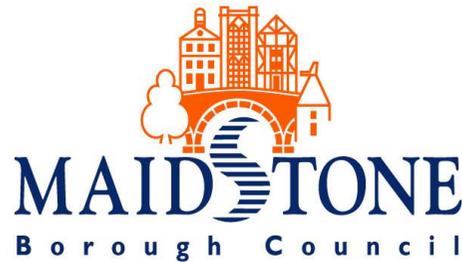


Maidstone's Biodiversity Strategy

A Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Phase 1: 2009 – 2014

HAP 5: Wet Woodland



Wet Woodland Action Plan

Table of Contents

Description	3
National status	4
Local status	4
Factors causing decline in biodiversity	4
Current national action	5
Funding resources.....	5
National plan objectives and actions.....	6
Local plan objectives and actions	6
Maidstone's objectives	6
Objectives and targets	7

Wet Woodland Action Plan

Description

- 1.1 Wet deciduous woodland is often found on floodplains and as small patches within larger wooded areas when damp ground is colonised by species such as willow, birch and alder, and sometimes ash, oak, pine and beech on the drier riparian areas.
- 1.2 Wet woods frequently occur in mosaic with other woodland key habitat types and with open key habitats such as fens. Management of individual sites needs to consider both sets of requirements.
- 1.3 In terms of National Vegetation Classification (NVC) plant communities this habitat is characterised by;
- W1 *Salix cinerea* - *Galium palustre* woodland
 - W2 *Salix cinerea* - *Betula pubescens* - *Phragmites australis* woodland
 - W3 *Salix pentandra* - *Carex rostrata* woodland
 - W4c *Betula pubescens* - *Molinia caerulea* woodland: *Sphagnum* sub-community
 - W5 *Alnus glutinosa* - *Carex paniculata* woodland
 - W6 *Alnus glutinosa* - *Urtica dioica* woodland
 - W7 *Alnus glutinosa* - *Fraxinus excelsior* - *Lysimachia nemorum* woodland.
 - W8 *Fraxinus excelsior* - *Acer campestre* - *Mercurialis perennis* woodland.
- 1.4 Wet woodland combines elements of many other ecosystems and as such is important for many species. The high humidity favours bryophyte growth. The number of invertebrates associated with alder, birch and willows, is very large, although some are now confined to just a few sites. Even quite small seepages may support significant invertebrate faunas. Dead wood within the sites can be frequent, and its association with water provides specialised habitats not found in dry woodland types. While few rare plant species depend on wet woodland per se, there may be relict species from the former open wetlands on the site such as the marsh fern *Thelypteris palustris*.
- 1.5 Wet woodland is an important habitat for a number of priority species including the craneflies; *Lipsothrix ecucullata*, *L. nervosa*, *L. errans* and *L. nigristigma*. Their requirements should also be taken into account in the implementation of the plan.

Wet Woodland Action Plan

National status

- 2.1 There are no precise data on the total extent of wet woodland in the UK, but in the late 1980s the Nature Conservancy Council estimated the total extent of this type in ancient semi-natural woodland to be about 25,000 - 30,000 ha. The area of recent wet woodland may be at least as large again. Thus a crude estimate of the total wet woodland area in the UK is 50,000 - 70,000 ha.

Local status

- 3.1 The 2003 Kent Habitat survey indicates 39 ha of this habitat in the Borough.
- 3.2 Of the 39 ha of wet woodland in the Borough none is notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), however 68% is within Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). This means that in total only 32% of this resource in borough is not currently designated.
- 3.3 Approximately 4% (1 ha) of wet woodland within LWS is under positive management or has been under positive management in the last 5 years via an environmental stewardship specifically for grassland.
- 3.4 Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) own 3 ha of wet woodland identified in the Kent Habitat Survey (2003) which is found within Mote Park and the adjacent River Len Local Nature Reserve. Additionally, MBC biodiversity surveying has also identified an additional 7 ha site called Senacre Wood.
- 3.5 Currently 1 ha (3%) of wet woodland identified within the Kent Habitat Survey 2003 is in a favourable condition.

Factors causing decline in biodiversity

- 4.1 Clearance and conversion to other land-uses, particularly in woods recently established on wetland sites.
- 4.2 Cessation of management in formerly coppiced sites may encourage succession to drier woodland types.
- 4.3 Lowering of water-tables through drainage or water abstraction, resulting in change to drier woodland types.
- 4.4 Inappropriate grazing levels and poaching of the soil by sheep, cattle and deer leading to a change in the woodland structure, ground flora impoverishment and difficulties for regeneration.

Wet Woodland Action Plan

- 4.5 Flood prevention measures, river control and canalization, leading to loss of dynamic disturbance-succession systems and invertebrate communities, as well as possible reductions in the extent of individual sites.
- 4.6 Constraints on the spread of woodland from conservation sites onto adjacent ground from agriculture, industrial or residential development, leading to greater uniformity of structure across the site.
- 4.7 Poor water quality arising from eutrophication, industrial effluents or rubbish dumping leading to changes in the composition of the ground flora and invertebrate communities.
- 4.8 Invasion by non-native species which alter vegetation composition and lower conservation value (e.g. Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*); air pollution which may influence particularly bryophyte and lichen communities; and diseases such as *Phytophthora*.
- 4.9 Climate change, potentially resulting in changes in the vegetation communities.
- 4.10 Direct damage to this sensitive environment from trampling, fires and other disturbance by anglers, fly-tippers, off-road motorcyclists and other intrusive activities.

Current national action

- 5.1 Wet woodland is currently targeted by the Forestry Commission English Woodland Grant Scheme to assist with management and enhancement.
- 5.2 Felling licences from the Forestry Authority (FA) are normally required if the woods are not managed under plans approved by them.

Funding resources

- 6.1 The Environmental Stewardship Scheme provides funding the maintenance, restoration and creation of woodland.

Wet Woodland Action Plan

National plan objectives and actions

- 7.1 The UK-BAP Wet Woodland Habitat action plan objectives and targets cover habitat conservation, restoration and expansion. The action plan aims to maintain the current extent and distribution of wet woodland (50,000-70,000 ha). Additionally, the plan seeks to reach a favourable condition for 65% and restoration of 21% of Wet Woodland habitat by restocking and ensuring native composition by 2015 in England.

Local plan objectives and actions

- 8.1 The Kent LBAP Wet Woodland Habitat action plan objectives and targets concentrate on the improvement of designated sites and creation of the habitat. Within SSSIs it seeks wherever feasible, favourable status for all wet woodland habitat by 2020. Within LWS the plan seeks favourable status for 25% of this habitat by 2020, increasing to 50% by 2026. The plan also targets the re-establishment of 18 ha by 2020 and an additional 9 ha by 2026.

Maidstone's objectives

- 9.1 Maidstone's objectives are;

1. **Research and maintain the current extent and quality of wet woodland**
2. **Ensure positive management of wet woodland habitat**
3. **Identify priority areas for increasing the area of this habitat through the creation of new woodlands and altering the water management of land near potential areas – including woodland creation projects associated with new development.**
4. **Linkage through wet woodland creation project of existing habitat fragments of a linear wet woodland along course of River Len (utilising improved grassland and other species poor sites).**
5. **Creation of at least one new wet woodland site in proximity to the River Medway.**

Wet Woodland Action Plan

Objectives and targets

Objective 1: Maintain the current extent and quality of wet woodland Habitat

Target 1: Maintain 39 ha (as identified by the Kent Habitat Survey 2003) by 2026.

WW	ACTION	TARGET START DATE	TARGET END DATE	KEY EXTERNAL PARTNERS	PROGRESS
1.	Ensure that Maidstone's Local Development Framework contain policy to protect wet woodland.	2010	2010	ALL	
2.	Ensure that significant wet woodland sites not designated SSSI are made Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	2010	2014	KWT	
3.	Target woodland environmental management schemes at all wet woodland sites	2010	2014	FC	
4.	Develop recording methods within the environmental schemes for woodlands to record when the habitat could be classified as wet woodland priority habitat	2010	2014	ALL	Need for recording/monitoring system to be set up as determined by Steering Group. Opportunity for community engagement.

Wet Woodland Action Plan

Objective 2: Ensure positive management of Wet Woodland Habitat

Target 2: Ensure the positive management of 21 ha by 2014, 22 ha by 2020 and 23 ha by 2026.

WW	ACTION	TARGET START DATE	TARGET END DATE	KEY EXTERNAL PARTNERS	PROGRESS
5.	Ensure that all wet woodland sites as identified in the Kent Habitat Survey 2003 are under an environmental stewardship or have been under an environmental stewardship in the last 10 years.	2009	2026	FC	
6.	Ensure an appropriate management plan for the Wet Woodland Area of Mote park is documented and implemented – with consultation from key partners.	2008	2014	FC KWT	Mote Park Lottery Bid. If not successful see appropriate funding via the English woodland grant scheme or alternative funding for the management of the wet woodland areas.
7.	<p>Work to facilitate funding source for the management of Senacre Woodland and Len Valley Nature Reserve wet woodland areas.</p> <p>Develop and implement an improvement and project plan for Senacre Wood and Len Valley Nature Reserve seeking advice from partners and consulting the local community.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate interpretation board is placed at the managed woodland sites to explain the management techniques used and the benefits to biodiversity.</p>	2008	2014	ALL	Management Plan under development and site survey data available for both sites – both management plans need re-writing to fit MBC Management Plan Format.

Wet Woodland Action Plan

Objective 3-5: Identify priority areas for increasing the area of this habitat through the creation of new woodlands and altering the water management of land near potential areas.

Target 3: Expand areas of wet woodland habitat at key sites by 5 ha by 2014 and 6 ha by 2020 (Total Area: 6 ha by 2026)

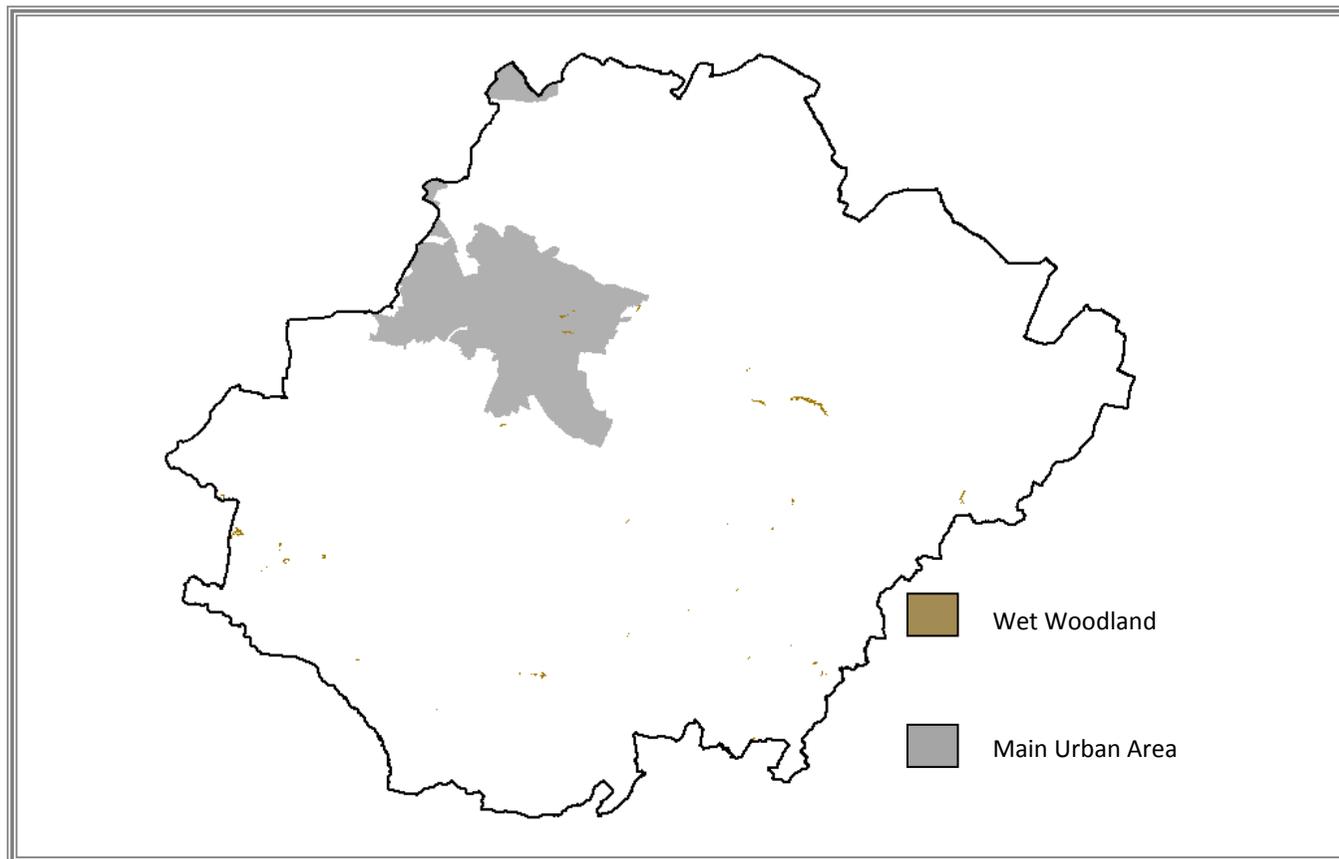
WW	ACTION	TARGET START DATE	TARGET END DATE	KEY EXTERNAL PARTNERS	PROGRESS
8.	Use Maidstone's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Green Infrastructure Strategy, Local Development Framework and data on current woodland enhancement/creation within the woodland statement to identify a location to create a 5ha site of wet woodland.	2009	2026	FC	
9.	Identify existing woodlands not currently classified as UK priority wet woodlands with the potential to be incorporated into this habitat category through appropriate management.	2009	2026	FC,	
10.	Encourage removal of non-native species from those woods identified above through development of management plans and grant aid.	2009	2026	FC NE	
11.	Work with developers to utilise section 106 funding to create and enhance wet woodland areas surround developments.	2009	2026	ALL	

Wet Woodland Action Plan

Wet woodland distribution

10.1 The distribution of wet woodland can be seen in figure 1. This is being re-mapped from 2010 in the revised Kent Habitat Survey.

Figure 1 Distribution of wet woodland in Maidstone borough



Data Source: Kent Habitat Survey 2003