REF.	ACTIONS	PARTNERS (lead partners in bold)
25.1	**Introduce habitat enhancement (including de-culverting where appropriate) in line with good practice.**	**ACC / AC / ACP / Local community / SNH / SEPA**
25.1.1	Develop best practice information or demonstration sites to encourage positive management for nature conservation including the de-culverting and re-meandering of watercourses where appropriate.	**ACC / AC / ACP**
25.1.2	Support and advise developers in the appropriate design of developments near urban watercourses.	**Local community / SNH / SEPA**
25.1.3	Encourage local authorities, public bodies and private landowners to draw up agreed, costed and prioritised programmes to enhance the habitats. – River/stream bed re-engineering – Promote the installation of nesting boxes for species such as dipper, pied wagtail etc. near watercourses – Promote the appropriate maintenance of bridges and other structures where bats may roost – Promote the use of SuDS both in new builds and retrospective installations	**ACC / AC / ACP**
25.2	**Use Local Plan policies and WFD Controlled Activities Regulations to avoid new, and reduce existing culverting.**	**ACC / AC / SEPA**
25.2.1	Ensure policies are adequate.	**ACC / AC / SEPA**
25.2.2	Support and advise developers in the appropriate design of developments near Aberdeen's watercourses.	**ACC / AC / SEPA**
25.2.3	Ensure SPP7 and NPPG14 guidance and any other relevant policies and guidance is incorporated, promoted and applied in local planning policy and decision making processes.	**ACC / AC / SEPA**
25.2.4	Identify opportunities for de-culverting throughout Aberdeen, such as during redevelopment works	**AC / ACC**
25.3	**Reduce abuse of water courses e.g. from fly tipping.**	**SEPA** / ACC/ AC
25.3.1	Raise awareness through education initiatives e.g. SEPA Watercourses in the Community guide and land manager workshops.	**SEPA** / ACC/ AC
25.3.2	Promote existing waste disposal services where appropriate to minimise illegal fly tipping e.g. bulky items uplift services.	**SEPA** / ACC/ AC
25.4	**Maintain and enhance foreshore habitat to south of Navigation Channel.**	**ACC / AHB / MCS /** EGCP
25.4.1	Hold regular beach cleanup operations on foreshore habitat to south of Navigation Channel at Aberdeen Harbour.	ACC / AHB / MCS / EGCP

Acronyms are listed in the centre of this Action Card

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urban watercourses 25

HABITATS

OBJECTIVE 25. Manage the habitat of urban watercourses sustainably

BACKGROUND

Urban watercourses provide a range of management challenges. There are often highly conflicting pressures, examples of which include the need for development space, the need for waste disposal, health and safety requirements, flood prevention and recreation.

Historically, these pressures and the resultant management options chosen have often resulted in watercourses which provide minimal opportunities for wildlife. As well as impacting on biodiversity, extensive modifications to watercourses, the use of 'hard' engineering and the desire to hide watercourses also results in the loss of many of the potential social benefits of having more natural stream/river systems in the urban environment.

However, with appropriate management, an urban watercourse can deliver the uses required by the surrounding community encompassing both social and amenity benefits, while also supporting a valuable range of habitats and wildlife.

ISSUES

- Generally the problems with urban watercourses are related to a lack of consideration for water quality and habitat at the design and build phases.
- The loss of bankside habitats has impacted on a number of habitats and species including riparian woodlands, water vole, and Daubentons bat. This may be due to a lack of, or inappropriate management, the removal of the bankside habitats as a result of development or the inappropriate lighting of areas to improve public safety.
- In the past urban watercourses have suffered from use as a means of disposing of industrial and other waste materials and some continue to suffer from illegal fly tipping.
- Areas to the foreshore to the south of the Navigation Channel appear to act as 'traps' for waterborne litter. This has a negative effect on the habitat quality and visual amenity of the area. Beach cleanups occur on a voluntary basis.
- Aberdeen's watercourses are culverted beneath the city for much of their length. Accordingly, they are likely to be designated as Heavily Modified in which case the Directive requires us to allow them to reach their ecological potential i.e. there is an acceptance that they can't be returned to their natural state before the city was built over them but neither can we neglect them. Auchinyell Burn, the Den Burn, its tributary the Gilcomston Burn and the West Tullos Burn. All the burns have their culverts identified as pressures since culverts exclude light and present a completely artificial habitat.

EXISTING / RECENT INITIATIVES

- The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has a statutory remit to monitor the condition of watercourses and a commitment through the Water Framework Directive to improve water quality in rivers and burns where they fall below 'good status'. Urban watercourses unlikely to achieve good status by 2015 have already been identified through the WFD characterisation process.
- Planning policy (SPP7 para 24-25) aims to minimise the culverting of watercourses and where possible open up culverted sections.
- NPPG14 para 56 encourages developers to incorporate watercourses as features of new developments.
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for new developments are promoted through local plan policies e.g. Drainage Assessment – A Guide for Scotland
- Various Local Biodiversity Action Plans for priority habitats and species in the north east are being developed, promoted and implemented including plans for Rivers and Burns, Wet and Riparian Woodland and

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Aberdeenshire Council

Aberdeen City Council

Aberdeen Countryside Project

Aberdeen Harbour Board

East Grampian Coastal Partnership

Local community

Marine Conservation Society

Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Scottish Natural Heritage

Further copies can be downloaded at www.theriverdee.org. For further information contact the Dee Catchment Officer c/o The Macaulay Institute, Craigiebuckler, Aberdeen AB15 8QH Telephone: 01224 498200 email: info@theriverdee.org

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Urban Areas as well as plans for the Water Vole and Daubentons bat.

- River/stream bed re-engineering - installation of boulders, gravels etc to promote salmonid and invertebrate breeding success.
- Urban watercourses unlikely to achieve good status by 2015 have been identified under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) characterisation.
- 3-Dee Vision project: improvements to Elrick Burn (*see Action Card 37*).

ACTIONS REQUIRED

- Introduce habitat enhancement and restoration in line with best practise guidance (including de-culverting where appropriate).
- Use Local Plan Policies and WFD Controlled Activities Regulations to avoid new and reduce existing culverting.
- Promote opportunities to adopt offset mitigation.
- Reduce abuse of watercourse e.g. from fly tipping
- Organise litter removal on a regular basis.
- Promote wildlife-friendly engineering practices e.g. reduce the risk of otters being trapped in excavations.

LEGISLATION

See Action Pack Annex for information sources

- The **Water Environment (Controlled Activities) Scotland Regulations 2005** were introduced through the **Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003**. All discharges to watercourses and engineering works in the vicinity of watercourses are controlled through the Controlled Activities Regulations.
- The **Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004** puts a duty on all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity.
- The **Local Plan** highlights areas which have been designated for development, protected areas where development will note be permitted and areas which may be developed in the future. Within the plans there can be advice on what is acceptable practise in terms of requirements both for built items and greenspace and for environmental protection.
- **NPPG14: Natural Heritage**. National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPGs) provide statements of Government policy on nationally important land use and other planning matters, supported where appropriate by a locational framework. NPPG14 gives guidance on how the Government's policies for the conservation and enhancement of Scotland's natural heritage should be reflected in land use planning. For more information see: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/1999/01/nppg14.
- **SPP7** sets out the Scottish Executive's planning policy on new development and flooding. For more information see http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/02/18880/32952.

GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

See Action Pack Annex for information sources

- Watercourse in the Community: A Guide to Sustainable Watercourse Management in the Urban Environment (SEPA)
- Promoting Nature in Cities and Towns: A practical guide; Malcolm Emery
- Waterways & Wetlands: A Practical Handbook; Elizabeth Agate, Alan Brooks (BTCV)
- Rivers and Wildlife Handbook; a guide to practises which further the conservation of wildlife on rivers (RSPB)
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems - design manual for Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Drainage Assessment – A Guide for Scotland

BENEFITS TO PROTECTED SPECIES

The following specially protected species will benefit from the Actions:

- Otter *Lutra lutra*
- Pipistrelle bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*



Shopping trolley in the River Dee at Garthdee

25 HABITATS

RELATED ACTION CARDS

5. Surface water drainage

6. Public sewerage/ drainage systems

11. Watercourses in Aberdeen City

37. Elrick burn catchment

AC Aberdeenshire Council **ACC** Aberdeen City Council **ACP** Aberdeen Countryside Project **AHB** Aberdeen Harbour Board **EGCP** East Grampian Coastal Partnership **MCS** Marine Conservation Society **SEPA** Scottish Environment Protection Agency **SNH** Scottish Natural Heritage

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