

Biodiversity Action Plan

2019-2020

It's part of our
Blueprint for Yorkshire



YorkshireWater

Our Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) outlines what we set out to achieve between 2015 and 2020, and highlights how we are doing so far. It will be updated and published on an annual basis.

Management of protected sites:

1. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

SSSI's are nationally designated conservation sites that are protected through a number of laws. As a large regional landowner, Yorkshire Water owns a number of these sites and has a resulting duty to manage them appropriately.

Performance Commitment Measure – Agreed and audited within our business plan

Target for March 2020:

Maintain and manage our 11,339 Ha of SSSI land to ensure that at least 95% meets target condition (recovering or favourable status) and to work towards increasing the amount that is in favourable condition.

Progress 2019-2020:

99.97% of our SSSI's remain in Unfavourable Recovering condition or better (the target is 98.5%), and we have received sign off from Natural England and the Environment Agency that our 2015-2020 work programme is complete.

Land and wildlife management:

2. Biodiversity improvements on our tenanted land

Yorkshire Water owns large areas of land in the watersheds of our reservoirs. This land is often leased to tenant farmers.

Target for March 2020:

We set out to maintain 98.5% of our tenanted land within an agri-environment scheme and to encourage tenants to introduce practices which benefit biodiversity.

Progress:

The target of 98.5% has been maintained. We created 'Beyond Nature' vision which aims to demonstrate Yorkshire Water's estate as an exemplar in sustainable land management to optimise multiple ecosystem values. This has evolved over the past 3 years, with the new letting of Humberstone Bank Farm under a Beyond Nature Management Plan. We are expanding this out across our estate with 3,568 hectares under Beyond Nature Management Plans.

3. Invasive Non-native Species Management

INNS pose a very real risk to Yorkshire's environment and wildlife. They can also impact on our ability to provide safe drinking water and return waste water safely to the environment. Yorkshire Water is working to manage species already established within the region (both on our assets and at a wider catchment scale) and introduce biosecurity to our sites to prevent further spread.

Performance Commitment Measure – Agreed and audited within our business plan

Target for March 2020:

To undertake treatment of INNS on 50 ha of our land.

Progress 2019-2020: We have undertaken INNS management across over 270 ha of our land and put multi-year management plans in place to maintain this benefit. We continue to work at a catchment scale with other key partners to manage species in a systematic manner along river corridors. In addition to the management of INNS we are following the GB Invasive Non-Native Species Strategy framework which stresses the importance of prevention of spread of INNS through biosecurity. We are working with our tenants and staff to introduce the concept of biosecurity.

4. Habitats and species conservation

Under the Water Industry Act (1991), Yorkshire Water have a requirement to further the conservation and enhancement of flora and fauna as part of our operations.

Performance Commitment Measure – Agreed and audited within our business plan

Target for March 2020:

To conserve or enhance 25 ha of habitat

Progress 2017-2018:

We have delivered over 80 ha of conservation focused habitat enhancements in partnership with regional NGO groups including the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and the Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust. The programme has been shortlisted for the 2020 CIEEM awards in the Large Scale Nature Conservation Category.

An example project delivered through the programme, is our work with the East region of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT), to help turn a disused fish farm on the West Beck Chalk Stream SSSI into a thriving space for nature. The site is just upstream of one of our major river intakes, and on one of the most northerly chalk streams in England. Partnership work with the YWT and NE helped to re-landscape the fish ponds, restore the impacts on the main river caused by the former abstraction points, and to appropriately reconnect the river to the wider landscape. We helped protect an important priority habitat, ensured the river remains resilient to our abstraction and that there was a long-term plan for the site through YWT management to deliver a lasting benefit.



Woodland management

5. Forestry management

Target for March 2020:

We set out to retain certification for our 3,997 acres of forested land under the highly-acclaimed Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) accreditation criteria.

Progress 2019-2020:

We've successfully maintained Forestry Stewardship Council accreditation for all 3,997 acres of our forested land. This means the trees we grow and the timber we provide meets sustainability criteria which creates major benefits for woodland habitats, species, water and people.

6. Restoring ancient woodlands

Ancient woodlands are a very important habitat and support a huge range of wildlife, including more threatened species than any other UK habitat. Since 2010 we have been undertaking significant habitat restoration replacing conifer and other low biodiversity plantations with more diverse collections of native trees.

Performance Commitment Measure – Agreed and audited within our business plan

Target for March 2020:

Working closely with the Forestry Commission, Natural England and Local Wildlife Groups we aim to restore, conserve and enhance ancient woodland habitat on 150 hectares of our land.

Progress 2019-2020:

From 2015 until 2020 we have planted thousands of native species including oak, hazel and birch saplings to replace conifer plantations, increasing biodiversity and woodland resilience in a changing climate. Over 150 hectares of ancient woodland have been moved into positive management, and the programme has been signed off as achieving its outcome by Natural England and the Environment Agency.

7. Veteran Trees

Yorkshire Water recognises that across our estate, we are custodians of several ancient or special trees whose value to nature is not often recognised. Using the Woodlands Trust Ancient Tree Hunt criteria, we are seeking to identify and safeguard these trees.

Target for March 2020:

To record and map the special (ancient, veteran, notable, other heritage and champion) trees on Yorkshire Water non-operational land following the principles developed through the Ancient Tree Hunt from the Woodland Trust. For actions to be undertaken to protect any trees identified as being vulnerable.

Progress 2019-2020:

We have completed our survey programme across our landholdings, and all trees identified have been uploaded onto the Woodland Trust website, and where appropriate, measures taken to safeguard their future.

River management

8. River restorations

Performance Commitment Measure – Agreed and audited within our business plan

Target for March 2020:

The company has no formal targets, but is researching and testing innovative solutions to mitigate for the impacts of our assets on downstream waterbodies. As such, we have been working with the Environment Agency to trial the use of different river restoration techniques to help improve local biodiversity.

Progress 2019-2020:

Post construction ecological monitoring is now taking place at our trial sites at Cudworth Dike, Esholt Hall, Ingbirchworth Reservoir and Swinsty reservoir. Learning from the trials has fed into our PR19 business plan, ensuring we deliver our 2020-2025 river restoration schemes in an efficient manner.

9. Fish passes

As a company, Yorkshire Water owns a number of structures which can become a barrier preventing migrating fish moving upstream. Examples include weirs, reservoirs and water intakes. We have been working with the Environment Agency and a number of Rivers Trusts, to identify these barriers and provide solutions to enable fish passage.

Performance Commitment Measure – Agreed and audited within our business plan

Target for March 2020:

To enable fish passage across 14 weirs identified by the Environment Agency as being barriers to fish movements.

Progress 2019-2020:

Fish passage has now been delivered at all the weirs required as part of our National Environment Programme commitments. More detail can be found in the Length of River Improved Performance Commitment section of our corporate Annual Report.

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