

Regents Place - London

Biodiversity Action Plan



Triton Square, Regents Place



Regents Place by night

1 Introduction & Background

Over the last few years the Government has been encouraging businesses to report on Social and Environmental issues. As part of this process, the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Select Committee (2000) and DEFRA and DTI guidelines (2001) have identified the need for business to engage more fully in the conservation of biodiversity.

British Land recognises that its business operations interact with biodiversity. As part of the Company's Corporate Responsibility programme for 2004, British Land has set an objective to 'promote the enhancement of local ecosystems'.

One of the actions to meet this objective was to:

'Prepare biodiversity action plans for at least two key properties to provide the framework for the development of further biodiversity initiatives.'

Biodiversity is the rich diversity of life comprising all living organisms and the ecological communities in which they live.

Regents Place is one of the sites selected by British Land for developing an action plan.

British Land is developing these Biodiversity Action Plans

- *to identify the important biodiversity features present at each site and provide a baseline*
- *to specify the works that may be undertaken to protect and benefit biodiversity over time.*

2 UK & London Biodiversity Action Plans

A UK Biodiversity Action Plan was born out of the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity, held at the Rio Summit. As has happened for many of the UK's counties and regions, London's local government and nature conservation groups have combined to produce a Biodiversity Action Plan for the Greater London area. Within this are listed a number of habitats and species groups seen as priorities for the region, to be the focus of targeted and achievable conservation action over the coming years.

These Priorities are listed below:

- *Stag Beetle • House Martin • Reptiles • Bats*
- *House Sparrow • Sand Martin • Black Poplar*
- *Carder Bumblebee • Water Vole • Black*
- *Redstart • Mistletoe • Tower Mustard*
- *Grey Heron • Peregrine*

3 Purpose of Biodiversity Action Plans

The Regents Place Action Plan, prepared by British Land, aims to detail the main features of value for biodiversity present, as determined through site survey, and explains the targets for these features as set within published UK or Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

The Site Action Plans will list the measures that are to be taken to help meet these targets or to improve or enhance value for wildlife.

4 Regents Place Baseline

The Regents Place Estate in central London (located on the Euston Road, near to Great Portland Street station) is owned by British Land Plc and managed by Broadgate Estates. The estate is a combination of multi-let and single let properties. It is a high quality, landmark mixed business and retail development on the edge of Regent's Park and although it is set within a central urban location, there are many small areas of gardens and parks that act as stepping stones for wildlife, within a greater green network.

The adjacent Regent's Park has been designated as a Site of Metropolitan Importance (SMI) to reflect its value to nature conservation. Nearby, smaller sites of Local Importance (SLIs) include St James' Garden and Gordon Square, but overall the Estate sits within an area of limited nature conservation sites.

Even urban environments can offer unique conditions and opportunities for wildlife and so can often support a number of specialised and occasionally rare species.

The existing biodiversity interest of the Regents Place Estate is largely limited to the landscaped surrounds of the predominantly built environment. Buildings themselves can be of equal interest to wildlife with birds, bats, invertebrates and small mammals all happy to take advantage of the shelter and protection. A number of areas of vegetation and landscaping exist around the site, comprising individual Plane trees, Sycamores and Pin Oaks that line the walkways and streets alongside the buildings. Dense mixtures of Ivy and Virginia Creeper have been encouraged to extend across the walls, built frameworks and ground-level landscaping displays.



Trees at Regents Place

As is the case throughout much of central London, Feral Pigeons are the most numerous species to be seen across the site. However, they are by no means exclusive and after only a few minutes 'timeout', Woodpigeon can often be found nesting within the boxed trees and the smaller, common bird species, such as Blackbird, Robin and Wren foraging through the creepers and pathways. Hedgehogs are reported to roam across the site at night and occasional visits from the urban Fox are more than likely.

Measures to enhance biodiversity value can have a tangible benefit for the human as well as wildlife occupants of the site, in terms of helping to enhance their everyday work environments.

5 Regents Place Proposed Biodiversity Actions

5.1 Overview

Those priority species (as outlined in section 2) of potential relevance to the Regents Place site, in that they potentially could live on the site or are present within the nearby area, include:

- ***Black Redstart***
- ***House Martin***
- ***House Sparrow***
- ***Peregrine Falcon***

Peregrines have nested in the capital for the past few years and sightings of these impressive birds of prey have dramatically increased across the region, including recent observations within Regents Park. Black Redstarts are also rare nesters, favouring industrial and built urban sites, and occur regularly nearby, including at Kings Cross and a handful of neighbouring sites within Camden. Numbers of the once common House Sparrow and House Martin continue to decline across much of the city, but can still be found in association with busy and built-up environments.

These four bird species are believed to be the most suitable targets for biodiversity action at the Regents Place site, in conjunction with the actions and targets set for the region as a whole. As a result, all are targets of the London Biodiversity Action Plan, as outlined above. It should also be recognised that actions taken to benefit a particular species more often than not serve to benefit a wide variety of other wildlife, thus further enhancing the biodiversity interest of the site.

5.2 Measures to Enhance Biodiversity on Site

The measures to benefit wildlife have been carefully weighed with the need to protect public health and safety. The greatest area of opportunity is above, where large areas of the building's roof are little utilised and managed in an inopportune way. Where areas of open space exist, that are not integral to the maintenance of the building, cost effective measures to benefit biodiversity can be considered. The following should be considered at Regents Place to encourage key species within the area.

Black Redstart

The Black Redstart is a small, robin-like bird that has colonised the inner cities of the UK from their more traditional European homes of steep mountain valleys and gorges. Up to ten pairs are known to nest each year within London. The urban environment mimics such areas by providing tall, vertical faces, ledges and crevices, plus sparse vegetation for insect and seed foods. Derelict sites contain boulders and rubble are often the most successful at attracting this species and the installation of 'green' or 'brown' roofs is beginning to pay dividends in London.



The Black Redstart

5.2 Continued

Roof areas containing a mixture of aggregate materials (gravels, small boulders etc), piled wood and occasional vegetation such as sedum mats, often taken from the cleared areas of a site at a cost-saving to the developer, can greatly contribute to the biodiversity value of a newly-developed site. Successful examples include the recent developments at Greenwich Reach; as a building-design consideration, they are continually being pushed to the forefront for those seeking environmental benefits to their development proposals.

Proposed Actions: Measures to consider for the Black Redstart would therefore include:

- *The set aside of non-essential roof areas for the collection of aggregate materials of various types and sizes, plus piled wood and the provision of small-scale patches of vegetation. The substrate materials and wood provide homes for numerous insect species, which in turn provide a food source for the birds; the urban plant species provide both seeds and insects. The podium level on Euston Tower and the roof of the Abbey Building would appear most suited to habitat improvement measures.*
- *The provision of boxes for nesting, in suitable locations relative to the improved habitat, once black redstarts have been recorded in the immediate vicinity.*

House Martin

The House Martin is an annual summer visitor to the UK, arriving each April and departing in autumn to overwinter in Africa. Like the Swallow and the Swift, they spend much of their time on the wing and eat their way through thousands of midges and flies each season. Formerly a common site throughout the sub-urban environment, they create groups of their mud nests under the eaves of houses and beneath other suitable ledges. As the number of airborne insects has decreased, due to the removal of vegetation and use of pesticides, and building design changes have reduced the number of nest site opportunities, so House Martins have begun to move elsewhere.

Proposed Actions: Measures to consider for the House Martin would therefore include:

- *The installation of specially designed House Martin nest boxes (available from the RSPB). The podium level of Euston Tower provides opportunities for installing boxes at the top of the pillars, beneath the natural overhang of the third floor.*
- *The vegetation and woodpile components of the roof habitats would provide insect food for the birds.*

House Sparrow

The House Sparrow is a species familiar to the majority of London's residents, due to its approachable and boisterous nature and its former abundance throughout the capital. Now a far scarcer sight (with some remaining strongholds), the Sparrow has declined in line with other small bird species, due to a number of factors such as the loss of its favoured habitats, nesting opportunities, and increasing food shortages. Nesting colonially in small 'family' groups, the House Sparrow requires access to the internal roof spaces of buildings or the provision of artificial nest sites, as well as sources of both insects and seeds.

Proposed Actions: Measures to consider for the House Sparrow would therefore include:

- *The installation of specially designed House Sparrow nest terraces (available from the RSPB) beneath ledges on suitable buildings. The podium level of Euston Tower provides opportunities for installing boxes at the top of the pillars, beneath the natural overhang of the third floor.*
- *The provision of bird feeding stations, offering regular supplies of both seeds and water within specific areas of the site. These can be designed and sited to minimise opportunities for 'raiding' vermin, such as rats or feral pigeons, and to maximise opportunities for viewing the bird species attracted.*
- *The vegetation and woodpile components of the roof habitats would also provide seed and insect food for the birds.*

5.2 Continued

Peregrine Falcon

The Peregrine has only very recently colonised the capital, nesting on a number of the city's tallest landmark buildings, such as Battersea Power Station. Traditionally a coastal cliff-nester, the steep faces of the urban skyline and the availability of its favoured prey, the Feral Pigeon, have permitted this species to tentatively expand into the city environment. They remain at this time a very rare sight, with no more than a handful of records each year. Often viewed favourably by the public for their powerful image and love of the often-disliked urban pigeon, this species is proving a welcome addition to London's biodiversity.

Proposed Action: Measures to consider for the Peregrine would therefore include:

- *The installation of one or two specially designed Peregrine ledge boxes, to be sited within the sheltered roof areas on top of Euston Tower.*



Peregrine Falcon

5.3 Implementation and Review

British Land will review with tenants the potential for cooperation on biodiversity actions that meet the objectives of the respective organisations.

The monitoring and review of the actions will be undertaken at least annually as appropriate.

6 Useful Contacts and Links

The following organisations can be contacted for further information on London's biodiversity and nature conservation interests:

- UK Biodiversity Group: www.ukbap.org.uk
- London Biodiversity Partnership: www.lbp.org.uk
- London Wildlife Trust: www.wildlondon.org.uk
- Black Redstart Working Group: www.blackredstarts.org.uk
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds: www.rspb.org.uk
- Living Roofs – An independent resource for green roof information: www.livingroofs.org

7 Contact

If you would like further information on this Biodiversity Action Plan, please contact claudine.blamey@britishland.com