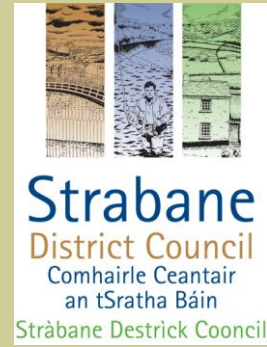


Strabane District Council Biodiversity Awareness Survey Baseline Report 2011



October 2011



<http://www.strabanedc.com/>

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Glossary

FBP	Foyle Biodiversity Partnership
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
NIBG	Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

Acknowledgements

The Foyle Biodiversity Partnership for Derry City Council and Strabane District Council, wish to express their gratitude to Lisa McMenamin and Christine Doherty for conducting the biodiversity awareness surveys. We would like to thank the one hundred respondents who gave their time to complete the questionnaires. Also, we would like to acknowledge Northern Ireland Environment Agency, who provided the funding to conduct this survey through their Natural Heritage Grants Programme.

1.0 Executive Summary

The Biodiversity Awareness Survey was endorsed by Strabane District Council, on behalf of the Foyle Biodiversity Partnership (FBP), to support the duty to conserve biodiversity, under the Wildlife and Natural Environment (NI) Act 2011. It establishes a baseline of the district's awareness, knowledge and activity associated with biodiversity.

This survey results shows that:

- 30% of respondents were aware of the term 'biodiversity'. However, only 21% of respondents could define the term. This is significantly lower than the regional target of 33%, set by the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group (NIBG, 2002).
- 26% of respondents identified that food supply, flood control, water quality, health and education were all related to biodiversity.
- 25% of respondents identified a local priority species, with 16% selecting red squirrels and 5% proposing bats. Invasive species awareness was very low (16%), with only two invasive species were recognised (grey squirrels and Japanese knotweed).
- 49% of respondents were able to relate biodiversity to their quality of life and 57% were concerned about the decline of biodiversity in Northern Ireland. Many respondents demonstrated a willingness and enthusiasm to take actions that will benefit biodiversity (taking litter home (98%), encouraging wildlife (84%) and buying local produce (83%)).
- The level of awareness of media communications relating to biodiversity is significant (48%), with TV and newspapers providing the most effective form of communication for raising awareness and understanding.
- The majority of respondents (90%) expressed the need for a green space / park. Only two areas were identified as good areas for wildlife in the district (Sperrins AONB and Killeter Forest).

It is anticipated that with a strong publicity campaign, improved park signage, events and workshops, Strabane District Council can reach a wider portion of the general public in relation to biodiversity issues.

2.0 Introduction

The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy highlighted the need to raise biodiversity awareness, knowledge and activity amongst the general public, facilitated by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) process (Annett and Spouncer, 2004). This Biodiversity Awareness Survey was endorsed by Strabane District Council. It will quantitatively measure the biodiversity awareness, knowledge and activity in the Strabane District Council area.

The LBAP process originated from the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, which introduced the term Biological Diversity or Biodiversity (the variety of life on earth). Over 150 countries, including the UK, signed the Convention on Biological Diversity. This convention commits these countries to safeguarding all biodiversity on earth for future generations, by halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity, which aims to raise awareness and the importance of biodiversity.

In order to fulfil this commitment, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan was launched in 1994. Regional strategies were formulated from the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. In 2002, Northern Ireland's Biodiversity Strategy was adopted and is overseen by the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group (NIBG). This strategy highlighted the need to raise biodiversity awareness, knowledge and activity amongst the general public, facilitated by the LBAP process (NIBG, 2002). LBAPs address the local threats to wildlife and the opportunities to protect and enhance the natural environment in the district. It helps to co-ordinate the work being undertaken by all responsible, interested organisations and provides a mechanism for local people to become involved in projects. Based on these recommendations and legislation, Strabane District Council is currently conducting a biodiversity audit and developing a LBAP for the district.

In 2007 the Derry and District Biodiversity Partnership was formed by Derry City Council, to co-ordinate the work being undertaken in the district by government departments, statutory and voluntary organisations. In 2010 Derry City Council and Strabane District Council secured funding to extend this process to the Strabane district. Therefore, in 2011 the group changed its name to Foyle Biodiversity Partnership, to reflect the wider geographical area covered.

Under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, introduces a duty for all local authorities to conserve biodiversity. 'It is the duty of every *public* body, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.'

This duty also requires public bodies, to have regard to any government designated biodiversity strategies. In particular, the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy highlighted the need to raise biodiversity awareness, knowledge and activity amongst the general public, facilitated by the LBAP process (NIBG, 2002). The Biodiversity Awareness Survey findings and

recommendations will be used to inform the FBP and help to identify and develop biodiversity actions. This survey will build upon the baseline of the awareness, knowledge and activity, within the general public in the Strabane District Council area.

3.0 Research Aim

This survey aims to quantitatively measure the biodiversity awareness, knowledge and activities of the residents within the Strabane District Council area.

3.1 Objectives

This survey has the following objectives:

- To identify the gender, age group and demography of the respondents;
- To determine the respondents' awareness and understanding of the term 'biodiversity';
- To rate the importance of biodiversity to respondents' daily lives, their concern for the loss and threats to biodiversity;
- To establish respondents' awareness of communications regarding biodiversity;
- To ascertain if there is a need for a park/green space in the area;
- To determine what actions respondents were willing to take, to enhance biodiversity within the Strabane District Council area;
- To identify which factors respondents thought were related to biodiversity;
- To ascertain respondents' attitudes towards agricultural practices on biodiversity; and
- To determine if respondents could identify priority and invasive species.

4.0 Methodology

A representative sample size of one hundred respondents from the Strabane District Council area was targeted. In order to obtain a representative sample, three locations were selected (Strabane, Castledearg & Donemana), to obtain a wider sample of the general public, to avoid bias towards any particular social, cultural or age group, given the nature of Strabane District Council. Only residents within the Strabane District Council area were included in the survey.

As a general public survey, the strata did not have predetermined sample sizes. The survey data shows that of the 100 people surveyed, 51% of respondents were males and 49% females. A higher number of urban (63%) respondents were surveyed. This is an accurate representation of the population within the Strabane District Council area, based upon the 2001 census data.

The surveys were conducted in Castledearg on Thursday 16th June 2011, Donemana on Friday 30th June 2011 and Strabane on Thursday 8th July 2011. The surveys involved face-to-face interviews with members of the public. Each interview involved completing a questionnaire. Each question was read out verbally and the respondents' answers were recorded. The questionnaire is included in Appendix 1.

Completed questionnaires of the respondents were divided into categories according to gender, age group and demography. These divisions formed twelve distinct sub-groups, for example, (male, 16-25 year olds and from an urban area).

A series of recommendations are outlined to increase the public's awareness and understanding of biodiversity. In line with the approach adopted for the Derry City Council baseline Biodiversity Awareness Survey, the survey will be repeated in 2013, to measure the progress in raising biodiversity awareness, understanding and action levels in the Strabane District Council area.

5.0 Results

5.1 Composition of respondents

Face-to-face surveys were conducted with a sample size of one hundred respondents in June and July 2011. The respondents were classified according to age group (16 - 25, 26 - 40 and 40+ year olds), 20% were 16-25 year olds, 41% were 26 - 40 year olds and 39% were over 40 years old. 49% of the respondents were female and 51% were male. The respondents were also sub-divided according to their residence (rural or urban areas). Of the respondents, 37% live in rural areas (Castlederg and Donemana), whilst 63% live in urban areas (Strabane). The age, gender and residency composition of the respondents are illustrated in Figure 1.

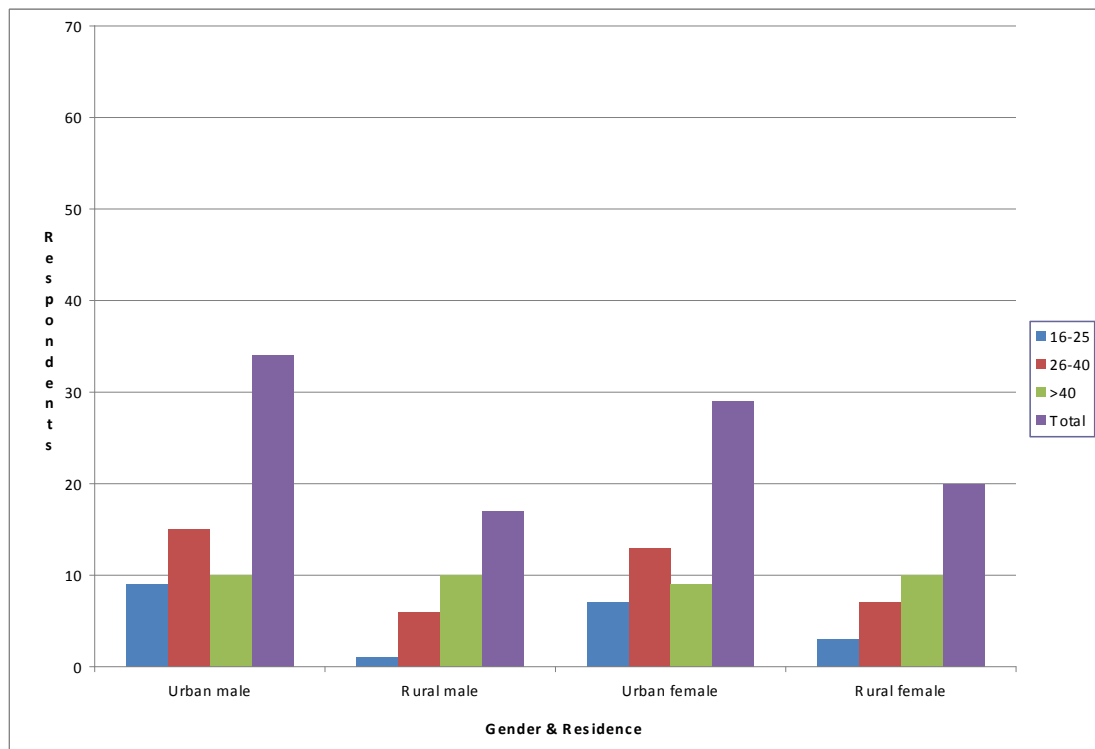


Figure 1 Age, gender and residence of respondents.

5.2 Terminology

Of the respondents, 30% were aware of the term 'biodiversity'. Of these respondents, a significantly higher number of urban respondents (63%) were aware of the term, in comparison to 37% of the rural respondents. The survey results show that a higher number of male respondents (70%) were aware of the term, in comparison to female respondents (30%). Respondents between the ages of 26-40 had a higher awareness of the term biodiversity (53%), in comparison to the 16-25 age group (20%) and the 40+ age group (27%).

5.3 Understanding

Of the respondents, 21% could explain the term 'biodiversity' in their own words. The most common responses provided were 'wildlife', 'the variety of plants & animals' and 'biological diversity'. Of these respondents, a higher percentage of urban respondents (81%) understood the term, in comparison with 19% of the rural respondents. A higher number of male respondents (76%) understood the term, in comparison to 24% of female respondents. Respondents aged 26-40 showed a higher understanding of the term (57%), in comparison to other stratified groups. Figure 2 shows the awareness and understanding of the term 'biodiversity'.

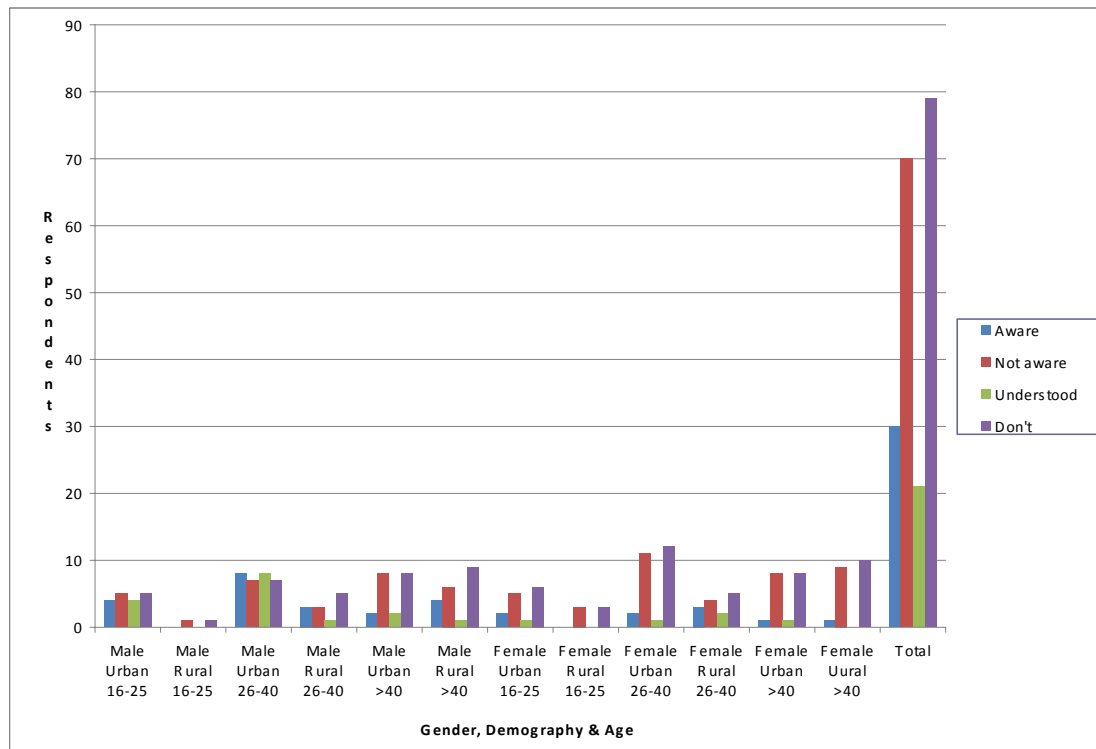


Figure 2 Awareness and understanding of the term 'biodiversity'.

5.4 Importance to daily life

Overall, 49% of the respondents indicated that biodiversity was important in their daily life, with only 14% stating it was not important or irrelevant (Figure 3). Of the 49% of respondents who indicated that biodiversity was important in their daily life, a higher percentage of rural respondents (62%) valued biodiversity, compared to 41% of the urban respondents. Respondents aged over 25 rated the importance of biodiversity to their daily life compared with only one of the respondents under the age of 25.

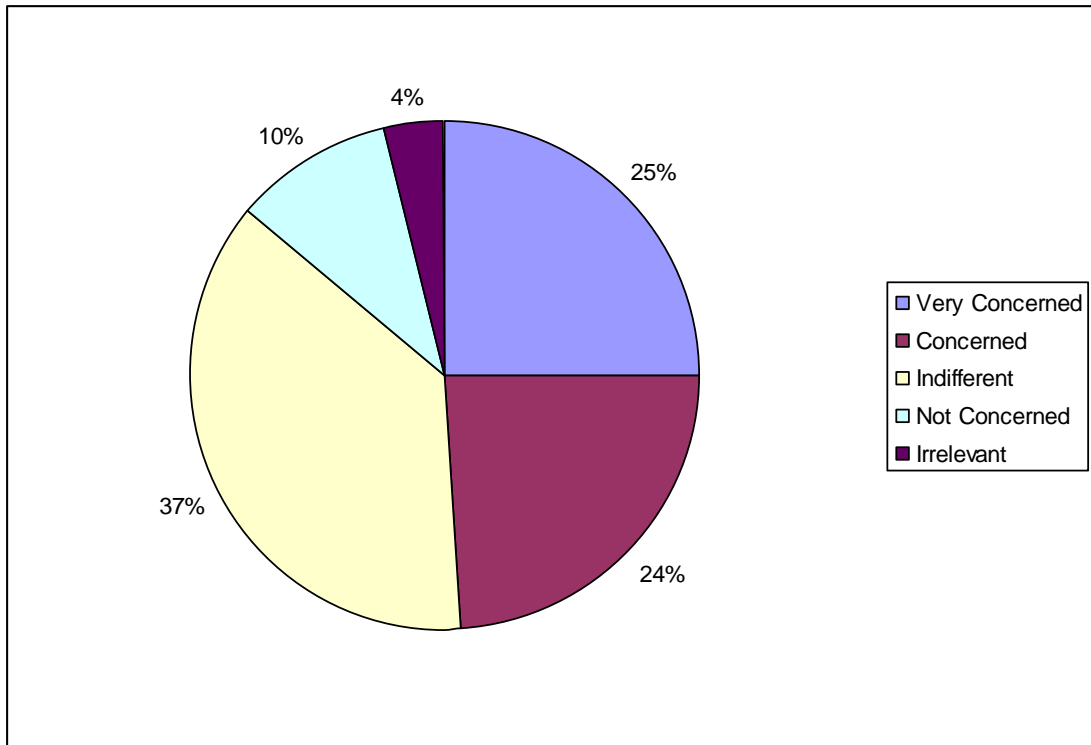


Figure 3 Importance of biodiversity to respondents' daily lives.

5.5 Decline in biodiversity within Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy identified an alarming decline in biodiversity within Northern Ireland (Annett and Spouncer, 2004). A total of 57% of respondents expressed their concern for the decline of biodiversity, (Figure 4). A higher percentage of rural respondents (65%) were concerned, in comparison with urban respondents (52%). Respondents aged over 40 expressed the highest level of concern with a decline in biodiversity (72%), compared with other age groups.

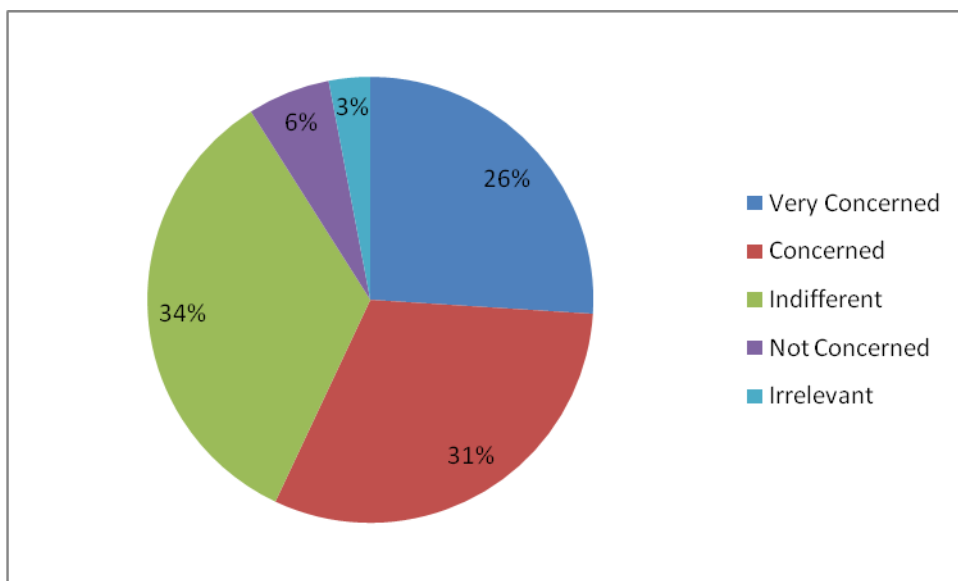


Figure 4 Concern for a decline in biodiversity within Northern Ireland.

5.6 Threats to biodiversity

Respondents' views in relation to threats to biodiversity varied, to include loss of habitat, invasive species, climate change and pollution. Of these concerns, pollution (81%) and climate change (74%) ranked as the top two main threats to biodiversity (Figure 5).

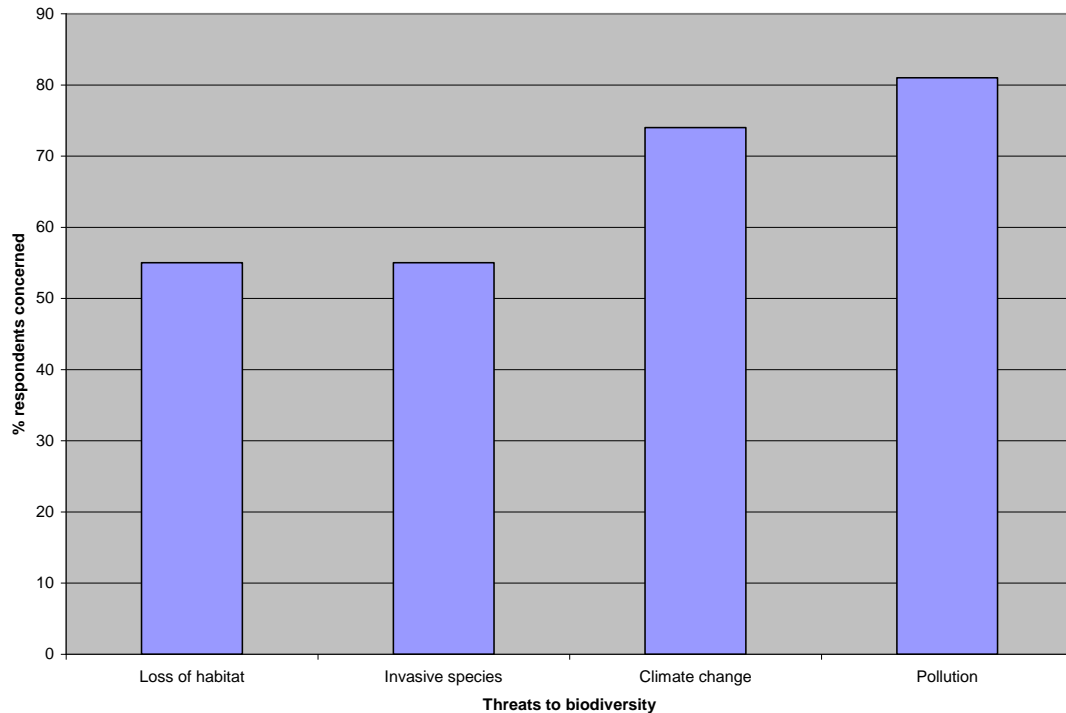


Figure 5 Concern for threats to biodiversity.

5.7 Awareness of biodiversity communications

Of the respondents, 48% were aware of media communications in relation to biodiversity awareness. The most effective form of communication was television programmes (40%), with 23% of respondents informed by newspapers. Posters, leaflets, radio, internet and email were effective in communicating biodiversity information to <5% of respondents. The age of the respondents was directly related to awareness, with 35% of 16-25 year olds surveyed were aware of communications, increasing to 49% of all 26 to 40 year olds questioned and peaking at 54% for over 40 year olds. Females were more aware of communications (55%), in comparison to 41% of male respondents (Figure 6).

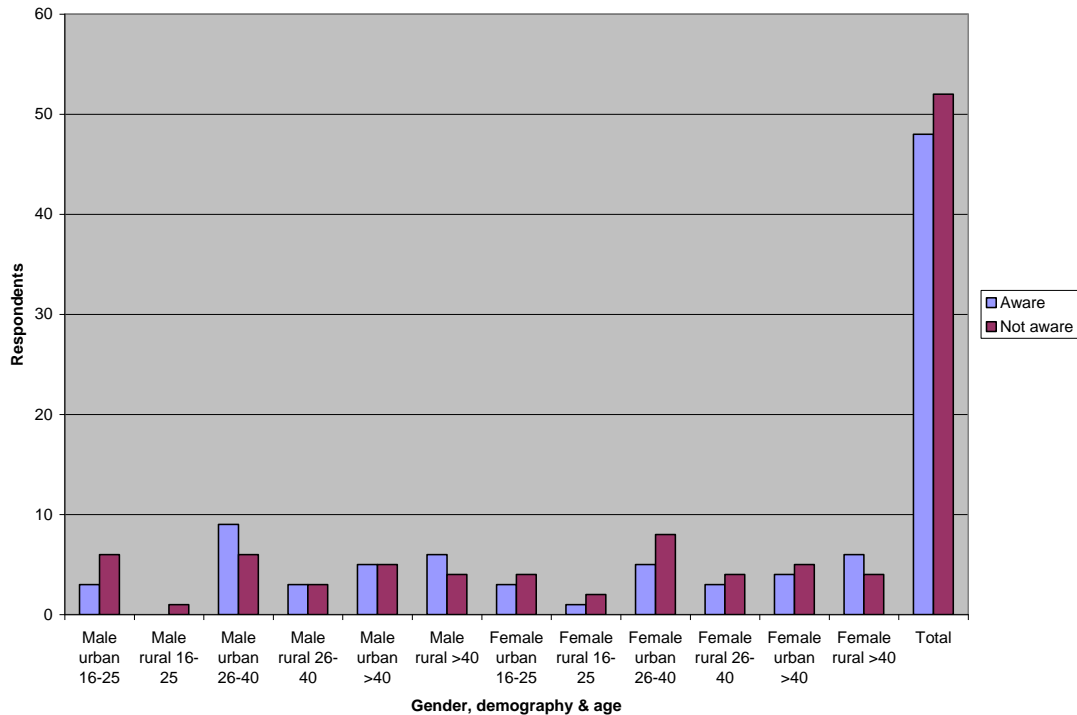


Figure 6 Awareness of communications in relation to biodiversity.

5.8 Green spaces for biodiversity

Respondents were asked if there was a need for additional green space within the district. The majority of respondents (90%) expressed the need for a green space or park in the Strabane District Council area.

5.9 Key Areas for Wildlife

Respondents were asked to identify a habitat or location that would be ideal for wildlife. Two thirds of respondents were able to identify an area / habitat. The Sperrins AONB was the most popular area with 13%, followed by Killeter with 9%.

5.10 Actions for biodiversity

Respondents were asked to list actions they take to help protect local biodiversity. The survey results showed that:

- 98% of respondents take their litter home with them;
- 84% encourage wildlife into their gardens;
- 83% buy locally farmed produce;
- 48% plant native trees; and
- 46% buy peat free products.

5.11 Biodiversity factors

Respondents were asked if they were aware that food supply, flood control, water quality, health and education were all related to biodiversity. The results illustrate that 26% of respondents were aware that all these factors were related to biodiversity. A total of 65% of respondents were surprised that these five factors were related to biodiversity, with the majority of these respondents linking biodiversity to water quality (46%), health (37%) and food supply (36%).

5.12 Agricultural practices

Respondents were asked whether they associated agricultural practices with positive or negative impacts on land, water and air. The majority of respondents associated agricultural practices with positive impacts on land, water and air (Figure 7).

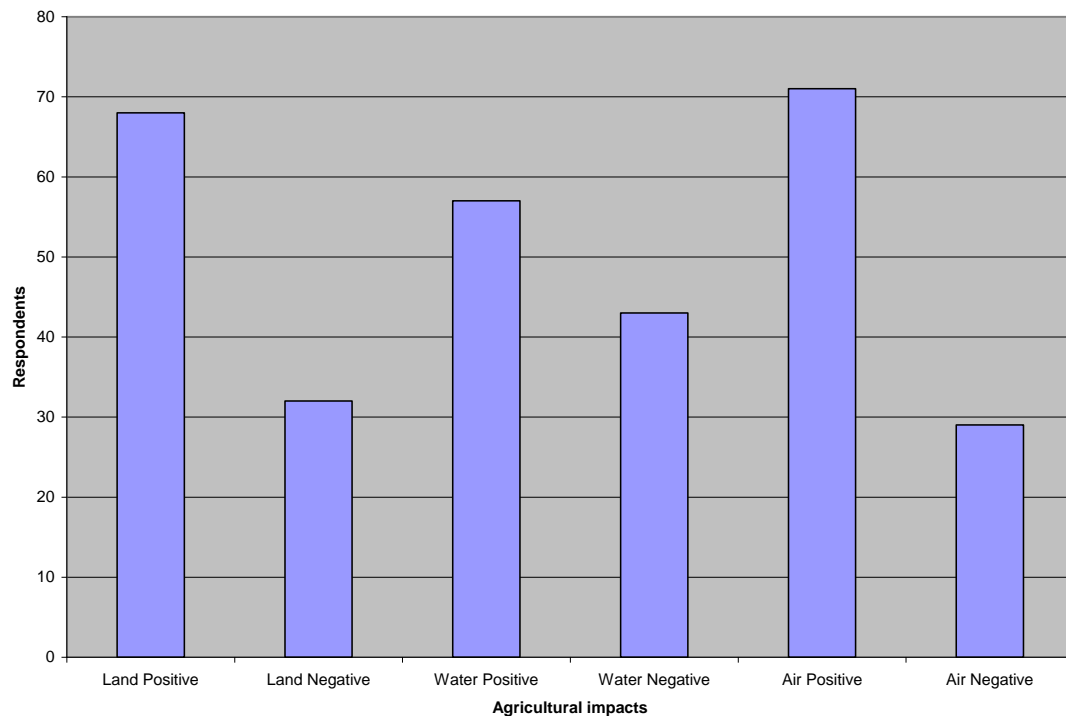


Figure 7 The impact of agricultural practices on land, water and air.

5.13 Species and habitat conservation priorities

The majority of respondents (75%) were unaware of Northern Ireland priority species and none of the respondents surveyed were able to provide an example of a Northern Ireland priority habitat. Figure 8 illustrates that 16% of respondents identified red squirrel, 5% recognised bats and birds, while 4% associated butterflies and 1% salmon as a priority species.

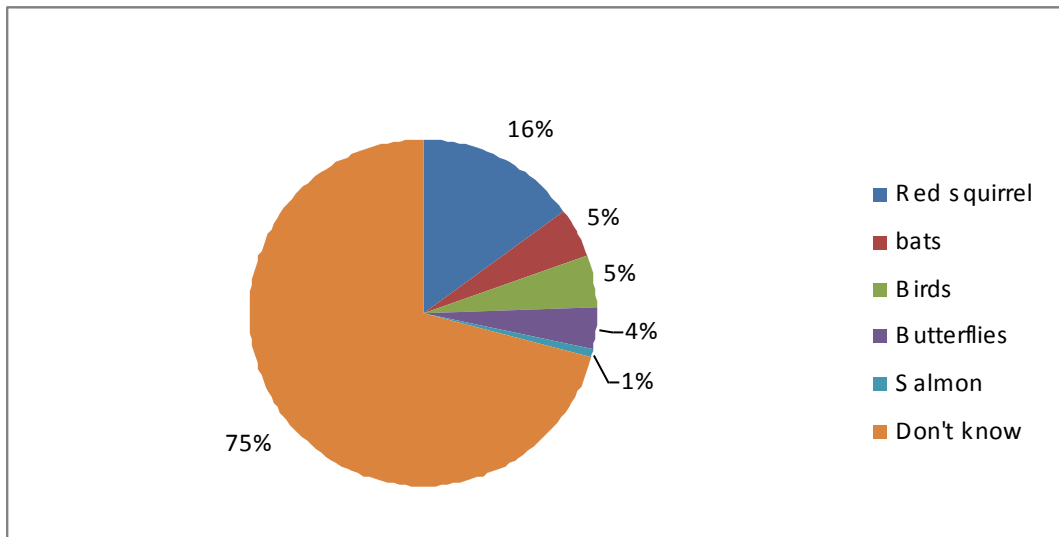


Figure 8 Awareness of local priority species.

5.14 Invasive species

Respondents were asked if they were aware of an invasive alien species. Of the respondents, 16% were aware of an invasive species. Grey squirrels (14%) and Japanese knotweed (7%) were the most prevalent.

6.0 Comparisons with previous studies

Over the past 19 years, since the term 'biodiversity' was first introduced at the Rio Summit in 1992, there has been several surveys associated with the awareness of biodiversity. This section compares the findings of this study, with the following surveys, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's annual '*Continuous Household Survey*' (2003 to 2010) and Derry City Council's baseline '*Biodiversity Awareness Survey 2008*' (FWAG, 2008).

6.1 Terminology

This baseline Biodiversity Awareness Survey found that 30% of respondents in the Strabane District Council area were aware of the term 'biodiversity', in comparison to 34% of respondents in the Derry City Council baseline '*Biodiversity Awareness Survey*' in 2008 (FWAG, 2008). The results for the Strabane District Council area are below the regional average level of awareness (38%), which was recorded in Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency's '*Continuous Household Survey*' in 2009/10. The Continuous Household Survey has been conducted on an annual basis from 2003 to present. The surveys show that in 2003, 28% of respondents in Northern Ireland were aware of the term 'biodiversity'. The level of awareness gradually increased to 38% in 2010 (NIRSA, 2010). The lower level of awareness within the Strabane District Council area may be due to a lack of awareness campaigns in the district. In order to increase the level of awareness within the district, a publicity campaign in 2012 should target key messages to increase awareness and understanding of the term biodiversity.

6.2 Understanding

Over one fifth (21%) of respondents in Strabane District Council were able to define the term 'biodiversity', in comparison to 12% of respondents in Derry City Council in 2008 (FWAG, 2008). This highlights that the majority of the general public in Strabane district have a very limited understanding of biodiversity, although a significantly higher level of understanding than respondents in Derry City Council in 2008. The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy recommends an awareness and understanding target level of one third for the general public (Annett and Spouncer, 2004). Therefore, the Strabane District Council area needs to strive to meet the regional target set by the NI Biodiversity Strategy and to comply with the Wildlife and Natural Environment (NI) Act 2011.

6.3 Importance to daily life

The results show that less than half of the respondents in Strabane District Council (49%) indicated that biodiversity was important in their daily life, in comparison to 76% in the Derry City Council area in 2008 (FWAG, 2008). This may be related to the lack of awareness of and understanding of the term

'biodiversity'. However, greater biodiversity awareness is needed to increase the number of people regarding biodiversity as important in their daily life.

6.4 Decline in biodiversity within Northern Ireland

The results show that 57% of respondents in the Strabane District Council area expressed concern regarding the decline of biodiversity within Northern Ireland. The Continuous Household Survey shows that 76% of respondents are concerned with the decline in biodiversity (NISRA, 2010), which is significantly greater than the results of this study. This may be attributed to the lack of awareness and understanding of the term 'biodiversity' in the Strabane District Council area.

6.5 Threats to biodiversity

The findings highlight that the majority of respondents are mainly concerned with pollution (95%) and climate change (88%), as threats to biodiversity. This is similar to the findings within Derry City Council in 2008 (FWAG, 2008) and the Continuous Household Survey (NISRA, 2010).

6.6 Awareness of biodiversity communications

The survey indicates that 48% of respondents were aware of media communications in relation to biodiversity. This is significantly higher than the baseline survey within the Derry City Council in 2008 (30.5%). The most common form of media communication was television (40%), compared to 20% in Derry City Council in 2008 (FWAG, 2008). The most effective form of local media communication was national (23%) and local newspapers (11%). The recent increase in television programmes, to include the BBC's Spring Watch and Autumn Watch has increased the public's interest in biodiversity. However, less than 5% of respondents were informed by posters, leaflets, radio, internet and email. This highlights the need for a co-ordinated publicity campaign in 2012, which uses less traditional forms of media.

6.7 Green Spaces for Biodiversity

The majority of respondents (90%) stated that there was a definite need for a park or green space in the Strabane District Council area. This may be due to the fact there are no significant public green spaces in the urban Strabane area, where the majority of the respondents lived.

6.8 Key Areas for Wildlife

A total of 47% of respondents were able to give an example of a key area for wildlife within the Strabane District Council area, which is similar to the baseline for Derry City Council in 2008 (44%) (FWAG, 2008).

6.9 Actions for biodiversity

The results show that the three main actions that respondents take to help protect biodiversity in the Strabane District Council area are take litter home (98%), encourage wildlife in their garden (84%) and buy locally farmed produce (83%). In comparison only 62% of respondents in the Derry City Council area in 2008 took action to protect biodiversity (FWAG, 2008). The higher result for the Strabane District Council area may be due to a larger number of respondents living in a rural area, where they have more land to encourage wildlife and do not want to spoil green spaces with litter. Also, residing close to farms, in association with the recent trend in 'growing your own' vegetables and farmer markets, may be attributed to the high activity associated with purchasing locally farmed products.

6.10 Biodiversity factors

The results show that 26% of respondents in the Strabane District Council area were aware that all of the following factors: food supply, flood control, water quality, health and education were related to biodiversity. Strabane District Council area has a lower awareness level than Derry (33%) (FWAG, 2008), which may be due to the lack of publicity campaigns highlighting issues regarding biodiversity.

6.11 Agricultural biodiversity

The survey highlights that the majority of respondents associated agricultural practices with positive impacts on biodiversity, with 71% arguing a positive effect on the air, 68% stating it had a positive effect on land and 57% associated it with a positive effect on water. This reflects a similarity in respondents' views on agricultural practices since 2008 in Derry, when most of the respondents indicated that agricultural practices had a positive impact on land and air, but a negative impact on water (FWAG, 2008).

6.12 Species and habitat conservation priorities

The majority of respondents (75%) were unaware of a local priority species or habitat. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Habitat Action Plan or Species Action Plans will not be developed and implemented in the Strabane District Council area until 2012. In preparation for the introduction of the Wildlife and Natural Environment (NI) Act 2011, a part-time Biodiversity Officer was appointed for the district in February 2011, to conduct a biodiversity audit of the area, to produce an LBAP, Habitat Action Plans and Species Action Plans. Following the publication and implementation of the LBAP, awareness should increase.

6.13 Invasive species

The results show a severe lack of awareness of invasive species, with only 16% of respondents able to identify an invasive species, compared to 24% in the Derry City Council baseline survey (FWAG, 2008). The lack of awareness may be attributed to a lack of targeted press releases, radio interviews and workshops. Following the implementation of the LBAP, Habitat Action Plans and Species Action Plans, awareness should increase.

7.0 Conclusions

- There is a lack of awareness (30%) and understanding (21%) of the term 'biodiversity'. Strabane District Council should strive to meet the regional one-third target set by the NI Biodiversity Strategy (NIBG, 2002).
- Of the respondents, 90% felt there was a need for a public green space or park in their area. Strabane District Council should raise awareness of the public green spaces available within the district and explore the option of creating further green spaces in the area.
- A total of 49% of respondents indicated that biodiversity was important in their daily life. However, only 26% were aware that food supply, flood control, water quality, health and education were related to biodiversity. Strabane District Council should ensure that any publicity campaign includes these key messages to build knowledge and understanding of biodiversity issues.
- The majority of respondents (57%) expressed concern for the decline in biodiversity in Northern Ireland. The two major concerns of the respondents were pollution and climate change. Strabane District Council should address these issues during the development of the LBAP.
- A total of 48% of respondents were aware of media communications relating to biodiversity, with TV being the most effective form of communication (40%). As less than half of respondents were aware of biodiversity communications, it is clear that there is a need for greater use of the media including TV, newspapers, posters, leaflets and the internet to highlight biodiversity issues.
- There is a high level of action for biodiversity within the Strabane District Council area. The three main actions that respondents take to help protect biodiversity are take their litter home (98%), 84% encourage wildlife in their garden and 83% buy locally farmed produce.
- The majority of respondents associated farmers with a positive impact on land, air and water. This positive image could be maintained by the use of the local media, to highlight positive news stories involving farmers and the benefits for local biodiversity.
- Only 25% of respondents were aware of a local priority species and only 16% could identify an invasive species. The lack of awareness and understanding needs to be addressed through a co-ordinated media campaign.

8.0 Recommendations

8.1 Audience development

- Define the term 'biodiversity' in all forms of communications, to further increase the level of awareness and understanding.
- Upload a biodiversity page on Strabane District Council's website and produce the LBAP, Habitat and Species Action Plans by July 2012.
- Produce press releases linked to the LBAP on a monthly basis and host at least six events / annum to raise awareness of planting native species, peat free products, invasive species, priority habitats and species.
- Increase awareness of media communications and the number of events in rural areas, to reach a wider portion of the general public.
- Increase awareness of media communications among the under 25 year olds, by examining alternative forms of communications, for example, link media campaigns to the school curriculum, Eco Schools and include a 'Facebook' page for biodiversity initiatives and events.
- Increase awareness of local green spaces through the creation of leaflets for local areas and host events at parks with low awareness levels.

8.2 Biodiversity Awareness Survey

A biodiversity awareness survey should be conducted in 2013, to measure changes in awareness, understanding and activity since the baseline survey in 2011.

9.0 References

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Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group. (2002). *Biodiversity Strategy for Northern Ireland*. HMSO.

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. (2010). *Continuous Household Survey*. <http://www.csu.nisra.gov.uk/survey.asp136.htm>

Appendix 1

Biodiversity Awareness Survey 2011



Date: _____

Gender: **Female** **Male**

Age: **16-25** **25-40** **40+**

Location: **Castledearg** **Strabane**

1. Have you heard of the term “biodiversity”? **Yes / No**

2. Can you define what is meant by the term “biodiversity”?

3. Biodiversity is the ‘variety of all living things and where they live.’ How important do you feel biodiversity is in your daily life?

(extremely) 1 2 3 4 5 (not concerned)

4. How concerned are you with the decreasing biodiversity in Northern Ireland?

(extremely) 1 2 3 4 5 (not concerned)

5. Which, if any of the following issues relating to Biodiversity are you concerned about? (Number 1 – 5)

Loss of Habitat _____ Invasive Species _____ Pollution _____
Effects of Climate Change _____ None _____

6. Over the past year, have you seen / heard of any Biodiversity related articles / information in the media? **Yes / No**

Local Newspaper National Newspaper Radio Internet
Leaflets TV Posters Other: _____

7. Is there a need for a park / green spaces in your area? **Yes / No**

8. From the map, can you show areas that are good for wildlife in the Strabane District Council area?

Sites: _____

9. What actions would you be willing to take to help protect biodiversity in Northern Ireland?
- a. Encourage and feed wildlife in your garden
 - b. Buy peat free compost
 - c. Take your litter home
 - d. Buy locally farmed produce
 - e. Plant native trees
 - f. Volunteer for conservation work

10. Which of the following do you think that biodiversity has a factor in?

Food supply Flood control Water quality
Health Education

Would you be surprised if we told you all of the above? **Yes / No**

11. How do our farmers affect biodiversity on our:

Land: **positive / negative** Water: **positive / negative**
Air: **positive / negative**

12. Can you suggest any species / habitats within the Strabane district that should be a conservation priority?

Species _____

Habitats _____

13. Invasive species are harming our biodiversity. Can you name any?

14. Do you take an interest in the local wildlife when you are out and about e.g. take photographs or look at them closely? **Yes / No**

15. Would you interested in receiving information on local Biodiversity news and events? **Yes / No**

Name: _____ Email: _____