species more likely.

## Objectives

- Improve water quality in watercourses and water bodies, particularly where this will have significant benefits for biodiversity.
- Remove or adapt structures which are a barrier to the migration of aquatic species.
- Enhance in-stream habitats to provide better feeding and breeding opportunities for aquatic species.
- Prevent further fragmentation of semi-natural areas along the river corridors.
- Use opportunities to maximise overall habitat diversity along the waterways corridors, and reinforce links between existing habitats.
- Restore natural hydrological processes by encouraging more appropriate land management, installing sustainable urban drainage systems and creating new wetlands.

- Develop a strategic approach to dealing with alien plant and animal species.

### Target areas for habitat management and creation

- The Floodplain.
- Valley Slopes, especially where these border the waterways.
- The Pennine Foothills where smaller rivers and streams form an important habitat network within a wider mosaic.
- For further information, please see the Biodiversity Opportunity Zones Map at [www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity)

### Targets

- To be decided.

### Key Links and Organisations

- Site protection: Kirklees Council, Environment Agency.
- Management through Environmental Stewardship and Woodland Grant Scheme in Kirklees: Natural England, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Forestry Commission.
- Management and restoration: River Calder Project (Yorkshire Wildlife Trust), River Colne Project, Routes to the River Project (Environmental Alliance), Kirklees Council (especially related to planning and development through Planning Policy statement 9 on Biological and Geological Conservation), British Waterways, Yorkshire Water; the Kirklees BAP: Guidance for the management of Rivers and Riverine Corridors: Kirklees Council Environment Unit.
- Surveys: Kirklees Wildlife and Landscape Advisory Forum, West Yorkshire Ecology.

### See Also

- [UK BAP Rivers and Streams Habitat Statement](#)
- [UK BAP Reedbeds Habitat Action Plan](#)
- [UK BAP Wet Woodland Habitat Action Plan](#)
- [UKBAP Blanket Bog Habitat Action Plan](#)
- [UKBAP Upland Flushes Habitat Action Plan](#)
- Kirklees BAP Water Vole Species Action Plan
- Kirklees BAP White-clawed Crayfish Species Action Plan
- Kirklees BAP Floating Water Plantain Species Action Plan
- Guidance for the management of Rivers and Riverine Corridors: Kirklees Council Environment Unit.  
(the above four documents are available at [www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity))