

Greenways (GW)

Habitat Action Plan

Doncaster Local Biodiversity Action Plan
January 2007



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1. Description

1.1 Greenways are essentially pedestrian, cycle, equestrian or in some cases vehicle routes away from the surfaced highway. They connect people to amenities, services and open spaces in and around towns, cities and the countryside, and are used for leisure, commuting and for access to agricultural land and properties. In some cases a historic right for vehicle access is in place, e.g. a byway. Listed Streets¹ on the Adopted Highways Map of the Borough is a useful research resource to locate green lanes and byways that have been lost or are no longer obvious.

1.2 By their very nature Greenways provide wildlife corridors, particularly when flanked by long-established and connecting or continuous linear habitats. Habitat fragmentation is a major factor causing decline for many key biodiversity species. Wildlife corridors are a means of physically linking habitats. They facilitate species dispersal between otherwise isolated habitats and movement across hostile areas, enabling species to expand their range and colonise new sites. Such corridors can also provide shelter, food and possibly breeding sites. Hedgerows are an incredibly valuable habitat often associated with Greenways. They can provide food, cover and nesting opportunities for a range of species and are particularly important for mammals such as bats, voles and mice, insects, and for nesting, foraging or hunting birds. Raptors such as **barn owls** (*Tyto alba*) and **kestrels** (*Falco tinnunculus*) are often seen hunting along Greenways, where favourable habitat for hunting exists. Bats also rely on linear features within the landscape to forage at night and are often seen darting up and down Greenways, particularly those supporting tall verges, hedges or ditches. Botanical species of conservation interest include **Spindle** (*Euonymus europaeus*) and **spurge laurel** (*Daphne laureola*), which are locally characteristic of Greenways found in the Southern Magnesian Limestone Natural Area.

¹ A DMBC map showing all the adopted maintained highways in the Borough

1.3 Greenways provide an important network of wildlife habitat around the country. Whilst often incorporating hedgerows, Greenways can also provide a different variety of habitat types, including tall grassland, short grassland, bare ground, scrub, tree lines, ditch lines and wet mud, rubble or gravel substrates. Such variety provides niches for more specialist species and creates a diverse wildlife assemblage as a whole. This degree of connectivity and structure means that Greenways should not be underestimated as an important wildlife habitat in their own right and as a fundamental conservation resource.

2. National status

2.1 The majority of Greenways are designated as public rights of way, and as such are recorded on the 'definitive maps' of each administrative borough or district. Research indicates that 17,000 km of Greenways have been created or are planned nationally for the near future.²

3. Local status

3.1 Doncaster Borough's rights of way network has over 450 kilometres of public footpaths, bridleways and byways on 560 separate routes. These range in length from a few metres, to long distance routes, with the Trans Pennine Trail tracking over 30 kilometres within the Borough and much more beyond. These routes vary completely in character, from formal urban routes to entirely rural and significantly vegetated historic towpaths, a number of which are managed by the Environment Agency and British Waterways. Some Greenways are on historic track ways, some on disused railway lines and others have been created as part of new developments. The green lanes around the Borough's northern villages, primarily Fishlake and Sykehouse, are well known examples of historic routes with important biodiversity features. However, whilst being a treasured asset for the local people and wildlife, many of them are overgrown and degraded. An

² Source: Countryside Agency

extensive, well-maintained rights of way network can significantly help to provide access to the countryside, through exposure to a variety of different habitats en-route and also by providing links or "corridors" to key nature conservation sites.

3.2 The following Greenways are designated as Sites of Scientific Interest (SSIs) in the Doncaster Borough; Edlington/Dearne Valley Railway Embankment (SSI 2.9), Common Lane (SSI 2.10), Church Lane Railway Embankments (SSI 2.11), St Catherine's Railway Embankments, Delves and Cuttings (SSI 2.24), Marsh Lane (SSI 8.12), Jone's Cable (SSI 9.18) and Roman Ridge, North and South (SSI 3.4a+b).

3.3 A good example of a Greenway with valuable wildlife habitat is the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT). The [TPT](#) also links a number of significant nature conservation sites and habitats across the UK. In Doncaster Borough the TPT links; Denaby Ings SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), Sprotbrough Flash SSSI, and Pot Ridings Wood SSSI along the Don Gorge, and stretches on to Cusworth Hall (SSI 3.10), and Owston Wood (SSI 7.15). This linkage is not only beneficial in leisure terms, but also facilitates species dispersal.

3.4 The Doncaster Greenway is currently 14km long and runs north to south across the Borough, connecting Highfields Country Park to the TPT near the town centre, including part of the Roman ridge. The next phase of route creation will link the southern part of Doncaster Borough and will again be approximately 14km long.

3.5 The Loversall 1 Bridleway is approximately 4km long and links into [Potteric Carr](#) SSSI and Local Nature Reserve. The Peatlands Way is a nationally important/ promoted route in the region, which runs through the north of the Borough.

3.6 Seven Yards Road (SSI 8.31a+b) is seven yards wide from side to side and is thought to be an old Roman Road. It is designated as a public highway privately maintained and runs from the M18 to Great Gate Wood (SSI 4.51) in Armthorpe. This right of way is yet to be added to the definitive map, pending the investigation of the claim under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

4. Legal status

4.1 The majority of Greenways are designated as public rights of way (footpaths, bridleways or byways). A designated public right of way is protected and managed under the Highways Act 1980 and the Rights of Way Act 1990. Further duties are placed on Local Authorities as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. However, whilst protecting the existence and maintenance of the route itself, the duties under the Highways Act and Countryside and Rights of Way Act do not provide any explicit protection for wildlife or habitats along the routes. Local Authorities also have a requirement under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to continually review the definitive map. The cut off date for new claims is currently 2026.

4.2 A few Greenways are designated as SSIs locally, and therefore receive a degree of protection through planning policy.

4.3 The promotion of countryside facilities that may provide wildlife corridors is actively encouraged through the EU Habitats and Species Directives and National Regulations.

5. Links to associated habitats & species

5.1 Aside from their intrinsic wildlife value, Greenways essentially help to connect the Borough's key habitats and nature conservation sites.

The Greenways Habitat Action Plan is linked to the following Habitat Action Plans:

- Marshes and Swamps, Lakes and Ponds, Ditches and Drains (MLD)
- Arable Field Margins (AFM)
- Ancient and Species Rich Hedgerows (ASH)
- Urban Greenspace (UG)
- Limestone Woodland (LW)
- Lowland Heathy Oak Woodland (LHW)
- Wet Woodland (WW)
- Neutral and Wet Grassland (NWG)
- Limestone Grassland (LG)
- Lowland Heathland / Acid Grassland Mosaic (HAG)
- Post Industrial and Brownfield Land (PIB)
- Rivers, Canals, Oxbows, Major Streams and Subsidence Flashes (RCF)

5.2 '**A Species Audit of Doncaster Borough**' has been produced as part of the Doncaster Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Species highlighted in bold within the Habitat Action Plans are identified within Doncaster's Species Audit and are conservation priorities. The Audit identifies **61** species associated with Greenways.

6. Current factors causing loss or decline

6.1 Wildlife corridors at risk from road widening / realignment.

6.2 Some rights of way improvements have the potential to cause habitat loss or decline, if wildlife issues are overlooked or inadequately addressed.

6.3 4x4 off-roading.

6.4 Illegal motorcycling.

6.5 Neglect or inappropriate management.

6.6 Development causing the loss of greenways or disconnecting them from the wider network.

6.7 Development close to greenway boundaries and boundary encroachment.

6.8 Mineral extraction on old railway embankments.

6.9 Damage to sensitive verges, e.g. through route widening and the hard surfacing of paths and tracks.

6.10 Path surfacing with inappropriate materials for the location.

7. Current local action

Research & Monitoring

7.1 Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Councils Public Rights of Way Service in partnership with colleagues from the Environmental Planning Team, Local Records Centre and Natural England's Humber to Pennines Team is proposing to undertake a series of route surveys of the green lanes within and around Fishlake and Sykehouse, to assess current condition, management requirements, biodiversity value and local landscape value.

7.2 Funding from the Big Lottery's Transforming Your Space initiative has enabled the further development of the Biological Records Centre at Doncaster Museum. The biological data collected as part of the project, particularly botanical information for local sites, species and habitats has enhanced the modern dataset. Historical biological information has also been transferred to the database.

7.3 The Doncaster Naturalists Society holds regular field meetings and has carried out detailed surveys of many of the borough's key sites and habitats. The Society routinely submit biological records to the Local Record Centre at Doncaster Museum. The Doncaster Naturalists Society has surveyed the entire stretch of hedgerow along one side of the Roman Ridge, including the associated ground flora. The Society intends to conduct surveys of greenways in the Fishlake and Sykehouse area in the near future.

Communications & Publicity

7.4 The Local Authority's Countryside Interpretation Team and Countryside Rangers regularly run guided walks along a range of Greenways and information on biodiversity is included in the presentations at such events. The Public Rights of Way Service presents up to date and informative web pages within the Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council website. The Public Rights of Way Service has also produced a booklet entitled the 'A to Z' of PROW, providing information on issues, problems and approaches to the management of routes.

Safeguarding & Management

7.5 Funding from the Big Lottery's Transforming Your Space initiative has enabled the development of a range of biodiversity initiatives, including the resurvey of the Borough's SSI's, research projects, production of site management plans and the provision of resources (equipment, educational, activity and promotional materials) to help raise awareness and encourage participation in the management and enhancement of local biodiversity.

7.6 The Roman Ridge Greenway, a roman road that is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, has been identified by Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council as a strategic leisure route. A restoration project is currently being progressed with Sustrans and other partners to restore its entire length (4.5km) and connect to Longlands Lane via a disused railway line, to give a total Greenway length of 5.4km.

Advisory

7.7 DMBC has introduced a programme of continuous professional development based on planning related issues, including 'Protected species' and 'Trees and Hedgerows'. The Environmental Planning Team has produced a suite of Supplementary Planning Documents, providing guidance on: Planning for Trees and Hedgerows, Nature, Sustainable Construction and Landscape Planning on Development Sites in Doncaster.

Links to other Strategies & Plans

7.8 Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council's Public Rights of Way Service is currently developing its Rights Of Way Improvement Plan. The production of this plan is a requirement under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This document will provide a strategic and thematic overview to the management and development of the public rights of way network across the Borough, with a particular emphasis on meeting the needs of local people. The Plan will include some direction on the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity along rights of way.

7.9 The Don Gorge Strategic Management Plan has been produced on behalf of the Don Gorge Strategic Partnership, a body of key organisations and stakeholders active in the Don Gorge. The Plan includes a series of time framed action plans for key issues including; visitor management, access and recreation; geological, biological, archaeological and heritage interest; management of the river and banks; and species and habitat management.

8. Objectives, targets & proposed Actions

Please refer also to the Generic Actions in the LBAP Introduction & Overview document

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Costs	Category
1) To ensure the protection and maintenance of existing Greenways.	Continuous.	1.1	<p>Prevent depletion of Greenways resulting from development and/ or the delivery of statutory functions by:</p> <p>1) Having regard to the protection and enhancement of habitats when considering the allocation of sites, in line with the approach set out in PPS9 and the priorities set out in the LBAP.</p> <p>2) Having regard to the assessment, retention and enhancement of habitat types when formulating and making Development Control Policies and decisions, in line with the approach set out in PPS9 and the priorities set out in the LBAP.</p>	DMBC, Natural England (NE)	Staff costs	Advisory/ Safeguarding & Management

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Costs	Category
			<p>3) Providing advice to Development Control and Developers on appropriate types of survey i.e. ecological and/or hydrological, the interpretation of survey results and methods of incorporating habitat retention and enhancement into development proposals (for both designated sites and non-designated features of biodiversity value, as identified in the LBAP.</p> <p>4) Having regard to the priorities set out in the BAP in the interpretation of UDP/LDF policies (and any supporting SPGs/SPDs).</p> <p>5) Providing technical advice on the severity, implications and nature of suspected breaches in planning control (either conditions or unauthorised development).</p>			

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Costs	Category
			<p>6) Awarding appropriate site protection through designation, based upon routine environmental monitoring and assessment.</p> <p>7) Ensuring that all Partners and relevant landowners, service providers and operational contractors are informed of the existence and importance of Greenways (both designated and non-designated sites).</p>			
	Continuous.	1.2	Continue to collect and maintain up-to-date, standardised, biological data using the Museum's Local Record Centre. Promote and initiate appropriate management, monitoring and the exchange of environmental data, to ensure the maximum level of site protection is awarded and habitat condition is maintained.	DMBC, NE, Doncaster Naturalists' Society (DNS), Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT)	Staff costs and volunteer time. Other costs to be evaluated	Future Research & Monitoring

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Costs	Category
	By 2008.	1.3	Expand DMBC's Environmental Planning protected species protocol to include LBAP habitats and species.	DMBC	Staff costs	Advisory
	Continuous.	1.4	Reduce the misuse by motorised vehicles on greenways. Prioritising those with sensitive ground flora.	SY Police, DMBC	£860 for regular ranger patrols	Safeguarding & Management
	Continuous.	1.5	Ensure that maintenance is appropriately timed for wildlife, e.g. nesting birds and wild flower seeding.	DMBC	Negligible	Species Management & Protection
2) To restore degraded greenways sites and ensure appropriate management of existing greenways.	New biodiversity initiatives on 5 route ways by 2010.	2.1	Investigate historic route ways for opportunities to manage and enhance for higher biological diversity.	DNS, DMBC	Staff costs & volunteer time	Future Research & Monitoring
	1 km of replacement species rich hedgerow on greenways by 2008.	2.2	Restoration of species rich hedgerows along greenways where hedgerows have been lost.	NE, Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), DMBC	£30,000	Habitat Creation & Restoration

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Costs	Category
	5 sites by 2010.	2.3	Identify all greenways where Priority Species are known to be present and implement appropriate specialist management schemes to benefit these species.	DMBC, NE, FWAG, Private landowners	To be evaluated	Species Management & Protection
3) To create 6.5 km of new/restored greenways. New greenways should be linked to existing greenways or other sites of nature conservation importance.	Continuous.	3.1	Where new greenways are developed or existing routes improved, minimise any detrimental environmental impact. All new greenway schemes to include an ecological assessment, identifying and mitigating for important species of flora and fauna.	DMBC, private landowners	Staff costs	Species Protection & Management
	50 metres of new species rich hedgerow on new greenways.	3.2	Where new greenways are developed encourage the planting of species rich hedgerows where appropriate, using locally sourced material.	DMBC, Private landowners	£2,000	Habitat Creation & Restoration
	Continuous.	3.3	All greenways to be planted/seeded with native species, unless a landscape design justification is agreed.	DMBC	Staff costs	Species Management & Protection

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Costs	Category
	5 new 'linkage' greenways by 2010.	3.4	Encourage the development of new greenways to connect to restoration sites with recreational route ways and other wildlife sites.	DMBC	5.5 km at a cost of £1.5 million	Safeguarding & Management/ Habitat Creation & Restoration
	1km of new habitat linking greenway by 2010.	3.5	Promote greenway linkage between green spaces, woodlands and new planting areas, in particular the footpath link from Lakeside to Potteric Carr.	DMBC, YWT, developers	Negligible	Policy and legislation/ Advisory
	Continuous.	3.6	Work with other local authorities in a regional context to create new regional links.	NE, DMBC, Other local authority LBAP partners	Staff costs	Communications & Publicity/ Habitat Creation & Restoration
	Linear SSIs increased by 0.5km by 2010.	3.7	Identify Linear SSI's and investigate the potential for linking sites by further greenway development.	DMBC	Staff costs	Safeguarding & Management/ Habitat Creation & Restoration

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Costs	Category
4) Raise public awareness of the importance and special characteristics of greenways.	1 leaflet produced by 2009.	4.1	Raise public awareness of the nature conservation value of greenways.	DMBC, YWT, Ramblers Association, local walking groups	£1500	Communications & Publicity
	Continuous.	4.2	Encourage the appreciation of wildlife on greenways as part of a programme of guided walks.	DMBC	Staff costs	Communications & Publicity
	New wildlife interpretation boards at 2 sites by 2009.	4.3	Provide interpretation on wildlife value of greenways on selected routes.	DMBC	£7000	Advisory

9. Indicative Habitat distribution & Opportunities map

The map for Greenways has been compiled using information about publicly accessible routes and are split into the following types:

-  Bridleways
-  Byways
-  Footpaths
-  TPT / Doncaster Greenway
-  DEFRA Stewardship
-  Other

Privately maintained routes are not shown on the map.

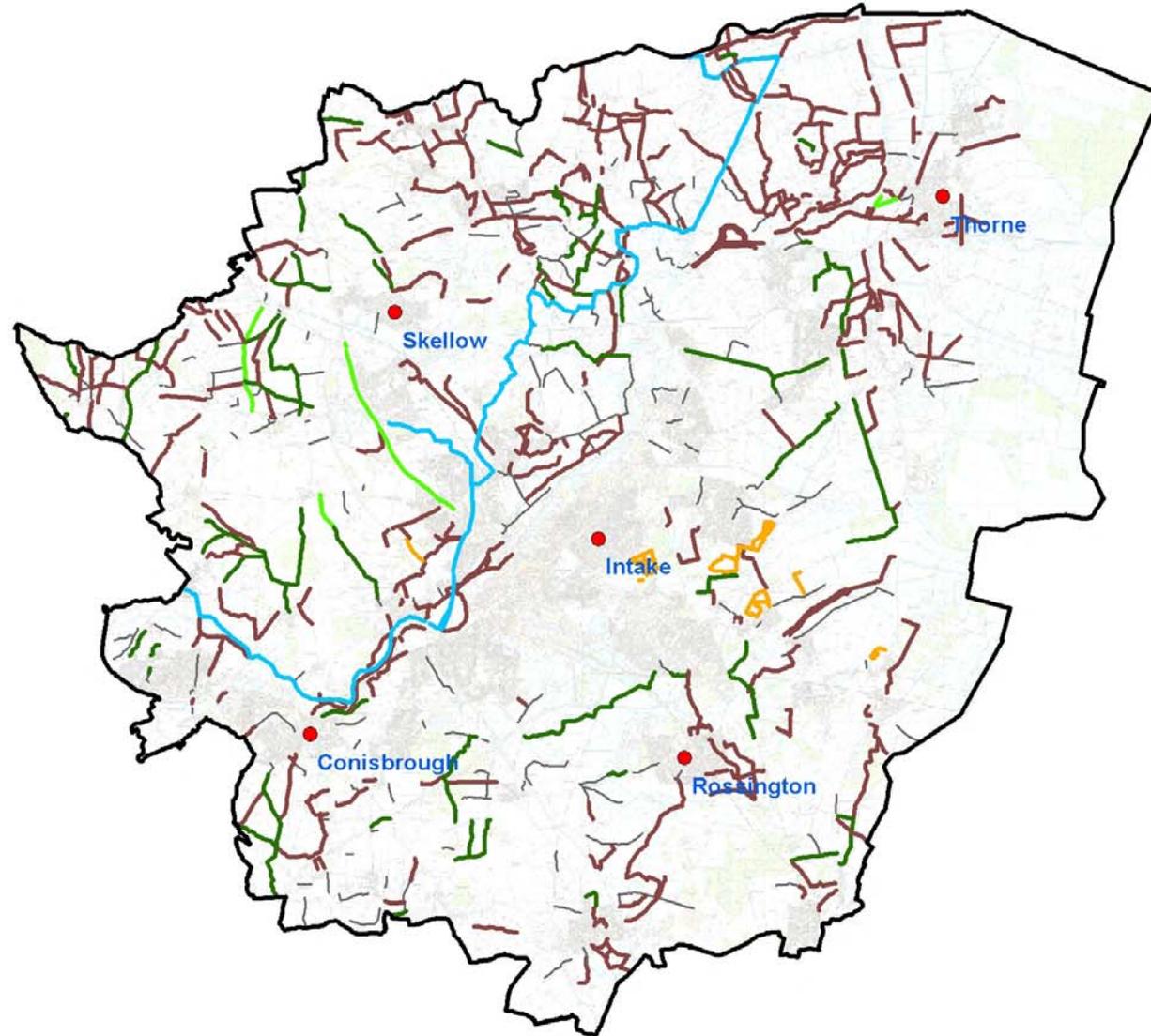
Greenways

DATE: January 2007
 SCALE: 1:160,000
 DRAWING NO: HAP/1/GW



LEGEND

- Doncaster Borough Boundary
- Village
- Bridleway
- Byway
- Footpath
- TPT/Doncaster Greenway
- DEFRA Stewardship
- Other



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