

# FOCUS

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN AND AROUND NOTTINGHAM, DERBY, NEWARK-ON-TRENT,  
GAINSBOROUGH, SCUNTHORPE AND ILKESTON

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## Beckingham estate appeals to birds

Action 20.5

In late 2000, the Environment Agency completed construction of extensive flood defence works on the east bank of the River Trent at Gainsborough which incorporated public access. Now the Estates Section of the Agency in Nottingham is turning its attention to the west bank. The Agency owns substantial land holdings on this bank of some 560 hectares, known locally as Beckingham Marshes, which are used as a flood storage area during high flow events in the Trent.

Until the 1940's, Beckingham Marshes was a rich habitat of wet grassland, extensively grazed, but since it was drained during the 1960's, it has been mainly arable. The Agency currently lets the majority of the land to five tenant farmers, as well as three hectares to an oil and gas company which pumps a number of wells on the estate, linked by a series of access roads. In partnership with the farmers and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Agency is exploring ways to provide an enhanced environment for wildlife that will also create a locally attractive site for recreational activities, such as walking and cycling.

The core element of the project is the creation of in excess of 100 hectares of lowland wet grassland which will be capable of supporting breeding waders. It will be created by re-wetting parts of the estate following a detailed study of the hydrology and soil types of the Beckingham Estate. The national UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) target for creating wet grassland is 10,000 hectares in a ten year period. Paul Freeborough, Principal Estates Officer, explains, 'Completion of the Beckingham Marshes project would deliver a remarkable 1% contribution to this national target! Importantly though, from the Agency's point of view, is that the flood storage potential of the land will remain unchanged.'



The Beckingham Estate

continued on page 2

## Foreword

Welcome to the second and final Local Environment Agency Plan Annual Review for the Lower Trent and Erewash catchment. This newsletter style will, we hope, introduce more people to the Agency and allow a greater sense of partnership in local environmental issues.

Partnerships will play an ever more important role in the years to come if we are to achieve sustained environmental improvement locally. I hope you will find this newsletter of interest. If you have any comments, or views, or you wish to become involved in addressing local environmental issues, we would be delighted to hear from you.

David Rooke  
Lower Trent Area Manager  
Environment Agency





## Beckingham estate appeals to birds

As well as wet grassland creation, the Beckingham project is promoting applications to the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) by the tenant farmers. The CSS provides funds to enable farmers to change their farming practices to enhance and conserve English landscapes, their wildlife and history and to help people to enjoy them. At Beckingham, the funds will enable areas to change from predominately arable farming to low intensity grassland management and for field margins to be left un-farmed. There are a number of species which will benefit from these changes. These include birds that have been undergoing long-term declines both locally and nationally such as curlew, lapwing, redshank, snipe, yellow wagtail, reed bunting and tree sparrow. The project will also contribute to BAP targets for water vole, brown hare, skylark and grey partridge.

Farmers and land managers play a vital role in influencing the nature, quality and wellbeing of rural land and are key to the survival of rural economies. The Agency is keen to work with farmers to minimise impacts on the environment and help manage the impact of new regulations in the industry. To promote sustainable farming, the Beckingham site will be managed in accordance with guidelines agreed between the Agency and the RSPB (Royal Society for the

Protection of Birds) and will incorporate best farming practices as identified by the Agency. The environment will benefit through the stoppage of fertiliser and chemical sprays on arable land and crops and the subsequent run-off into watercourses. Similarly soil erosion through ploughing will be reduced and siltation of watercourses minimised.

There are public footpaths around the edge of the estate, but the Agency has identified opportunities to use the oil access roads and farm tracks for increased public access. The improvement of the conservation and wildlife value of the Estate will enable the Agency to develop more attractive public walks and to use interpretation features for educational purposes. An old willow works on the site may prove to be suitable for a visitor centre or office for the RSPB warden who will manage the conservation interest of the site.

For more information, please contact: Paul Freeborough, Principal Estates Officer, at the Environment Agency, Nottingham office.



A hard surface has been laid on top of the flood defences which begins at the Trent Port Pub



The disused willow works

## The Environment Agency - who are we?

The Environment Agency works to protect and enhance the natural environment. Formed in 1996, the Agency brought together the expertise of the National Rivers Authority, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution and the Waste Regulation Authorities and a number of smaller units from the Department of Environment. The Agency is required and guided by Government to help achieve the objective of sustainable development – '*..development that meets*

*the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*'. The Environment Agency publication, 'An Environmental Vision, the Environment Agency's contribution to sustainable development' sets out how we aim to meet this challenge.

Our remit is very broad and encompasses pollution prevention and control, flood defence, waste management, fisheries,

recreation, navigation, water quality, water resources and conservation. By adopting an integrated approach, we aim to deliver significant, long-term advances in every environmental arena.

For more information on the work and remit of the Environment Agency both nationally and locally, please contact: the Customer Contact Team at the Environment Agency, Nottingham office.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



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# About the Lower Trent and Erewash area

The Lower Trent and Erewash area covers just over 2,000 square kilometres, which mostly falls within the county of Nottinghamshire, although it includes parts of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. Major towns include Nottingham, Newark-on-Trent and Scunthorpe as well as the southern part of Derby. The area has a population of approximately 800,000.

Business activity ranges from heavy industry to intensive agriculture. There are 47 major industrial process plants in the LEAP area including the large steelworks at Scunthorpe and a number of coal-fired power stations in the Trent Valley. To the south, the area is dominated by the city of Nottingham. This urban area has a significant impact on the character of both the River Trent and River Erewash and the quality of the area in general.

The River Trent changes character as it travels northwards. The narrow undulating upper stretches of the river in Derbyshire are surrounded by small-scale arable and pasture fields and woodlands with some small-scale settlements. Through the city of Nottingham the river takes on a harder urban character. As the river leaves Nottingham, it passes into the Trent Washlands, a low lying agricultural region, characterised by productive arable farming featuring cereal production, meadowlands, small villages, market towns, power stations and quarries.

The River Erewash flows through a mixture of open rural and dense urban areas, including towns such as Long Eaton and Ilkeston. The Erewash catchment, prior to industrialisation, was predominantly rural and agricultural in character. Once coal and ironstones deposits were discovered however, the character of the valley changed, with the appearance of collieries, gas and tar

works and blast furnaces. In more recent times the collieries have closed down and some of the worst spoil heaps have been reinstated under successful reclamation schemes. Light industrial estates have largely replaced the traditional heavy industries of this area.

The River Trent is a major navigation from Shardlow to the Humber and is used extensively by boaters and commercial barges, as well as many sailing clubs and rowing clubs. It supports a good fishery throughout its length, with a diverse population of coarse fish. There have been recent increases in fish such as perch and dace, which prefer cleaner water. Significant water quality improvements have taken place on the River Trent and its tributaries, so much so that in November 2001, 80,000 salmon paid for by Severn Trent Water were reintroduced to the River Dove by the Trent Salmon Trust. Along the Trent, large open waters left over from the gravel extraction industry are used for sailing, boardsailing, water skiing, bird watching and angling.

The River Trent valley has always suffered periodical flooding. The earliest recorded flood was in 1346 and the most recent major floods occurred in November 2000 and on the River Devon in July 2001. The Agency operates a flood warning service across England and Wales. Flood warnings are issued directly to people who may be affected and to the police, local authorities and the other members of the public through a variety of media including radio and television. The Agency also has a national 'Floodline' service to provide advice and information about flooding (0845 988 1188). The geology in the area is characterised by the Carboniferous Coal Measures which outcrop to the north-west of Nottingham and

have provided significant employment, as well as the Permo-Triassic Sherwood Sandstone – a major aquifer – which outcrops under the western part of Nottingham supporting large water abstractions for both private and public water supplies.

The Lower Trent and Erewash area supports a diverse range of wildlife and habitats. It includes wet meadows, wet woodlands and neutral grassland as well as heathland and woodland on the acidic Sherwood Sandstone area to the north. Attenborough Gravel Pits is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) noted for its breeding and over-wintering bird population. The River Leen is a stronghold for the native crayfish and signs of otter have been found in the Tidal Trent. Blacktoft Sands on the banks of the Trent and Ouse, is an important RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) Nature Reserve which supports Britain's most northerly breeding avocet population.



*Newark Castle from the River Trent*



*The lock at Beeston Weir, where the Beeston Canal joins the Trent*



*The regenerated Waterfront area of the Beeston Canal, Nottingham City*



*Fishing on the River Trent*



# Spring clean helps fish!

In the early months of 2002, Environment Agency Fisheries Officers have worked in partnership with Nottingham City Council to rescue hundreds of fish while their home at Bulwell Hall Lake was spring cleaned. Restoration of the upper lake at Bulwell Hall Park has also helped to ensure the future of angling and forms the first phase of a project aiming to improve management of leisure facilities at the park.

The two-acre lake had suffered a one metre thick build up of silt, brought into the lake by a small brook to the north, originating in Home Wood. This gradually caused conditions in the lake to deteriorate, threatening the fish population.

Work began in January with removing large samples of water plants such as bulrush, fool's watercress and the rare mare's tail from the lake. These were stored at a tree nursery and were returned to the lake when work was completed. Charlotte Williams, Assistant Nature Conservation Officer at Nottingham City Council said: 'Water plants are very important as they provide a perfect habitat for invertebrates as well as a shelter for fish stocks from predatory birds'.

During February the Agency and Nottingham City Council partially drained the lake and removed the stocks of coarse fish. Roach, pike, carp, bream and tench were removed and kept in special storage tanks at the Agency's Nottingham offices where they were fed and cared for during the clean up operation. Contractors then partially dredged the lake using JCBs and excavators, removing tons of silt.

A silt trap in front of the mouth of the brook was also refurbished and arrangements have been made to empty it regularly, to prevent silt from the brook entering the lake in the future. The trap, which was installed 20 years ago, comprises a concrete lip that stretches across the lake. It works by slowing down the speed at which water enters the lake, causing any solid material carried by the brook to settle within the silt trap and not in the lake itself. Environment Agency Fisheries Management Officer, Jon Whitmore, said: 'The work we are doing will prevent further loss of depth, providing more space for the fish and encouraging the fish community to thrive. If we did not carry out this work, the lake would continue to silt up and become too shallow to support the fish population.'

To complete the project, the water plants were replanted and the fish were moved from their temporary home in the Agency's holding tanks back to the lake. The clean up has resulted in a healthier lake for the fish and has helped to ensure the future of angling and nature conservation for years to come.

For more information, please contact: Jon Whitmore, Fisheries Officer at the Environment Agency, Nottingham office.



*Bulwell Hall Lake prior to work commencing*



*Removing silt from the lake*



*The silt trap is exposed as work nears completion*



# First success for River Trent Bankside project

A partnership project involving the Agency, Severn Trent Water and local Wildlife Trusts, with special support from local angling clubs, was set up in 2001 to boost fish stocks and create angling and bird habitat in the Trent Valley. The first success of the project, known as the River Trent Bankside Project, has been the creation of a 10 hectare fish fry\* refuge on the River Trent at Holme Pierrepont.

The Holme Pierrepont site is a complex of old finger ponds known as Marina Pond, left over from gravel extraction. Following the end of gravel extraction in the 1960s, Nottingham and District Federation of Anglers bought the whole 52 hectare complex and the associated riverbank which is still in their control today. To create the fish fry refuge, a permanent connection between the River Trent and Marina Pond has been made via a pipe. This enables the pond to act as a spawning area and refuge to enhance fish populations in the River Trent. A bridge has been provided over the pipe to allow bankside access for farming use and public access.

The connection will cause the water level in the pond to be lower in summer than it has been historically and will result in warm water that originates from the

Trent entering the pond rather than groundwater. This will give optimal conditions for fry growth. Some fish will spawn in the pond having entered from the river - these will be mainly bream and roach. The connection will also allow fish normally thought of as river spawning fish such as chub, dace and barbel to colonise the pond and seek refuge. Studies have shown that fry which develop in refuges are substantially larger at the end of the growth season than those in the main River Trent. This should give them a much better chance of surviving the cold water and high flows of winter, as size is directly related to the ability to withstand this period.

In addition to the connection creation, the project has established reedbeds and bird nesting habitat and engineered a substantial wader nesting and feeding habitat to augment the existing shallow areas around the pond. Permanent angling pegs have also been installed and made useable by a small amount of willow coppicing to encourage use of the amenity. In collaboration with the Angling Club, a sustainable management plan has been produced for continuation of the fishery and conservation objectives of the site.

The creation and management of such refuges supports the health and diversity of fish populations within the River Trent, as the fish are free to migrate into the main river when they are ready and thus augment the river stocks. This could be very significant, as fish catches carried out have indicated that the new fry refuge at Holme Pierrepont has a potential to produce nearly five million fry available to move into the main Trent per year!

The River Trent Bankside project hopes to be able to create a whole series of similar fry refuge areas along the river to augment fish stocks and improve angling in the future. Working in partnership with local angling clubs, riverside owners and other funding partners will be essential to the success of the project – special thanks go to Severn Trent Water for their financial support in undertaking the work at Holme Pierrepont.

For more information, please contact: Keith Easton, River Trent Bankside Project Officer at the Environment Agency, Nottingham office.

*\*Fry are the freshly spawned (born) young of fish.*



The pipe links Marina Pond, Holme Pierrepont to the River Trent



# OnTrent initiative gathers pace

ACTION 1.2

OnTrent is a long-term initiative intended to benefit local people and the natural and cultural heritage in the parishes along the River Trent. It seeks to reverse the continuing decline in biodiversity by securing a better balance between wildlife and agriculture, commercial activity and development. This will create a landscape fit for the 21st Century, both for the river and its environs, from Stoke-on-Trent to the Humber Estuary.

OnTrent's initial focus is on searching for new opportunities to create or enhance wet grasslands, reedbeds, and wet woodlands whilst looking at the cultural and financial benefits for local land managers in working in wetland environments. The creation and enhancement of such habitats will contribute to the delivery of local, regional and national Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets. Karen McHarg, the Agency's Area Fisheries, Ecology and Recreation (FER) Manager sits on the OnTrent steering group and believes this initiative will act as a catalyst for regeneration. She says, 'As well as carrying out some practical demonstration projects, OnTrent will facilitate action by other stakeholders in the River Trent by acting as a source of information, co-ordination and advice.' Work supported by the OnTrent initiative will aim to preserve local distinctiveness whilst providing opportunities to improve the quality of life for local people, support the local economy and conserve the Trent Valley's historic and cultural identity

The OnTrent initiative was set up in 1998 in recognition that over the last century, the Midlands has suffered perhaps the worst decline in biodiversity of any English region. The habitats, landscape features and archaeological resources of the River Trent and the floodplain parishes that bound it have suffered losses due to flood control, drainage, agricultural improvement, mineral extraction, built development and canalisation for navigational purposes. In both the East and West Midlands, along the length of the Trent, these features are now fragmented and in some cases are at further risk from degradation or destruction.

The OnTrent initiative is being run by a range of partners including English Nature, the Wildlife Trusts, Severn Trent Water, RSPB and the Environment Agency as well as local councils from Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire. The OnTrent Initiative steering group has recently successfully secured funding for an OnTrent Project Officer. This post, will be located at the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust office at East Mill, Belper. The Project Officer will be responsible for collating information on the location and status of key wetland habitats, carrying out research and survey work to address gaps in current knowledge and formulating a programme of action to deliver OnTrent's objectives. The Project Officer will also carry out at least one practical habitat creation project to develop and demonstrate good practice.

For more information about OnTrent, please contact: Karen McHarg, Area Fisheries, Ecology and Recreation Manager at the Environment Agency, Nottingham office.



Aerial view of River Trent at Holme Pierrepont

# Tackling air pollution

ACTION 2.1

Part of the Agency's Vision is for cleaner air for everyone. One example of action taken to achieve this is the establishment of a working group of specialist staff of the Agency and the power generating companies to develop an Air Quality Management Plan for each power station. This national group was established in 2001 to oversee the work of the power generating companies on short-term impacts of sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) from power stations, and has agreed a methodology to achieve compliance with the Air Quality Standard for SO<sub>2</sub> by 2005. A number of power stations, such as West Burton, one of the 5 coal-fired power stations in the Lower Trent and Erewash area, have already taken action to reduce their emissions of SO<sub>2</sub> by installing Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) equipment. FGD systems remove SO<sub>2</sub>

from the exhaust gases of a power plant by using limestone solutions to absorb it. This creates calcium sulphate (gypsum) which can then be used in the building trade.

As well as improving the quality of the air we breathe, the reduction in SO<sub>2</sub> emissions will help prevent the creation of acid rain, which has been implicated in damaging forests throughout the UK and Europe, and acidifying lakes, particularly in Scandinavia, making them uninhabitable for aquatic life. Acid rain also corrodes buildings and statues, flattening out intricate carving and crumbling stone. The Agency will continue to work with this industry and others, to improve air quality from all sources, through shared strategies and the authorisation process.



# Flood management under review

A major new initiative called the Fluvial Trent Strategy has recently begun. This strategic review of flooding and flood management along the River Trent corridor will take into account existing and anticipated flood locations from the head of the river at Stoke-on-Trent to the tidal limit at Cromwell Weir downstream of Newark-on-Trent. The need for such a review was identified following the Autumn/Winter floods of 2000 which caused extensive damage.

(putting back woodlands) and rural land management to reduce surface run-off, as well as the traditional approach of hard defences where they are appropriate. At this stage, no flood management initiative has been entirely ruled out, or ruled into, the strategy.

study team would welcome responses to the scoping document and is looking for comments on sustainable solutions to flood management and flood control. Information is available on the Agency's website on: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk) in the Midlands' section.

Working to tight deadlines, the review is scheduled to take around 14 months to complete. The first (scoping) stage enters consultation in June 2002. The

For more information, please contact: Penny Thorpe, Environmental Impact Assessment Officer at the Environment Agency, Nottingham office.

The review will take an integrated approach to flood problems and the causes of flooding by looking further than just the traditional engineering approach to flood management. It will consider how a wide range of factors including river maintenance, development in flood plains, rural land management, development planning policy and climate change might be involved with flooding along the Trent corridor. It also aims to take a similarly wide view to identifying measures that may be effective in a flood management strategy. This may include, for example, controlling development in the flood plain, river restoration, use of flood plains for flood storage, afforestation



*The autumn/winter floods of 2000 caused extensive damage  
Picture courtesy of the Nottingham Evening Post*

# Retreating for a purpose

As part of the Humber Estuary Shoreline Management Plan, the Agency is intending to re-align the current line of defences at up to 12 sites around the estuary. Management re-alignment involves the breaching of existing flood defences to open up areas of land to allow the controlled flooding of the site. This will result in reduced flood levels in the estuary as well as allowing the Agency to address the impacts of sea level rise on the internationally important nature conservation interest of the Humber. Up to 1000 hectares of land will be returned to the estuary over the next few years.

For more information please contact: John Pygott, Alkborough Project Manager at the Environment Agency, North East Region.  
Tel: (0113) 213 4600 during office hours.

One of the largest sites is at Alkborough where the Trent meets the Humber. Here the Agency is working in partnership with a wide group of bodies to build one of the biggest wetland habitat creation projects in Europe as part of managing flood risks in the estuary and tidal rivers. Substantial funding for the project is already in place and several European funding bids are in preparation. A key element of the project is to identify and secure the best possible opportunities for local community involvement as part of the development of the project.



*The land in the view will return to intertidal habitat*



# Reedbed grows through partnership

Attenborough Nature Reserve Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), one of Nottinghamshire's prime wetland sites, has just got better. A large new reedbed has been created through a partnership of the Agency, English Nature, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, Broxtowe Borough Council and RMC (the owners of the site). It is hoped that the reedbed will eventually cover approximately 10 hectares. This will contribute 10% to the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) target of creating or restoring 100 hectares of reedbeds in Nottinghamshire by 2005.

Attenborough supports a wide range of wildlife and habitats and is a popular spot for birdwatchers, dog walkers and people out for a stroll. The site is made up of flooded pits of varying ages, created through gravel extraction, that adjoin the River Trent. There are important areas of wet woodland, marsh and reedbed, whilst some patches of original floodplain grassland still remain. The reedbed will improve what is already a good site.

Sustainability principles have been incorporated into the creation of the reedbed. Leftover afterburden (waste material) from the gravel workings has been recycled by bulldozing it into one of Attenborough's lagoons known as Clifton Pond. This has created a shelf just under the surface of the water along the pond margins, which has been shaped into a ridge and furrow profile. This will provide small dykes within the reedbed that are key feeding habitat for bitterns. These birds have already been recorded at Attenborough, but it is hoped that this new reedbed will encourage them to overwinter at the site. The new reedbed will also attract other birds such as the reed warbler and sedge warbler, as well as supporting invertebrates which are associated with reedbeds.

A key to the success of this project has been the close working between each of the partners on the project. Funded by English Nature, the work has been carried out by Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and sensitive contractors under the full support of owners RMC. The Agency has provided technical expertise to advise on the best ways to raise and lower the water level within Clifton Pond to first allow the reedbed to take root and spread and then to control its extent.

For further information on this project, please contact: Valerie Holt, Conservation and Recreation Team Leader at the Environment Agency, Nottingham office.



A view of Attenborough Nature Reserve



Overburden being re-profiled to provide a platform for the reedbed, Source: English Nature

## Crayfish get protection code

A new leaflet called 'Protecting native crayfish in the Midlands' has been published by the Agency, with support from English Nature, Severn Trent Water and the International Association of Astacology. This leaflet, which would be of interest to anglers, watercourse owners, farmers and others, outlines the Crayfish Code. Adhering to this simple set of rules will help to protect the vulnerable remaining populations of the white-clawed or native crayfish. These populations are under threat from pollution, disturbance and loss of habitat, as well as competition from aggressive non-native species, such as the American signal crayfish. Copies of this leaflet and the more detailed 'Freshwater crayfish in Britain and Ireland' are available from the Customer Contact Team at the Environment Agency, Nottingham office.





# Further research needed for grey heron chicks

Work continues to determine the causes of grey heron chick mortalities at the Besthorpe Heronry in Nottinghamshire. A partnership group including the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, the Agency and the RSPB has been established to enable further investigations over the next two years to try and establish the main cause of the mortalities.

Besthorpe Heronry is a grey heron colony located on a lake in the Besthorpe Nature Reserve, managed by the

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. Herons have bred at the site at least since 1978. In 1996 the North Nottinghamshire Ringing Group started to visit the colony regularly and during one of the first visits several of the chicks were found dead, with multiple fractures of leg and wing bones. Since then, each breeding season chicks have been found dead with the same pathological characteristics.

Fieldwork, monitoring and lab studies have been carried out during the last five

years in order to determine the origin of the disease. Several reasons have been proposed as to the main cause, including starvation related to the inability of parents to find food, and the presence of an environmental pollutant interfering with calcium metabolism.

For further information please contact: Karen McHarg, Area Fisheries, Ecology and Recreation Manager at the Environment Agency, Nottingham office.

# Water voles keen on the Leen and Erewash

A survey of the River Erewash for water voles was completed late last year by Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT) on behalf of the Agency. The final report shows a good distribution of water voles along the river, although there are threats to their habitat from development. Another survey has shown that a new habitat for water voles created five years ago on the River Leen is now heavily populated. The Agency worked with the Coal Authority and consultants to trap and move water voles to a more suitable location as part of a subsidence scheme that was being carried out at the time. The Agency was involved through land drainage consents that were obtained for the work.

The water vole used to be widespread in lowland Britain, but has suffered a long-term decline since 1900 and is now found in only 11% of the sites where they have been previously recorded in Britain. Therefore, the results of these surveys are good news for water voles. However, water voles in this area are under threat from mink. Other threats include habitat loss and disturbance by bank protection works. The water vole gained limited legal protection in 1998 when it was included in an amendment to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This makes it illegal to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place which water voles use for shelter, and to disturb water voles while they are using such a place.

As the Lead Agency for the water vole which is a priority species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, the Agency will protect water voles and their habitats through the consenting process, involvement with habitat enhancement projects and by providing advice. The Agency will also continue to support the Water for Wildlife project run by the Wildlife Trusts as it brings real actions on the ground to assist in the re-colonisation of species such as water voles.



*Water voles have suffered severe decline in numbers*



# Our Vision: making it happen

Early in 2001, the Environment Agency launched its vision for the future. This aspirational document, 'An Environmental Vision – The Environment Agency's contribution to sustainable development' sets out the state of the environment the Agency would like to see achieved by 2020. Recently, the Agency has launched 'The vision for our environment: making it happen' which describes our plan to deliver our vision over the next five years. It is a statement of our commitment to protecting and enhancing the environment.

The making it happen document is sharply focused and contains clear priorities and targets that will help to deliver our vision effectively. This means that everything we do drives towards an enhanced environment and better quality of life for all.

Each Area office of the Agency is currently developing how we will 'make it happen' at a local level and over the next few months we will be working up our local contribution to the vision in the Lower Trent Area.

Further information about 'The vision for our environment: making it happen' is available on the Agency's website - [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk).

## Sand martins move in!

Early in summer 2001, flood defence works along the River Trent at Sutton-on-Trent resulted in an unexpected conservation gain. Work had begun on raising the flood bank that had suffered as a result of the floods during winter 2000. The material needed was excavated from the adjacent riverbank, creating a trench that exposed a sandy seam in the cliff face. The construction team returned a few days later only to

find that the seam had immediately been colonised by sand martins, which were seen darting in and out of their newly excavated nests.

Sand martins are summer visitors to the UK, and the speed with which they inhabited the trench was remarkable and suggests there may be a lack of suitable nesting habitats in the area. Sand martins are included on the long list of globally threatened/declining species in

the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and so work was immediately halted to allow them to nest in peace.

It has been agreed with the landowners to retain part of the sandy sheer face to provide a ready-made colony site for birds. The Agency has fenced off the area to protect it from damage by grazing cattle, hopefully ensuring the banks stability for a few more breeding seasons before it naturally erodes.



*This sand bank was quickly colonised by sand martins*



# Uninterrupted owls!

The Agency has worked with the Hawk and Owl Trust to ensure a continuous string of barn owl nest boxes from Gainsborough to Nottingham. Phase 2 of this project involved the installation of 16 nest boxes at various sites along the River Trent between Cromwell and Nottingham. Also, four extra boxes were erected to complement the very successful Phase 1 of this project, which in 1999 installed nest boxes from Gainsborough to Cromwell.

Many of these nestboxes have been erected in rural locations, as the barn owls' favoured hunting habitat is rough grassland which supports small mammals such as field voles that make up 90% of the owls' diet. Barn owls nest in holes in mature trees, barns and out buildings. However, these nest boxes will help to address the loss of nesting sites which is one of the key factors which has seen the barn owl decline by 50% in the UK in the past 50 years. This decline can also be attributed to loss of feeding habitat, poisons used in the control of rats and mice, drowning incidents and road traffic accidents.

It is hoped that Phase 3 of the project will take place this year. This will install nest boxes from Beeston to Willington near Derby to link up with a similar project that has been carried out in the Agency's Upper Trent Area. This will create a continuous run of nest boxes along the whole length of the Trent!

For more information on barn owls and the Hawk and Owl Trust, visit their website at [www.hawkandowl.org](http://www.hawkandowl.org)



*The barn owl is a threatened species*



*An example of the nest boxes installed*

## Progress

The results of this year's Annual Review are that 12 actions have been completed (2.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 8.3, 8.6, 9.1, 11.3, 11.4, 14.1, 16.3 & 17.1), 9 actions have been removed to be reported through other ongoing actions (3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 7.7, 8.7, 8.8, 10.1, 19.1 & 19.3), 1 action has had no progress made (24.4) mainly because they were not due to start during 2001 and no new actions have been added. Remaining actions are been carried forward into the Area's Contribution document as mentioned on pg. 10.

Should anybody wish to support the work within the Lower Trent and Erewash area or require a full report of progress made on LEAP actions this year, then please contact: Sam Todd in the Partnerships Team, Environment Agency Nottingham office.



# Winthorpe Lake gets make over

Conservation and Recreation Officers from the Agency have recently tidied up Winthorpe Lake, a popular, well-fished site located just north of Newark between Winthorpe and Holme. The popularity of the site had led to it becoming worn and in a state of disrepair. Being responsible landowners, the Agency has made some recreational and health and safety improvements. The disabled anglers' fishing pegs have been repaired to improve access and comfort for fishing and the site has been re-fenced to control cattle and exclude them from the fishing areas, preventing erosion of the banks. Access stiles have also been re-instated and stoppers have been installed to prevent cars driving onto the site. The improvements will enable the popularity of the lake to continue.



*New fencing and a stile have been installed*

*We would be delighted to receive your feedback. For further details on any of the articles in this newsletter, to give us your views on this new style of Annual Review reporting or to get involved, please contact:*

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*This newsletter covers the Lower Trent and Erewash catchment area. Other catchments covered by the Lower Trent Area office are: Idle and Torne, Derbyshire Derwent and Soar.*

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