REF.	ACTIONS	PARTNERS (lead partners in bold)
28.1	**Identify otter use of the catchment, areas of potentially good quality habitat, and degraded habitats.**	**SNH** / NESBReC
28.1.1	Assess existing data *(CEH data and report to SNH on value of Dee for otters)*	**SNH** / NESBReC
28.1.2	Where data are not available, undertake surveys using approved methodology to determine locations of key habitats supporting otter holts and couches throughout the catchment.	**SNH** / NESBReC
28.2	**Promote the management of existing riparian woodland areas for the benefit of otters and other species e.g. red squirrel & salmon.**	**FCS** / **SGRPID** / **SNH** / AC / ACC / **SEPA** / **DDSFB** Forestry owners / Land owners / SRPBA / SNW / **CNPA**
28.2.1	Promote best practice for river and riparian management in order to prevent operations that would impact on otter populations adversely.	**FCS** / **SGRPID** / **SNH** / AC / ACC / **SEPA** / **DDSFB** Forestry owners / Land owners / SRPBA / SNW
28.2.2	Distribute and interpret the results of surveys to land managers and raise awareness of relevant guidance.	**SNH** / AC / ACC
28.2.3	Develop new riparian initiative to actively promote to landowners/ farmers.	**SGRPID** / **SNH** / AC / ACC / **SEPA** / **DDSFB** / Land owners / SRPBA
28.2.4	Ensure the application of appropriate assessments into plans or projects that are likely to have a 'significant effect' upon otter populations.	**SNH** / **AC** / **ACC** / **CNPA**
28.2.5	Ensure all new and restocking forestry schemes adhere to Forests and Water guidelines.	**FCS** / Forestry owners / SRPBA / SEPA / SNW / SNH / AC / ACC
28.3	**Seek to improve impoverished bankside habitat.**	**SGRPID** / Forestry owners / Land owners / SEPA / SNW / NELBAP / SNH / AC / ACC
28.3.1	Encourage planting of riparian woodlands and tall bankside vegetation to link existing riparian habitats, while avoiding open habitats of high conservation importance.	**SGRPID** / Forestry owners / Land owners / SEPA / SNW / NELBAP / SNH / AC / ACC
28.3.2	Use agri-environment measures and SFGS to promote the re-creation of wetlands in suitable locations.	**SGRPID** / Forestry owners / Land owners / SEPA / SNW / NELBAP / SNH / AC / ACC
28.4	**Control operations that would have an adverse impact on otter populations.**	**SNH** / **AC** / **ACC** / **CNPA** / DDSFB / SEPA / SGRPID / SW
28.4.1	Ensure the application of appropriate assessments into plans or projects that are likely to have a 'significant effect' upon otter/otter habitat.	**AC** / **ACC** / **CNPA** / SEPA / SGRPID / SW
28.4.2	Ensure *either* effective regulation *or* removal of permitted development rights for operations that could have a significant effect upon otter habitats.	**AC** / **ACC** / **CNPA**
28.4.3	Facilitate projects demonstrating good practice.	DDSFB
28.4.4	Raise awareness of relevant best practice guidance.	AC / ACC / CNPA
28.5	**Assess incidental otter mortality.**	**SNH** / NELBAP
28.5.1	Establish whether there are road death hotspots and investigate whether these can be mitigated by crossings/signage.	SNH / NELBAP
28.5.2	Establish the extent of trap mortality.	SNH / NELBAP
28.5.3	Promote legal use of traps.	SNH / NELBAP

Acronyms are listed in the centre of this Action Card

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otter 28 SPECIES

OBJECTIVE 28. Maintain the population and current distribution of the Eurasian otter *Lutra lutra* throughout the Dee catchment. Safeguard the range and extent of habitat necessary to achieve this.

BACKGROUND

The Eurasian otter *Lutra lutra* is present throughout the River Dee catchment, from the river's mouth at Aberdeen to the upper reaches of its tributaries, including many of the high-altitude lochs. The strength and viability of this population is representative of North East Scotland and is reflected in the inclusion of the otter as a qualifying species in the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designation of the River Dee and for Ballochbuie, Cairngorms, Muir of Dinnet and Glen Tanar.

Otters range very widely across varied terrain, but their territories are centered on clean running and standing water with good stocks of fish (especially eels) and amphibians as their staple diet. Dense, undisturbed vegetation, usually near water, is required for resting couches, and as cover for breeding holts in natural holes, often amongst bankside tree roots. The river system and wider catchment contains extensive areas of suitable habitat for otter feeding, resting and breeding, including watercourses with a high fish biomass, and islands and marshy areas for resting.

ISSUES

- The otter population is not under threat Scotland, but is to be safeguarded by ensuring that its breeding, resting and feeding habitat requirements are maintained and, where possible, enhanced throughout the catchment.
- The main concerns are that private or public bankside engineering and management works can damage holts or destroy vegetation cover used as couches.
- The drainage of ponds and wetlands could reduce the distribution of feeding habitat, and it is possible that the increased opportunity for access to water may cause further disturbance.
- Accordingly, it is necessary to identify key sites for otters so that appropriate safeguards can be effected.

EXISTING / RECENT INTIATIVES

- Any plan or proposal that could have a significant effect upon otters is subject to an appropriate assessment to ensure that there is no adverse impact.
- Existing initiatives to recreate wetlands at Tarland and upstream of Braemar will create additional favourable habitat for otters, as will the planting of riparian woodlands under the Salmon LIFE and 3-Dee Vision projects.
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan implementation is contributing to otter conservation nationally.
- Local actions for otters are being carried out through the relevant North East and Cairngorms Habitat Action Plans.
- The River Dee Trust (RDT) and the Dee District Salmon fishery board (DDSFB) are promoting riparian woodlands for the benefit of salmon and this will also benefit otters.
- The Salmon LIFE project is funding coppicing and marginal planting of broadleaf species, which will again have benefits for otters.
- Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS) Guidelines.
- Rural Development Contracts under the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP).
- Scottish Native Woodlands (SNW) riparian woodlands scheme.



Otter (3-Dee Vision)

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Aberdeenshire Council

Aberdeen City Council

Cairngorms National Park Authority

Dee District Salmon Fishery Board

Forestry Commission Scotland

Forestry Owners

Landowners

North East Local Biodiversity Action Plan

North East Scotland Biological Records Centre

Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Scottish Government Rural Payments & Inspections Directorate

Scottish Natural Heritage

Scottish Native Woodlands

Scottish Rural Property & Business Association

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

deecatchment partnership

ACTIONS REQUIRED

- Ensure that existing information on the locations of key otter habitats are made available to allow proper assessment of any activities that could affect them.
- Extend the survey effort to identify key otter habitats more comprehensively.
- Encourage the re-creation of wetlands and riparian woodlands in suitable locations including agricultural land and commercial forests.
- Promote the creation of wildlife corridors to link existing riparian woodlands.

LEGISLATION

See Action Pack Annex for information sources

- The species is categorised as "vulnerable" in the 2000 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
- Habitats Regulations
- Water Environment and Water Services Act (WEWS) Act

GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

See Action Pack Annex for information sources

- Riparian habitat river bank management guidelines - Aberdeenshire Council (AC) / Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
- Riparian Management leaflet - SEPA
- Managing River Habitats for Fisheries - SEPA
- Best Practice Guidelines for River engineering - AC
- Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme (SFGS) Guidelines - Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS)
- Forests and Water Guidelines (FCS)
- www.jncc.gov.uk
- ww.ukbap.co.uk
- www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/Otter

BENEFITS TO PROTECTED SPECIES

The following specially protected species will benefit from the Actions:

- Otter *Lutra lutra*



Otters (SNH)

28 SPECIES

RELATED ACTION CARDS

1-12. Water Quality Cards

14. Water abstraction

18. Obstacles to fish passage

20. Lowland wetlands

21. Upland wetlands

22. Floodplains

23. Wet and riparian woodland.

24. Bankside grasslands

25. Urban watercourses

26. Atlantic salmon

AC Aberdeenshire Council **ACC** Aberdeen City Council **CNPA** Cairngorms National Park Authority **DDSFB** Dee District Salmon Fishery Board **FCS** Forestry Commission Scotland **NELBAP** North East Local Biodiversity Action Plan **NESBReC** North East Scotland Biological Records Centre **SEPA** Scottish Environment Protection Agency **SGRPID** Scottish Government Rural Payments & Inspections Directorate **SNH** Scottish Natural Heritage **SNW** Scottish Native Woodlands **SRPBA** Scottish rural Property & Business Association

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