



# BIODIVERSITY

# ACTION PLAN

2020-25





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# Introduction

AWE's role in supporting national defence is to manufacture, maintain and develop warheads for Trident, the UK's ultimate deterrent. It also uses its unique skills and expertise in nuclear threat reduction.

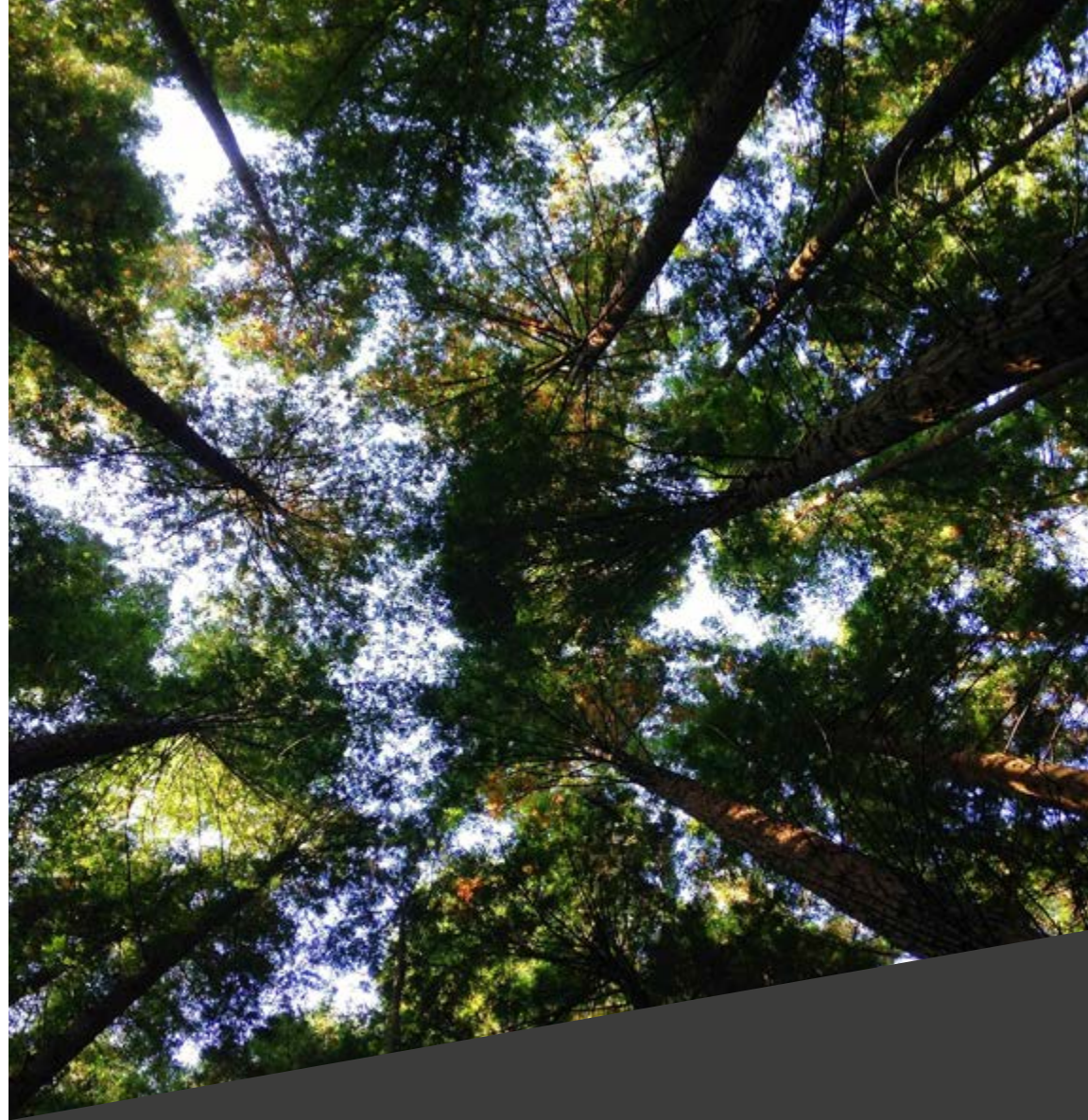
AWE takes its environmental responsibilities very seriously. Its work complies fully with legal and regulatory requirements, including meeting the expectations of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and other stakeholders.

Its Environmental Management System (EMS) is certified to the internationally recognised ISO 14001:2015 standard and supports continuous improvement in environmental sustainability performance.

AWE works to minimise the environmental footprint of its operations, whilst aiming to deliver the highest standards in environmental protection and sustainability.

## **This Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) sets out:**

- Information for all AWE's stakeholders on the biodiversity protection and conservation measures that are in place at AWE
- How biodiversity at AWE is managed currently and plans for the future



# What is 'Biodiversity'?

The term refers to the biological diversity of life forms and species, of genetic variation and in ecosystems. Biodiversity is a crucial component of the environment within which human society exists.

Globally, biodiversity is declining. Species populations are dwindling, pushing many organisms close to extinction, resulting in ecosystems being destroyed, fragmented or disappearing altogether.

Our commitment to protecting and improving our habitats supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 15, Life on Land.





# Biodiversity in the UK

## - Policy background

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) was published in 1994 by the UK Government as a response to the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit Convention on Biological Diversity in Rio de Janeiro.

Although superseded by the UK post-2010 Biodiversity Framework, the UKBAP still forms the basis for the statutory lists of priority species and habitats as required under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

These lists are used to guide decision-makers, such as public bodies in England, including local and regional authorities. It requires them to take the conservation of biodiversity into consideration when carrying out their normal functions.

These national targets are currently interpreted, at a regional and local level, in AWE's area through the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership. There are no current targets for BAP Priority Species in Berkshire

because efforts are being focused on habitats and landscape scale projects. These primarily take the form of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs).

The protection of priority habitats and species is included in the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF). This is reflected by West Berkshire Council in its Local Plan and one of the plan's Core Policies (Policy CS17) covers biodiversity.

Part of the same policy also requires that any developments which require planning permission must maximise opportunities to achieve net gains in biodiversity.



# What is 'Biodiversity Net Gain'?

This is an approach to development that means biodiversity is in a better state after a development than before. It involves avoiding, minimising or compensating (offsetting with new biodiversity schemes such as, for example, tree planting) biodiversity loss as far as possible, whilst achieving measurable net gains that contribute towards both local and strategic biodiversity priorities.

This approach is additional to existing legislation, protection guidance and planning requirements in place relating to habitats, wildlife and ecology.





# Our sites

## Aldermaston

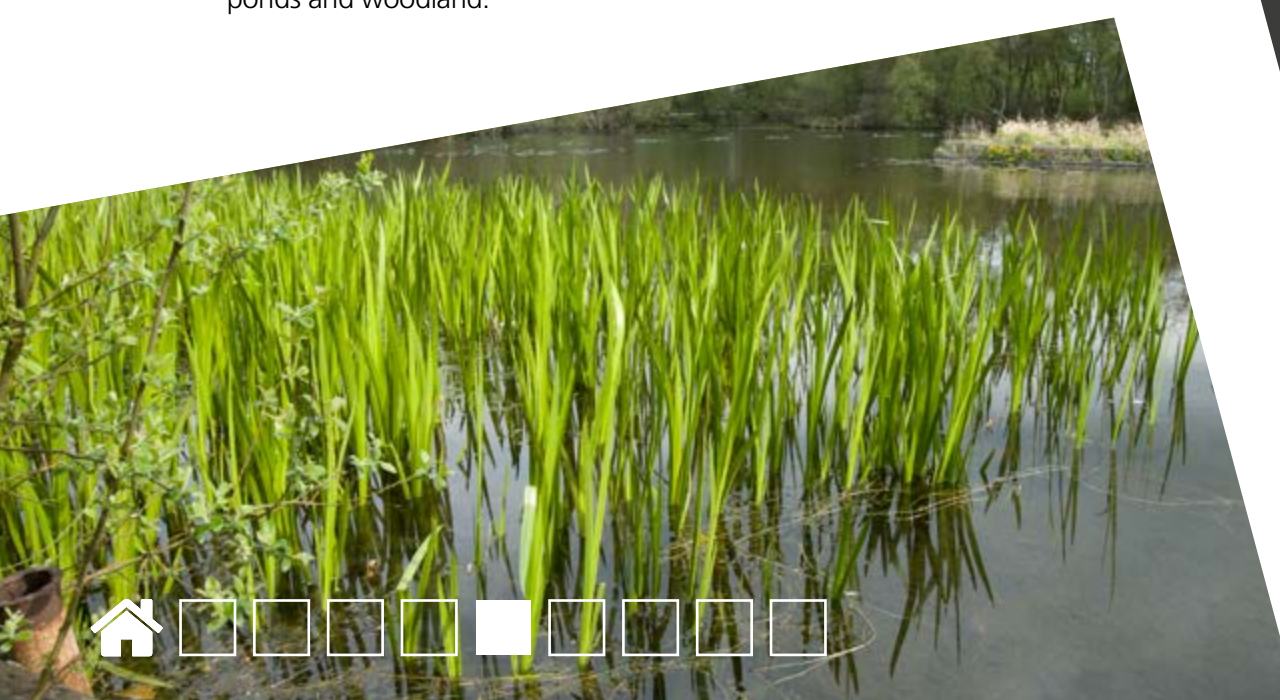
AWE Aldermaston occupies approximately 750 acres. Once a wartime airfield, today AWE Aldermaston is a centre of excellence, housing advanced research, design and manufacturing facilities.

The western half of the site is heavily developed with numerous offices and industrial buildings. The eastern half is entirely different, consisting of the remnants of the former Aldermaston Manor estate. The majority is parkland and wood-pasture, with fine examples of ancient and veteran trees; there are also areas of lowland heath, ponds and woodland.



## Burghfield

A former Royal Ordnance factory, the 225-acre site at AWE Burghfield is used for maintenance and assembly of warheads in service and decommissioning afterwards. The majority of the Burghfield site is industrial in nature, although an extensive tree planting programme, together with significant recent improvements to the Burghfield Brook, have improved its value as a wildlife habitat.





# Key species

AWE is fortunate in that both sites are home to a number of endangered and declining species, many of which benefit from enhanced legal protection

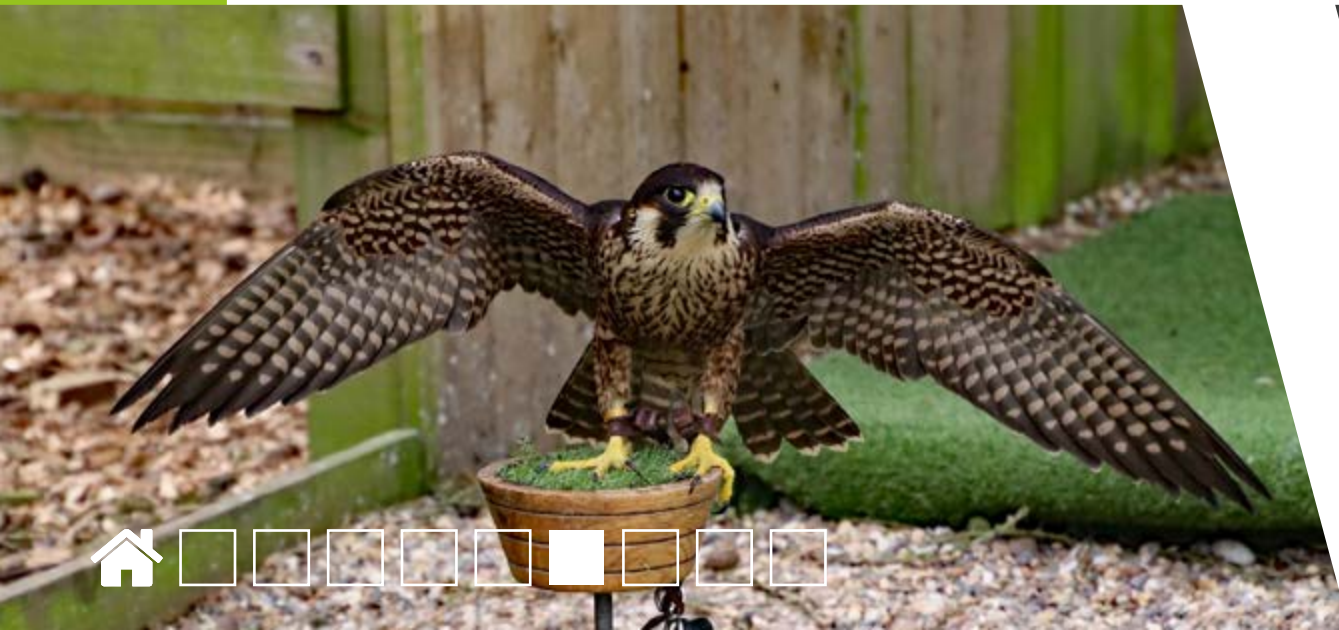
## Peregrine Falcon

Over 30 species of bird utilise our sites, either for nesting, foraging or as passing migrants. Notable species include Peregrine Falcons that like to nest on our taller buildings and Woodlark that use the heath at the eastern end of the Aldermaston site.



## Newts

All three native species of newt (Smooth, Palmate and Great Crested) are present and their numbers are monitored periodically.







## Mammals

There is an active badger sett within our fence-line and recently otters have been sighted along the boundaries. At least three species of bat roost in our buildings, including Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Brown Long-Eared bats.



## Reptiles

Common Lizard, Grass Snake, Adder and Slow-worm are found across the estate.

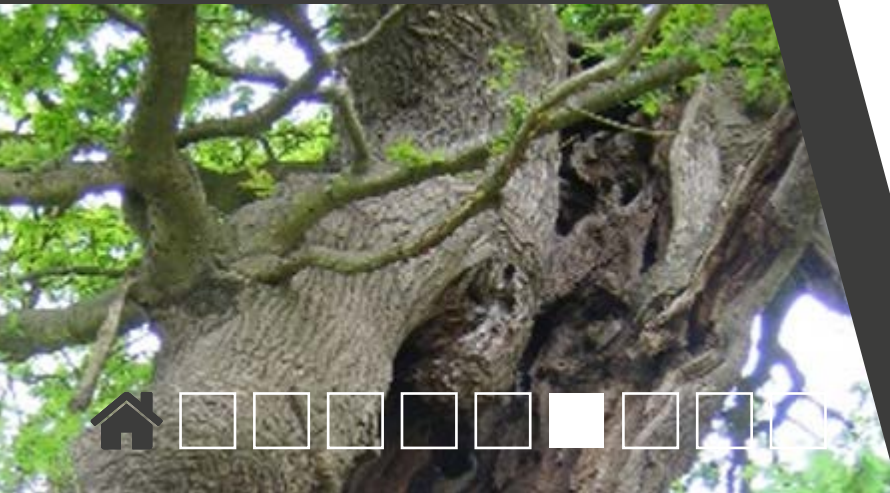
## Trees

The Aldermaston site includes a considerable remnant of the wood pasture that once made up the estate around Aldermaston Manor. One of the principal features of this habitat is the number of ancient and veteran trees, some of which are at least 400 years old.

# Key Species

## Flora

Because the sites have never been subject to modern agricultural practices the diversity of flora and fungi can be quite high.





# How biodiversity is managed at AWE

Ensuring that its operations are compliant with all relevant legislation and guidance is a key requirement of AWE's Environmental Management System (EMS). This is independently certified to meet the international ISO 14001 standard. Wildlife is recognised as one of the primary aspects which could be impacted by AWE's operations and is considered as part of every activity that AWE undertakes. AWE's Environmental Sustainability Plan commits the organisation to improving our environmental performance across a number of areas. For biodiversity we pledge to "Positively manage AWE's natural and cultural heritage to maximise the benefit for current and future generations".

Prior to any development work on site, ecological surveys are undertaken. Following industry best-practice guidelines the surveys identify appropriate protection, mitigation and compensation measures, which are then monitored by AWE's experienced team of environmental specialists.

Opportunities to enhance biodiversity where possible are also identified, for example, through exceeding a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain on large construction projects; conserving existing high value on-site habitats or creating wildlife gardens at local schools.

## AWE commits to:

**"Positively manage AWE's natural and cultural heritage to maximise the benefit for current and future generations"**





# Case Studies

## Peregrine Falcon

Peregrine Falcons were known to nest on a redundant building scheduled for demolition. In order to compensate for the loss of a potential nest site and to reduce risk to the project, artificial nest boxes were installed on several other suitable buildings on the estate. The hope is that the Peregrines will take up residence in one of the new boxes and that we'll retain this rare and interesting species on site. The Peregrines and the new nest boxes will continue to be monitored throughout the project.



## 2019 Sanctuary Awards

The Flood Alleviation Project Team was delighted to be recognised as runner-up in the 'Sustainability Project' category at the recent Ministry of Defence Sanctuary Awards for flood alleviation work at Burghfield Brook.

The team was a collaboration between AWE's Capital Projects and Environment teams, supported by external contractors. The award recognised both the challenges overcome in the construction and the longer-term benefits it would deliver for the environment.





# House Martin Nest Boxes

The recent refurbishment of a small building resulted in the loss of the previous year's House Martin nests. To remedy this, the project team installed several artificial nests in order to encourage the birds to return. And they did!



# Bee Orchid turf relocation

In advance of a proposed development on-site, an ecological survey identified the presence of Bee Orchids. In order to mitigate any impact on this species, approximately 250m<sup>2</sup> of orchid-rich turf was relocated to another suitable area on the estate.





# Planned objectives and actions

Objectives	Actions
<p><b>All projects will achieve 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Use DEFRA BNG Tool to inform landscaping schemes for projects requiring planning permission</li> <li>■ Develop simpler BNG tool for smaller construction and refurbishment projects</li> </ul>
<p><b>Collaborate with our neighbours and stakeholders to achieve wider landscape scale gains for biodiversity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ensure any habitats that are created are in line with the priority habitats identified for Berkshire</li> <li>■ Engage with West Berkshire Council, the Local Nature Partnership and Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust assess where AWE can contribute to wider landscape goals</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aim to conserve and, where possible enhance, the habitats present within our site boundaries</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Where the felling of trees is unavoidable, ensure these are replaced with native broad-leaved species at a minimum ratio of 3:1</li> <li>■ Continue to monitor grassed areas to determine if they can be mown less frequently to allow wildflowers to grow benefiting insects and providing visual enhancement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aim to increase our knowledge of the habitats and species present on our estate and share this information where appropriate</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Look to undertake surveys targeted at specific species groups and habitats to better understand our sites' biodiversity</li> <li>■ Share survey data with conservation organisations in order to improve wider understanding regarding the presence and abundance of key habitats and species</li> </ul>
<p><b>Seek to ensure that AWE's performance on managing biodiversity is externally verified</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ensure that the elements of the Environmental Management System relating to the management of biodiversity continue to meet ISO14001</li> <li>■ Aim to achieve the Wildlife Trust's Biodiversity Benchmark</li> </ul>





## **Biodiversity Action Plan 2020**

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