



## OPEN MOSAIC HABITATS ON PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND

### Introduction

This action plan covers the distinctive plant and animal communities found on previously developed land, which are highly characteristic of urban areas and fall outside many traditional nature conservation strategies. Some previously developed land supports vegetation akin to that of semi-natural habitats such as grassland and woodland, and is included under those action plans, rather than this plan.

Communities found on previously developed land often support components of UK priority habitats, notably species-rich grasslands, and can also support a wide range of species more often associated with other priority habitats, especially calcareous grassland. This habitat type is now recognised as a UK BAP priority habitat: Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land. The UK BAP priority species known to be present in this habitat in Bristol are song thrush, linnet, bullfinch, reed bunting and large garden bumblebee, but there is potential for several other priority invertebrate species to be present.

Large areas of this habitat type have been lost in Bristol in recent decades, but significant examples remain at Lamplighters Marsh, elsewhere in the Avonmouth area and also in the St Phillip's Marsh area. Smaller fragments are present in other locations, such as around the Floating Harbour, but are often threatened by development.

### Current Status

Some sites supporting this habitat type, such as Lamplighter's Marsh, are designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest or form parts of Wildlife Network Sites. Others, especially the smaller sites, often have no designation and may be identified as development sites. The extent, distribution and quality of the resource are less well understood than those of more 'natural' habitats.

These communities usually occur on sites where intensive human activity has produced a highly unusual, artificial substrate that is nutrient-poor and may vary radically, for example in its water retention capacity, over small distances.

Most of these substrates, such as those derived from rubble or ballast, are calcareous, but materials such as furnace clinker can produce an acidic substrate.

Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land are typically characterised by a mosaic of short sparse grassland, tall herb vegetation and scrub. Wetland may also be present. Non-native plant species are often abundant, for instance white stonecrop in short grassland, evening primrose and Oxford ragwort in tall herb vegetation and buddleia and cotoneasters in scrub. Unlike in other habitats they are often highly valued here, for their contribution to local distinctiveness, their visual appeal and their value for invertebrates and other animals. Some of the introduced species are uncommon and have a long recorded history at particular sites, such as moth mullein at Lamplighters Marsh.

The range of native species can be exceptionally diverse and often includes species from disparate habitats. Particularly distinctive species include squirrel-tail and rat's tail fescues, wild carrot, biting stonecrop and common bird's-foot trefoil. Displays of flowering plants on some sites can be very striking. Some sites are very diverse: Long Cross Tip in Lawrence Weston, for example, supports bee, pyramidal and southern marsh orchids. Particularly characteristic of Bristol are old walls, with rich fern populations and non-natives such as bellflowers and ivy-leaved toadflax, as well as natives such as flattened meadow-grass and blue fleabane. The walls and quaysides of the Floating Harbour support some highly characteristic non-natives such as beggarticks and fig, as well as natives from grassland, wetland, woodland and saltmarsh habitats.

Open mosaic habitats can be extremely rich in invertebrates, including butterflies such as common blue, brown argus and marbled white, and a range of rare bees and wasps. Many sites support slow worms, and possibly other reptiles. Scrub and wetland can support large populations of birds such as linnet, goldfinch and whitethroat.

Bristol City Council, with input from the local community, has carried out a comprehensive programme of management works at Lamplighter's Marsh, which has included scrub control and breaking up hard standing to allow vegetation to develop. This has been successful in increasing populations of plants such as moth mullein and viper's bugloss, allowing colonisation by additional scarce plants such as hawkweed oxtongue and improving habitat for scarce invertebrates such as six-belted clearwing moth.

Ruderal plant communities growing in and around the Floating Harbour have been promoted as part of the city centre nature trail. The colonisation of the old railway sidings here by Oxford ragwort also recently featured on the BBC's Nature of Britain series.

There is no comprehensive information on the extent of this habitat types within Bristol.

### Current Threats

- I Lack of knowledge of resource

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- I Pressure from development

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- I Lack of understanding of resource

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- I Lack of management, leading to scrub encroachment (although many sites can maintain their interest for long periods without management)

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- I Pressure to “tidy up” sites

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- I Vandalism and fly tipping

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- I Habitat fragmentation

Objective 1: To increase knowledge of the open mosaic habitat resource

**Target:**

- I To gather information on the extent of good quality open mosaic habitats in Bristol
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Objective 2: To maintain and enhance the open mosaic habitat resource

**Target:**

- I To ensure that development does not result in a net loss in the area of good quality open mosaic habitat
  - I To ensure that, where appropriate, development mitigates for any losses through the creation of good quality open mosaic habitats including creation of extensive green roofs
  - I To ensure that no species currently found in open mosaic habitats are lost from Bristol as a whole
  - I Where possible to ensure that sites supporting good quality open mosaic habitats are in favourable conservation status
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Objective 3: To increase awareness and enjoyment of open mosaic habitats

**Target:**

- I To make planners and other professionals aware of the special interest of open mosaic habitat, the threats it faces and the potential for habitat restoration and creation of new sites
  - I To raise the profile of open mosaic habitat amongst local people
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# CHAPTER 5

## OPEN MOSAIC HABITATS ON PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND

OPEN MOSAIC HABITATS ON PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND ACTIONS	OBJECTIVE	DATE	IMPLEMENTORS
Identify and survey open mosaic habitats of particular significance or importance to biodiversity	1	2009 – 2010	BCC, BRERC
Assess planning applications to ensure that no development has a net adverse impact on good quality open mosaic habitat	2	2008 – 2013	BCC, AWT
Develop specification for extensive green roofs (with open mosaic habitats) and promote through the planning system	2	2008 – 2013	BCC (Bristol Parks, and Sustainability Environment Unit)
Ensure all BCC owned open mosaic habitat SNCl in favourable conservation status by 2015	2	2008 – 2013	BCC
Develop project within Bristol Docks to ensure characteristic species and habitat is maintained and enhanced, and interpreted to the public	2, 3	2008 – 2010	BCC, BLRP
Run one training event every two years for planners and other professionals	3	2008 – 2013	BCC, AWT
Develop programme of awareness raising to include public events/publications	3	2008 – 2013	BCC, AWT

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