

# Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land

## Current UK status and trends

Unknown current resource. Declining due to development pressure.

## Estimated current Northamptonshire resource

Approximately 130ha

## Progress towards BAP targets 2008–2015

130ha of priority habitat identified through survey work and a number of LWS designated

## Lead partner

Wildlife Trust

## Target areas



## Habitat description

Previously developed land includes redundant urban land which once served a use such as industry, housing, quarrying, landfill or transportation but has now become derelict, allowing natural processes once again to take place. It is also known as brownfield. Within the county most previously developed habitats occur within the principal urban or quarried areas. These habitats are best defined by structure and growth form, rather than specific vegetation communities. They comprise mosaics of bare ground with, typically, very early pioneer communities, more established open grasslands, scrub and patches of other habitats like heathland, swamp, ephemeral pools and inundation grassland.



The heterogeneity of these habitats means that they hold diverse and sometimes unusual species assemblages, particularly for invertebrates. Pioneer communities are common and the habitat can remain in a state of 'suspended succession' for many years.

These habitat mosaics are essential to the survival of many species, both those specific to this type of habitat and to those moving between patches of other habitat. Brownfield sites also provide a refuge for species that

would be associated with other habitats, e.g. species rich grasslands, were it not for human influence on the environment.

Habitats of high nature conservation value are generally those which contain:

- Large and/or species-rich mosaics of bare ground, pioneer communities, flower rich grassland and other habitats with associated structural and topographical features
- Bare ground and pioneer communities which have been retained over an extended period, demonstrating arrested succession
- Exceptional assemblages of key species groups.

## Main issues and threats

- Development pressure due to historical lack of recognition and the consequently poor history of recording on many urban and post-industrial sites. Built development is concentrated in urban areas in order to protect the countryside and the current national target for housing is that 60% of all new housing should be on previously developed land.
- Mismanagement by 'green washing': topsoil importation, grassland seeding, and tree planting can be devastating to brownfield biodiversity

## General strategy

- Protect sites through good use of planning conditions and Section 106 agreements to secure funding for long-term management
- Ensure that green infrastructure is integral in new development schemes
- Identify and survey previously developed sites that may have a high biodiversity value (particularly for invertebrates)
- Educate conservationists, local authorities and local people about the value of naturally recolonised habitats
- Ensure suitable restoration schemes are put in place once industrial use (e.g. landfill or quarrying) of a site ceases
- Focus on Northampton, Corby and Kettering, and previously quarried areas

## Targets

1. Identify all areas that meet the definition for this habitat through desk study and site visits by 2020
2. Maintain the current known extent of this habitat and ensure no net loss
3. Achieve favourable condition on 30ha of open mosaic habitats by 2020

## Actions

<b>A.</b>	By 2020 through desk study and survey work identify all open mosaic habitats that meet Local Wildlife Site criteria and provide advice to landowners	Wildlife Trust
<b>B.</b>	Through advice and projects ensure up to date surveys of open mosaic LWS and work with landowners to bring sites into favourable management	Wildlife Trust
<b>C.</b>	Carry out invertebrate surveys on sites meeting the BAP habitat description	County Recorders NBRC Wildlife Trust
<b>D.</b>	Produce a guidance document for planners and developers regarding the value of open mosaic habitats on previously developed land by 2020	Wildlife Trust Buglife
<b>E.</b>	Ensure that suitable restoration schemes are put in place once industrial use of sites such as landfill sites and quarries ceases	NCC Wildlife Trust

## Flagship species



- Common lizard
- Garden tiger moth
- Grass snake
- Slow worm

## Further information and management advice

- ▶ [Further habitat information from the Wildlife Trust](#)
- ▶ [Buglife's open mosaic habitat inventory](#)
- ▶ [Management advice for invertebrates](#) (from Buglife)
- ▶ [Management advice for bumblebees](#) (from Bumblebee Conservation Trust)