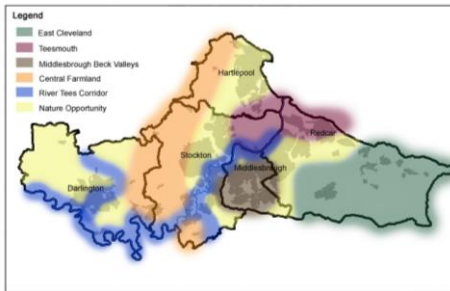


Biodiversity Opportunity Area: Central Farmland – Darlington-Stockton track bed area CF BOA V

1. Background



The Tees Valley can be divided into five broad areas of landscape type. The BOA's comprise the key areas for potential biodiversity enhancement within these larger areas where targeted maintenance, restoration, creation, mitigation and offsetting measures should be adopted to enhance biodiversity and in turn help to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services. Collectively the BOA's form a strategic network, representing a significant environmental asset for the Tees Valley.

TVNP Priority 1: Protect and enhance the geodiversity and biodiversity of the Tees Valley ensuring the conservation, restoration and creation of key landscapes and habitats, including mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

TVNP Priority 2: Work at a landscape scale to restore and deliver robust ecological networks that demonstrate a wide range of environmental, social and economic outcomes.

NPPF: para. 109: The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...; recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services; minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, ...establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

NPPF: para. 117: plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries; identify and map components of the local ecological networks (including) areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation; preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations

2. Overview:

The BOA falls within the [NCA Profile: 23 Tees Lowlands \(NE439\)](#)

Characteristics of landscape area: Patchwork agricultural landscape including areas of increasingly scarce unimproved neutral grassland, ponds, hedgerows, small wetlands, a broken corridor of woodland from Crimdon Dene to Wynyard to community forests and the river Tees. A large percentage of many breeding populations of bird species of key importance in the Tees Valley are present within this Landscape Area.

Characteristics of BOA: A plateau-like area that lies to the north of the River Tees. The A66 forms the northern and part of the eastern boundary the Southern boundary is River Tees Corridor landscape area enclosed farmland, under a mix of arable and pastoral cultivation. A66, A67 and the railway line form a west-east transport corridor. Large areas of recently planted community forests. A recreational landscape with good access and community woodlands. Durham Tees Valley Airport has one of the best examples of nationally scarce, species-rich MG5 grassland habitat in the Tees Valley.

Local authorities affected: Darlington Borough Council; Stockton Borough Council

Landscape Character Assessment areas:

[Darlington Landscape Character Assessment map](#) Landscape Character Area: Middleton Farmland

Landscape Character Assessment – Stockton Landscape Character area: West Stockton Rural Fringe

3. Profile:

3.1 Geology and Soils: mid to late Permian sedimentary rocks, mainly mudstones and sandstones. dominant soil type in the area - slowly permeable, seasonally wet soils which are slightly acidic, loamy and clayey. Superficial deposits dating from end of last ice age (approx. 14k years BCE)

3.2 Biodiversity:

3.2.1 Statutory-designated sites: [Central Farmland Landscape Area Designations](#)

LNR: The Whinnies

SSSI: Neasham Fen – favourable condition

3.2.2: Non-statutory sites,

LWS: Neasham Brickworks; Hunger Hill Farm, The Whinnies, Elton Rookery Wood, Elementis Nature Reserve; Eliff's Mill; Aislaby Banks; Slosmire Gate Pond, Newsham Wood, Newsham Banks, Hartburn Beck (grassland); Hartburn Beck (water course - proposed); The Brickie pond.

LGS: None present in BOA

Sites of biological interest (from Phase 1): Burn Wood, Aislaby Wood

3.2.3: Priority habitats and priority species NERC Act S.41

[Central Farmland Landscape Area Habitats & Species](#); [Priority habitats and species in the Tees Valley](#)

Priority habitats: Lowland Fen; Lowland Meadow; 'priority' ponds; traditional orchard (at South Burden); Deciduous woodland;

Priority species: forester moth, largest UK population at Coatham Wood, Long Newton. Brown Hare, Water Vole; Harvest Mouse; Great Crested Newts; Dinky Skipper; White-letter Hairstreak; Green Hairstreak; pepper saxifrage, black poplar, farm land birds such as grey partridge, tree sparrow

3.2.4: Further important habitats. Unimproved neutral grassland e.g. extensive area approx. 100 hectares of species-rich [MG5 grassland](#), at Durham Tees Valley Airport.

3.2.5: Further important species. Water violet,

3.2.6: Ancient woodland presence: Rookery Plantation; Bunkerdale Wood; Aislaby Woods

3.2.7: landscape-scale conservation activity: Community Woodlands?

3.3 Archaeology:

Scheduled monuments: West Hartburn Village

3.4 Access:

3.4.1. Country Parks: None

3.4.2 Cycleways: National Cycle Route 14 in part following the course of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. Very small section of national Cycle Route 165 on the outskirts of Neasham.

3.4.3 PRow: Public footpaths & bridleways present

3.4.4 CRoW Act access land: South Burden Community Wood; Coatham Community Wood

3.5 Key Ecosystem Services:

Agricultural production; forestry production? recreational (walking, cycling, equestrian, 'allotmenting', plane spotting!); pollination services; flooding regulation?

Locality details in [Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy](#) and any open space categories

3.6 Socio-Economic:

3.6.1 Employment: Airport staff; agriculture; Elementis Chromium; Forestry Commission (exclude the

towns villages within this area – they are blanked out)

3.6.2 Housing/employment land allocations: Historic commercial allocation in and around airport site, housing around Middleton St George (not currently marked on map). Stockton allocations identified on map.

3.6.3 Community involvement: Friends of The Whinnies.

3.6.4 Agri-environment schemes: North East Region Theme Area HLS: x 13 entry level environmental stewardship agreements; x 14 Countryside Stewardship middle tier agreements.

- **Objectives & proposals:**

Objective 1: Positive management of existing sites derived from [Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services](#) outcomes,; Neasham Fen SSSI to achieve 'favourable condition' by 2020. LWS in the BOA are in positive management by 2020.

Objective 2: Habitat restoration & creation.

- Scrub clearance Aislaby Banks LWS.
- Maximise the enhancement of biodiversity along river corridors.
- Improvements required to field boundaries to restore and enhance the landscape pattern.
- Greater protection for the grassland habitat at Durham Tees Valley airport.
- Maintain open area between Darlington and Stockton.
- Investigate potential for additional woodland and wetland creation, particularly in the Hartburn Beck area.
- Investigate potential for linking with developments at Durham Tees Valley Airport.
- Improve access for adjoining residential, commercial and business areas to Hartburn Beck.
- Focus on habitat and watercourse restoration and enhancement at Hartburn Beck.
- Buffer/extend areas of unimproved neutral grassland.

Objective 3: Socio economic including; access, public involvement.

- Promote historic heritage,
- Improve links with existing open space, business and housing areas.
- Prevent urban encroachment into strategic open spaces and strategic gaps.
- Manage river corridors for wildlife thus reducing siltation and nutrient inputs, and providing shading to keep water cool, and can help slow the flow and reduce flood risk to communities downstream.
-

4. Nomenclature

BOA – Biodiversity Opportunity Area

HLS – High Level Stewardship

SSSI – Site of Special Scientific Interest

LNR – Local Nature Reserve

LWS – Local Wildlife Site

LGS – Local Geological Site

PAWS – Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site

PRoW – Public Rights of Way

NERC Act s.41 – Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Section 41: Species of Principal Importance in England

BOA Objectives & Targets for the whole of the Tees Valley will be compiled in a summary table.