

# Status of English Local Wildlife Site Systems 2011





## **Status of Local Wildlife Site Systems 2011**

There are 47 individual Wildlife Trusts covering the whole of the UK. All are working for an environment rich in wildlife for everyone.

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Every year we work with thousands of schools and our nature reserves and visitor centres receive millions of visitors. Each Wildlife Trust is working within its local communities to inspire people about the future of their area: their own Living Landscapes and Living Seas.

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## **Acknowledgments**

Most importantly, we wish to extend our thanks to everyone who took the time to complete the questionnaire. Thanks are also due to:

Sadie McGlone (The Wildlife Trusts) for co-ordinating the survey and data entry;

Philip Precey and to Pernille Egeberg (The Wildlife Trusts) for data analysis and for writing the report; and to

Kieron Huston for the cover photo.

## **Further Information**

The Wildlife Trusts hold a comprehensive dataset detailing all England Local Wildlife Site systems. We are also continuing to build our existing library of Local Wildlife Site system policy manuals, development plans, newsletters and leaflets. If you would like access to any of this information or would like to contribute updates, please contact The Wildlife Trusts, The Kiln, Waterside, Mather Road, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 1WT, tel: 01636 677711, email [rhackett@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto:rhackett@wildlifetrusts.org)

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the sixth in a series of surveys that have been conducted by The Wildlife Trusts on Local Wildlife Site systems across England.

Chapter two provides information on Local Wildlife Sites and Local Wildlife Site systems and the purpose of the survey, the third chapter outlines the survey methodology and the fourth provides an analysis of the survey results. These are presented in relation to key common standards as recommended by Defra's *Local Sites: Guidance on their identification, selection and management* document which was published in 2006.

Across England there are 52 administrative boundaries for Local Wildlife Site systems: completed questionnaires were received from 50 of these systems. Despite the Defra guidance document advocating the use of the term 'Local Wildlife Sites', there are still at least 13 different terms currently in use, although this has decreased from 23 since the previous survey in 2008. There are at least 41,174 Local Wildlife Sites in England, covering more than 711,201 hectares. Based on the answers provided, 24% of Local Wildlife Sites are owned by public bodies and 65% are in private ownership. NGOs own just 7%.

Defra recommends that Local Wildlife Site systems should be based on a partnership approach. Of the systems that responded, the average number of partners involved is almost 14: just one system does not have an established partnership. A minimum of 606 organisations or individuals are involved in Local Wildlife Site system partnerships across England.

Forty one systems have updated their site selection criteria since the Defra guidance was published in 2006 and a further 4 are in the process of doing so. Five systems have not updated their criteria since 2006. Forty systems have introduced new or revised system procedures in the same time period. For 22 systems, further endorsement of the site selection panel/partnership's decisions is required, compared to 28 where it is not. Forty five partnerships have a procedure for the de-selection of sites where the nature conservation interest has deteriorated to such an extent that they no longer qualify as Local Wildlife Sites.

Defra suggests that once sites are identified, the partnership should promote the appropriate management of sites and provide support and advice to landowners and/or tenants. Eleven partnerships provide specific land management advice to the landowners/tenants of all sites, 21 provide this advice for some sites, 10 provide advice on request and 5 partnerships do not provide land management advice at all. Landowners have been given advice for at least 3,775 sites in the five year period 2005-2010; advice for 1,875 of these sites was given during 2010.

Just 2 partnerships provide site-specific management plans to landowners/tenants of all sites; 3 partnerships provide advice on, or assistance with completion of grant and agri-environment scheme application forms to landowners/tenants of all sites. The most significant constraints cited by partnerships as limiting their ability to liaise with and advise landowners include lack of or limited funding, time constraints, the availability of appropriate staff and/or volunteers and the landowners not being known.

Defra recommends that Local Wildlife Site partnerships should establish a process for monitoring the condition of the selected sites. During 2010, 39 partnerships reported that some

Local Wildlife Sites had been monitored: of these, only 10 systems monitored more than 10% of their sites. At least 2,502 Local Wildlife Sites were monitored in England in 2010, approximately 6% of the total.

Only 8 partnerships believe that local development policies to protect Local Wildlife Sites are implemented effectively. At least 173 Local Wildlife Sites were lost or damaged in England during 2010 as a result of development. The main factors threatening the loss of and/or damage to Local Wildlife Sites are considered to be lack of or inappropriate management, followed by development and intensification of land use practices. The loss of NI197 and Local Area Agreements has caused some concern amongst Local Wildlife Site partnerships: 29 considered that there would be a negative impact, with the most frequently cited concerns being a fall in the perceived importance of Local Wildlife Sites and a resulting threat to future funding.

Forty eight systems had at least one paid member of staff working on Local Wildlife Sites with 25 of these having at least one full-time member of staff employed. At least 30 Local Wildlife Site partnerships make use of volunteers, with at least 263 volunteers working on Local Wildlife Site system in 2010.

Twenty nine systems receive financial contributions from local authorities: at least 81 local authorities contributed up to £5,000 during the 2010/2011 financial year and at least 37 local authorities contributed more than £5,000. However, at least 125 local authorities made no financial contribution to the running of their Local Wildlife Sites system. Just 7 partnerships received financial contribution from Natural England during the same period.

Twelve Local Wildlife Sites partnerships have considered how they might influence the implementation of the *Making Space for Nature*<sup>1</sup> recommendations in their area. Four of these have used the recommendations to influence planning policies and decisions; 3 partnerships used them to influence the Natural Environment White Paper consultation<sup>2</sup>; and 2 partnerships are now refocusing Local Wildlife Site work as core to the delivery of ecological networks and landscape scale projects.

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<sup>1</sup> Lawton, J.H., Brotherton, P.N.M., Brown, V.K., Elphick, C., Fitter, A.H., Forshaw, J., Haddow, R.W., Hilborne, S., Leafe, R.N., Mace, G.M., Southgate, M.P., Sutherland, W.A., Tew, T.E., Varley, J., and Wynne, G.R. (2010) *Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network*

<sup>2</sup> Defra (July 2010), *An invitation to shape the Nature of England – discussion document*

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### ***2.1 What are Local Wildlife Sites?***

Local Wildlife Sites are sites with ‘substantive nature conservation value’. They are defined areas, identified and selected locally for their nature conservation value, based on important, distinctive and threatened habitats and species with a national, regional and (**importantly**) a local context. Together with the statutory sites (SSSI), they form the essential building blocks of an ecological network.

Found on both public and private land, Local Wildlife Sites vary in size and shape from small ponds and copses and linear features such as hedgerows, road verges and water courses to much larger areas of habitat such as ancient woodlands, heaths, wetlands and grassland.

Collectively they play a critical role in the conservation of the UK’s natural heritage by providing essential wildlife refuges in their own right and by acting as stepping stones, corridors and buffer zones to link and protect other site networks and the open spaces of our towns and countryside.

### ***2.2 What is a Local Wildlife Site System?***

A Local Wildlife Site system is the partnership-based approach for identifying, selecting, assessing, monitoring and protecting Local Wildlife Sites. Systems are most commonly administered on a county or unitary authority scale and their efficient delivery requires access to a large volume of up-to-date information and data.

To ensure site protection and system and site integrity, all systems should have clearly documented procedures with defined partnership roles and mechanisms for delivery. These should be developed and adapted to suit local circumstances in line with agreed national common standards. To help increase consistency and understanding, Defra published *Local Sites: Guidance on their identification, selection and management* in 2006.

Local Wildlife Site systems select all sites that meet the assigned criteria, unlike Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), which for some habitats are a representative sample of sites that meet the national standard. Consequently, many sites of SSSI quality are not designated and instead are selected as Local Wildlife Sites. For some counties, Local Wildlife Sites are amongst the best sites for biodiversity and they form important linkages between other core areas. It is essential, therefore, that the different status assigned to Local Wildlife Sites should not lessen the perception of their importance and the vital role they play in conserving our natural heritage.

### ***2.3 Purpose of the survey***

The main purpose of this survey is to update existing information held by The Wildlife Trusts on Local Wildlife Site systems in England. Since the last survey in 2008, the information gathered has been used extensively by a wide range of organisations and individuals including

conservationists, statutory and non-statutory policy and decision makers, landowners, educational establishments and students.

The information has also been used by The Wildlife Trusts to:

- identify, establish and share good practice
- respond to enquiries about Local Wildlife Site systems
- support the case for better recognition of Local Wildlife Sites in policy and legislative lobbying including *Making Space for Nature*<sup>3</sup> (the independent review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Networks);
- examine trends and anomalies in system activities and to highlight gaps in system management, protection and operation
- press for the inclusion of Local Sites data within the Government's new single data set

## ***2.4 What does the survey show?***

The main body of this report reflects the status of Local Wildlife Site systems across England. The results are presented in section three as an objective analysis of responses to the Status of Local Wildlife Site systems 2011 questionnaire. Where relevant, some sections are accompanied by extracts from Defra's *Local Sites Guidance* (2006) to give an indication of how current practice in England relates to the guidance.

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<sup>3</sup> Lawton, J.H., Brotherton, P.N.M., Brown, V.K., Elphick, C., Fitter, A.H., Forshaw, J., Haddow, R.W., Hilborne, S., Leafe, R.N., Mace, G.M., Southgate, M.P., Sutherland, W.A., Tew, T.E., Varley, J., and Wynne, G.R. (2010) *Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network*

### **3. SURVEY METHOD**

As with previous surveys, the number of administrative boundaries for Local Wildlife Site systems was identified and an appropriate contact within each boundary was invited to complete a questionnaire. Administrative boundaries refer to the local authority areas that are covered by a single system or in the case where no system activity exists, the local authority areas that should be covered by a system.

In some counties a number of independent systems share common site selection criteria. In these instances, a suitable county contact was identified and asked to complete a questionnaire. Unlike the 2008 report, the survey reverted to treating London as a single partnership system on the advice of a number of London Boroughs and London's Environmental Records Centre (GiGL).

In developing the questionnaire for the 2011 status of Local Wildlife Site systems survey, feedback on previous questionnaires was used to improve existing questions and to introduce new ones. The number of questions in the questionnaire was reduced to increase the reply rate and to remove redundant questions.

Questionnaires were sent out during February/March 2011 with a return deadline of early April. Contacts who did not respond by the deadline received a follow up email to try to maximise the response rate. Questionnaires not returned by the 8 July 2011 were recorded as having failed to respond.

A copy of the questionnaire is available on request (contact details on the back of this report).

## **4. SURVEY RESULTS**

### ***4.1 COVERAGE AND SCOPE***

#### **4.1.1 Administration boundaries for Local Wildlife Sites systems**

52 administrative boundaries for Local Wildlife Site systems were identified in England. In the previous 2008 survey, 90 systems were identified, 57 when treating London as a single system as in previous surveys.

The current survey has reverted to treating London as a single system.

Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland are now covered by Durham.

Aylesbury Vale is now covered by Buckinghamshire.

Darlington is now covered by Tees Valley.

Completed questionnaires were received from 50 of the 52 systems.

Results are presented as the number of systems that responded, out of 52 possible systems. Where percentages are used, they refer to all the 52 partnerships that were invited to participate in the survey: the two systems for which no answers were received are included in the analysis, with each response recorded as 'no answer provided'.

Because some respondents did not provide comprehensive answers to all questions in the questionnaire and two systems failed to return questionnaires at all, the numbers given in the results section should be interpreted as minimum estimates.

#### **4.1.2 Terminology**

The Defra Local Sites Guidance for England (2006) advocates the use of the term 'Local Wildlife Sites'. Currently, 19 systems have adopted this term in line with the guidance, an increase from 11 systems in the 2008 survey.

In the 2008 survey 23 different terms were identified for Local Wildlife Sites: this has decreased to 13 different terms, of which Local Wildlife Sites is now the most common. Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) was previously the most common term, with 20 systems using this in 2008 reduced to 8 in the 2011 survey. A number of systems use more than one term for different sites within their area.

The following terms are currently used by systems to name Local Wildlife Sites:

Term	Number of systems using each term
Local Wildlife Site	19
County Wildlife Site	5
Wildlife Site	2
Special Wildlife Site	1
Key Wildlife Site	1
Site of Importance for Nature Conservation	8
Site of Nature Conservation Importance	3
Site of Nature Conservation Interest	1
Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation	1
Site of Biological Interest	2
Biodiversity Alert Site	1
Biological Heritage Site	1
no answer provided	11

#### 4.1.3 Number and area of Local Wildlife Sites

From the 50 systems that provided details, we know there are at least 41,174 Local Wildlife Sites in England. This is an increase of 3,393 sites from the 2008 minimum (37,781 sites).

The total area covered by Local Wildlife Sites in England is at least 711,201 hectares.

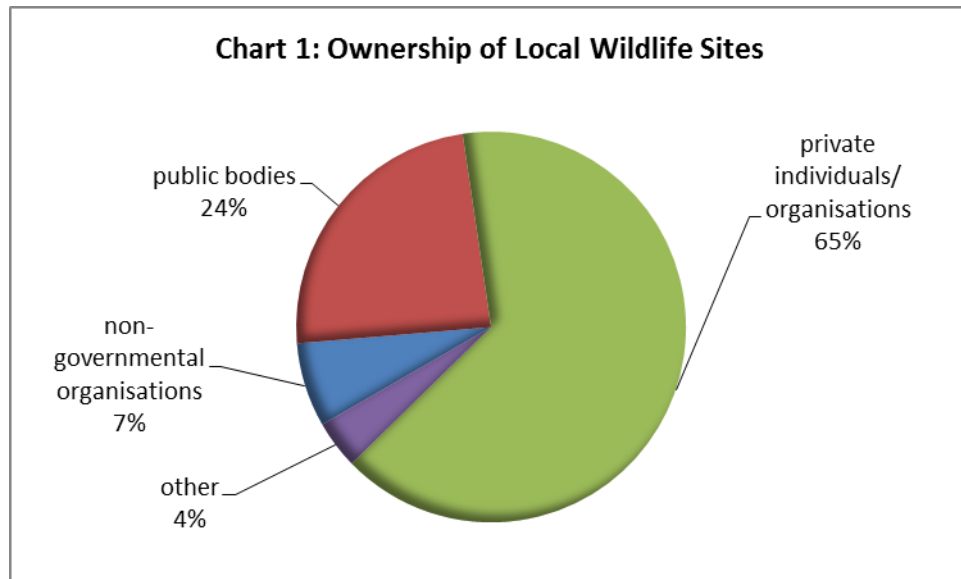
A possible explanation for the increase in both these figures may be the result of more accurate reporting from partnerships as a result of National Indicator 197 (specific reporting for which has now ceased, but is still required as part of Government's single data set reporting).

Forty five systems provided a figure for the percentage of the partnership area that is covered by Local Wildlife Sites. Based on these 45 responses, the survey suggests that for the average Local Wildlife Site system, the Sites cover 6.1% of the system area, ranging from just 0.01% to 13.8%.

In addition, 2 replied that they didn't know, 4 gave no answer and 3 appeared to have misinterpreted the question and have therefore been excluded from the analysis.

#### 4.1.4 Ownership of Local Wildlife Sites

Twenty six systems provided useable, accurate figures for site ownership. Chart 1 illustrates the ownership of Local Wildlife Sites across England based on those 26 responses received:



N.B. This chart had to be based on actual responses received and not total number of systems as it shows the average percentages reported. Twenty six systems either stated that they did not know the percentage ownership of the Local Wildlife Sites, were unable to give a complete response to this question or could only provide broad brush estimates. These systems were not included in the analysis of site ownership.

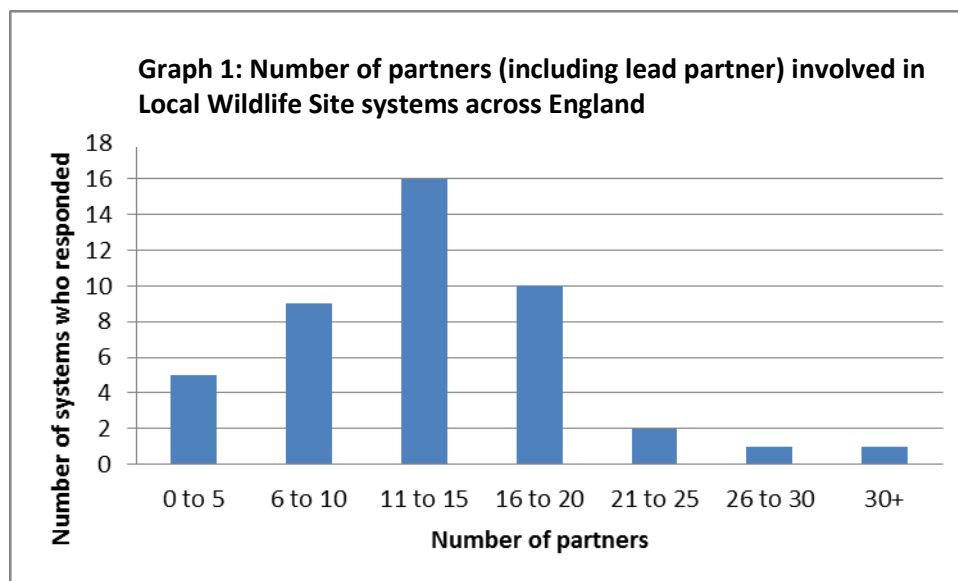
## 4.2 PARTNERS

Defra recommends that the establishment and management of a Local Sites system should be based on a partnership approach involving organisations that have an interest in biodiversity conservation and that the Local Sites system partnership should include representation from landowners or their representative bodies, as well as local authorities, statutory bodies and voluntary organisations.

### 4.2.1 Size and make-up of partnerships

Forty five systems provided partner information. For those, the average number of partners per system is 13.8, while the highest number of partners involved in a Local Wildlife Site system partnership is 45. Only one of the systems that provided information does not have an established partnership.

Graph 1 shows the range of partner numbers involved in the systems:



There are a minimum of 606 organisations/individuals involved in Local Wildlife Site system partnerships across England.

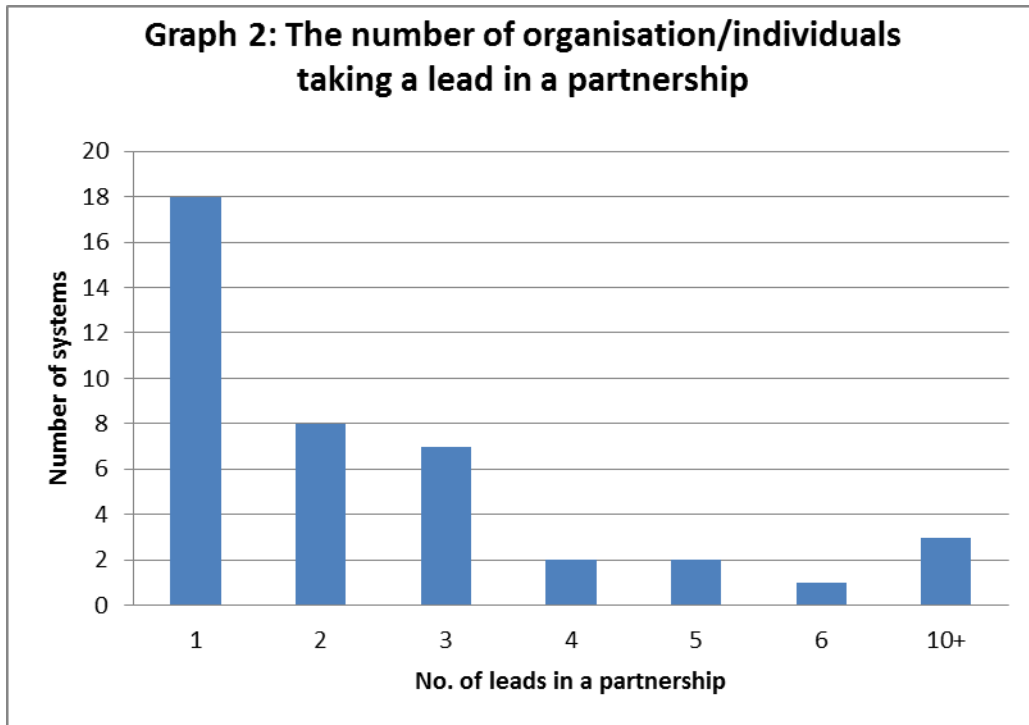
The proportion of the 52 systems where each of the following partners is involved is as follows (including the seven that didn't answer the question), with the figure in brackets the percentage from the 45 systems that gave details of their partnership:

<b>Partner involved in system</b>	<b>Percentage of systems in England (52)</b>	<b>Percentage of systems that answered the question (45)</b>
Local Authority (any of Unitary Authority, County Council, District or Borough Council)	90.0%	(100%)
<i>Unitary Authority</i>	59.6%	(68.9%)
<i>County Council</i>	50.0%	(57.8%)
<i>District/Borough Council</i>	48.1%	(55.6%)
Wildlife Trust	84.6%	(97.8%)
Natural England	80.8%	(93.3%)
Local Record Centre	76.9%	(88.9%)
Environment Agency	61.5%	(71.1%)
Regional Important Geological/Geomorphological Site (RIGS) Group or equivalent	42.3%	(48.9%)
Local specialists	38.5%	(44.4%)
Forestry Commission	34.6%	(40.0%)
Local naturalist groups	34.6%	(40.0%)
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)	28.8%	(33.3%)
Landowners/managers/tenants	15.4%	(17.8%)
Country Landowner and Rural Business (CLA)	9.6%	(11.1%)
National Farmers Union (NFU)	9.6%	(11.1%)
RSPB	9.6%	(11.1%)
Academic institutes	7.7%	(8.9%)
Members of the public	5.8%	(6.7%)
Government Departments	1.9%	(2.2%)
Other partners	30.8%	(35.6%)

#### **4.2.2 Lead partner(s)**

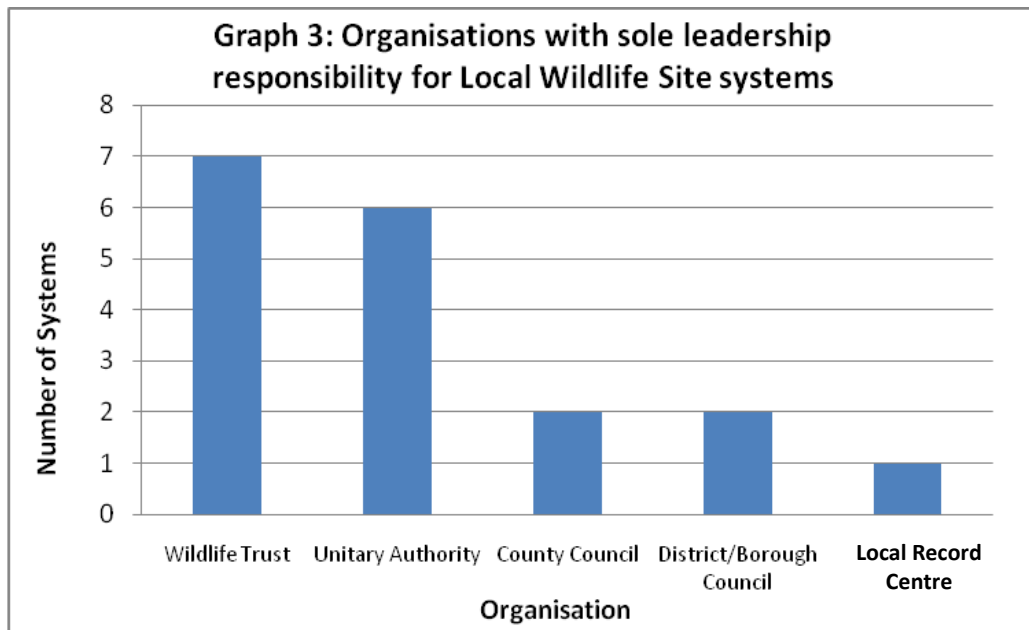
Defra recommends that local authorities should provide leadership in establishing and maintaining partnerships to identify and manage Local Sites. The number of lead partners range from 1 to 13 with 8 systems not providing an answer.

Graph 2 shows the number of organisations taking a lead role in the system partnerships.

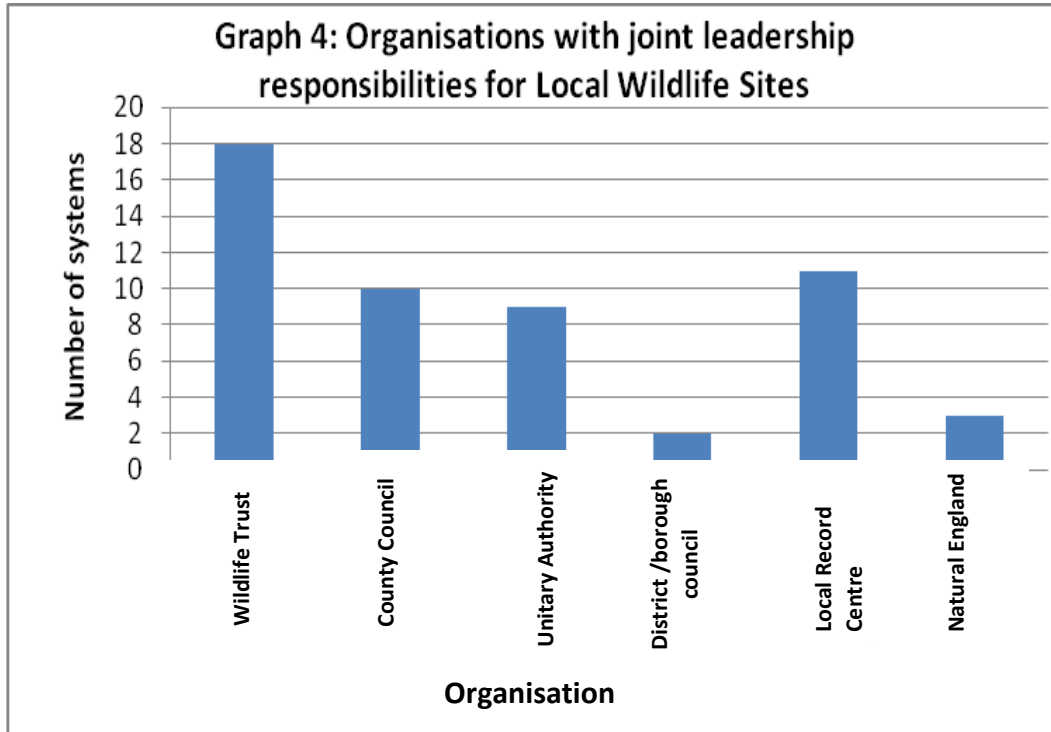


The graph shows that at least 18 systems are led by a single partner.

Graph 3 shows the distribution of single lead partners for Local Wildlife Site systems. The graph only displays the organisations that take sole leadership responsibility.



Graph 4 shows the number of organisations with joint leadership responsibility for Local Wildlife Site systems.

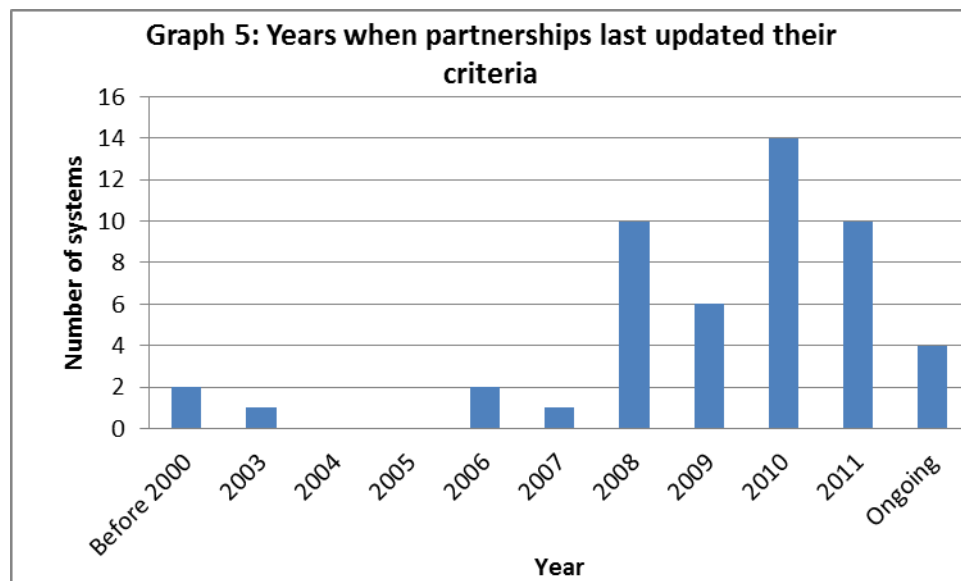


## 4.3 SYSTEM PROCEDURES

### 4.3.1 Reassessing site selection criteria

Forty one systems have updated their criteria since the Defra Local Sites Guidance (2006) was published and a further 4 are in the process of doing so. Five systems have not updated the criteria since 2006.

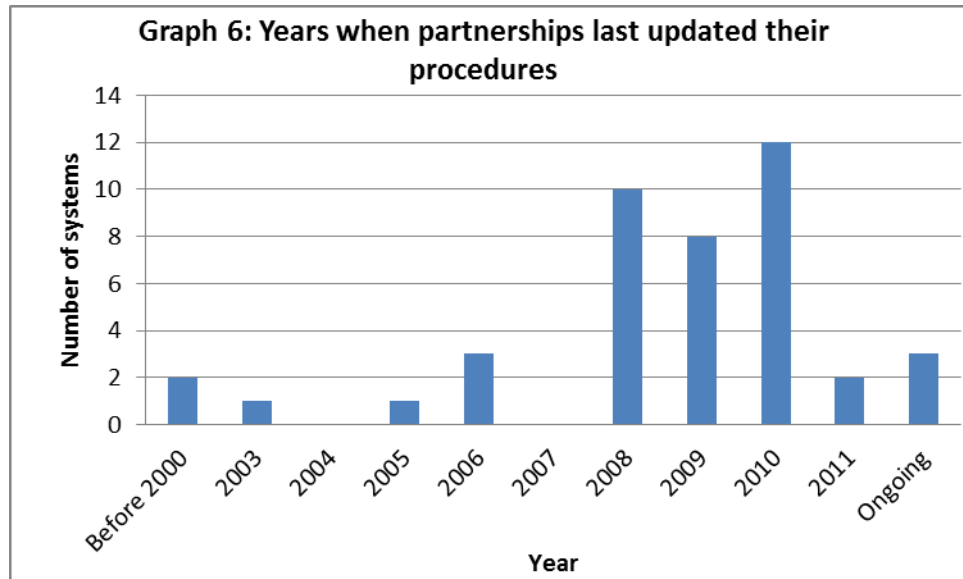
Graph 5 shows the distribution in years of when a partnership last updated their criteria.



### 4.3.2 Reassessing system procedures

Forty systems have introduced new or revised system procedures since the Defra Local Sites Guidance (2006) was published, an increase of twenty systems since the last survey in 2008. Of these, five are in the progress of doing this. Four have not developed or reviewed their system since the guidance was published and one stated that they did not have a procedure in place. Three did not know when it was last updated and four did not provide an answer.

Graph 6 shows the distribution in years of when a partnership last updated their procedures.



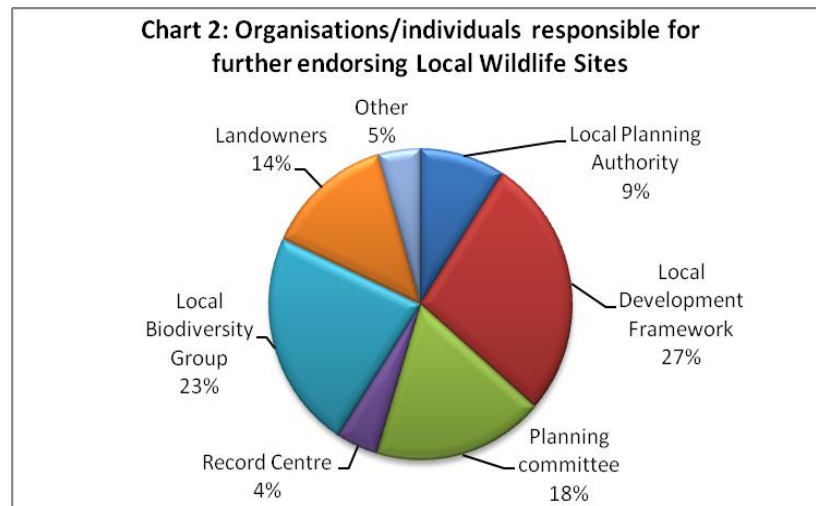
When questioned about what significant changes have been made to the procedures, the most frequent response, from 8 respondents, was that the procedures had been revised in line with the 2006 Defra guidance. Six systems have introduced new standardised procedures with another 4 undertaking a 'complete overhaul'.

Three systems mentioned NI197 as a driver for change to their procedures, with another citing the need "to reflect revised national priorities and planning policy."

### 4.3.3 Endorsement of Local Wildlife Sites

For 22 systems, further endorsement of the site selection panel/partnership's decision to select a Local Wildlife Site is required, compared with 28 where it is not.

Chart 2 shows the organisations/individuals responsible for final endorsement of Local Wildlife Sites.



### 4.3.4 Deterioration of Local Wildlife Sites

Defra recommends that a partnership can de-select sites if their nature conservation interest deteriorates to such an extent that they no longer qualify as Local Wildlife Sites.

Forty five systems reported that they have a procedure for de-selection of sites, of which 8 are currently under review. Three systems currently have a de-selection procedure in development. Four systems did not provide an answer.

### 4.3.5 Provision of land management advice

One of the key roles of a Local Sites partnership should be to actively promote and support site management. Defra suggests that once sites are identified, the partnership should promote the appropriate management of sites and provide support and advice to site owners.

Forty eight of the partnerships provided information about the provision of land management advice. Eleven partnerships provide specific land management advice to the landowners/tenants of all sites, 21 provide this advice for some sites, 10 provide advice on request and 5 partnerships do not provide land management advice at all.

#### 4.3.5.1 Provision of site-specific management plans

Defra suggests that it is for the partnership to decide whether general management guidance is provided or whether site specific management plans are produced.

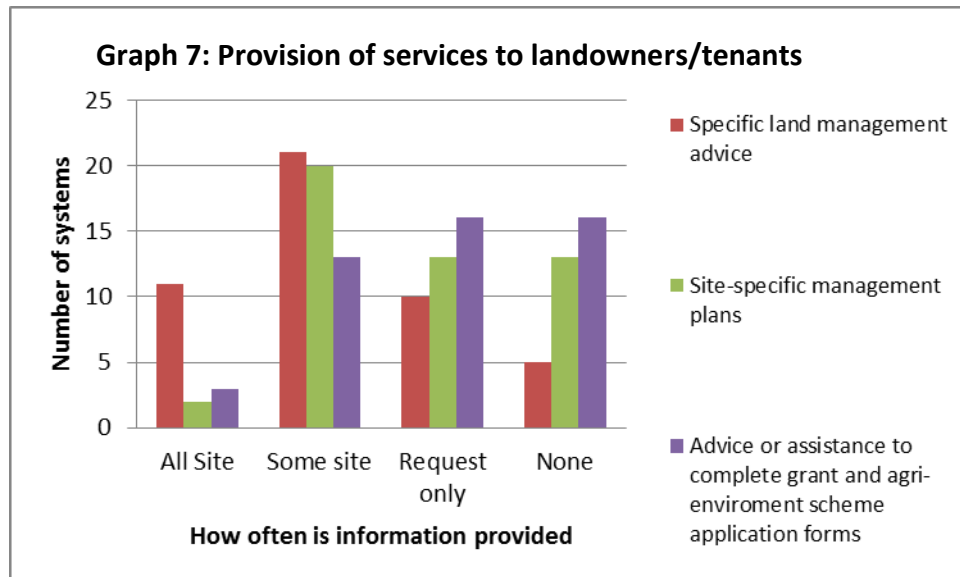
Just 2 partnerships provide site-specific management plans to landowners/tenants of all sites, 20 provide these plans for some sites and 13 provide management plans on request only. Thirteen partnerships do not provide site specific management plans.

#### 4.3.5.2 Provision of assistance to complete grant or agri-environment scheme applications

Local Wildlife Site partnerships can play a valuable role in identifying, publicising and providing access to sources of information, advice and funding for environmental land management.

Three partnerships provide advice on or assistance with completion of grant and agri-environment scheme application forms to landowners/tenants of all sites, 13 provide this advice or assistance for some sites, 16 provide advice or assistance only upon request, and 16 do not provide this advice or assistance.

Graph 7 shows the number of systems that provide advice or assistance to landowners and/or tenants of Local Wildlife Sites.



#### 4.3.5.3 Constraints that limit landowner advice and support

The following constraints were cited by partnerships as limiting their ability to liaise with and advise landowners:

No or limited funding	45 partnerships
Time constraints	40 partnerships
Availability of staff and/or volunteers	39 partnerships
Landowner not known	30 partnerships
Irregular contact with landowner	19 partnerships
Lack of incentives	16 partnerships
No pre-existing procedure	10 partnerships
Unwillingness of landowners	6 partnerships
Lack of skills within the partnership	3 partnerships

Additionally, one partnership suggested that provision of land management advice did not fall within the remit of any of the partners and another reported that the provision of advice would require the input from and agreement with all members of the partnership, a procedure which was too time consuming.

#### ***4.3.5.4 How is advice targeted?***

Twenty five partnerships reported that they targeted their provision of landowner advice on request, 15 on a rolling programme and 8 do not target the provision of advice. Twenty partnerships target their advice based on proximity to a Living Landscape scheme; none of the partnerships based their targeting of landowner advice on proximity to Wildlife Trust reserves.

Four partnerships target their provision of landowner advice through the delivery of other projects, 3 target sites considered to be of greatest conservation value and 4 target sites or habitats considered to be most at risk.

#### ***4.3.5.5 Number of sites where landowners have been given management advice***

##### ***During 2010***

Thirty four partnerships provided details of the number of sites for which landowners have been given management advice in 2010, of which 5 stated that no advice had been given. Eleven partnerships answered 'unknown' and the remaining 7 did not provide an answer.

Landowners have been given advice on at least 1,875 sites in this period by the 29 partnerships who reported that they had provided site advice in 2010, ranging from 1 to 550 per partnership.

Based on the number of sites in each Local Wildlife Sites system, landowner advice was provided for at least 4.5% of all Local Wildlife Sites in England in 2010. For those 34 partnerships who gave details, an average of 6.9% of sites were given management advice in 2010, ranging from zero to 33.4%.

##### ***During the last five years (2005-2010)***

Thirty one partnerships provided details of the number of sites for which the landowners have been given management advice in the last five years, of which 3 stated that no advice had been given. A further 13 partnerships answered 'unknown' and the remaining 8 did not provide an answer.

Landowners have been given advice for at least 3,775 sites in this period by the 28 partnerships who reported that they had provided site advice in the last five years, ranging from 3 to 560 per partnership.

Based on the number of sites in each Local Wildlife Sites system, landowner advice was provided for at least 9.1% of all Local Wildlife Sites in England in the five year period 2005-2010. For those 31 partnerships who gave details, an average of 21.0% of sites were given management advice in the five year period up to 2010, ranging from zero to 53.3%.

## **4.4 MONITORING**

Defra recommends that one of the roles for a Local Wildlife Site partnership is to establish a process for monitoring the condition of the selected sites. The general condition of sites should be monitored to ensure that they retain their 'substantive value' and retain the interests for which they were selected. This should be planned in such a way that individual sites are revisited at regular and consistent intervals.

Forty three partnerships provided details of the number of Local Wildlife Sites that have been monitored in the period from 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2010, 4 answered 'unknown' and 5 did not provide an answer. Of those partnerships that provided details about monitoring Local Wildlife Sites, 4 did not perform any monitoring.

At least 2,502 Local Wildlife Sites were monitored in England in 2010, with the number of sites monitored by those partnerships who carried out some monitoring ranging from 3 to 289 sites per partnership.

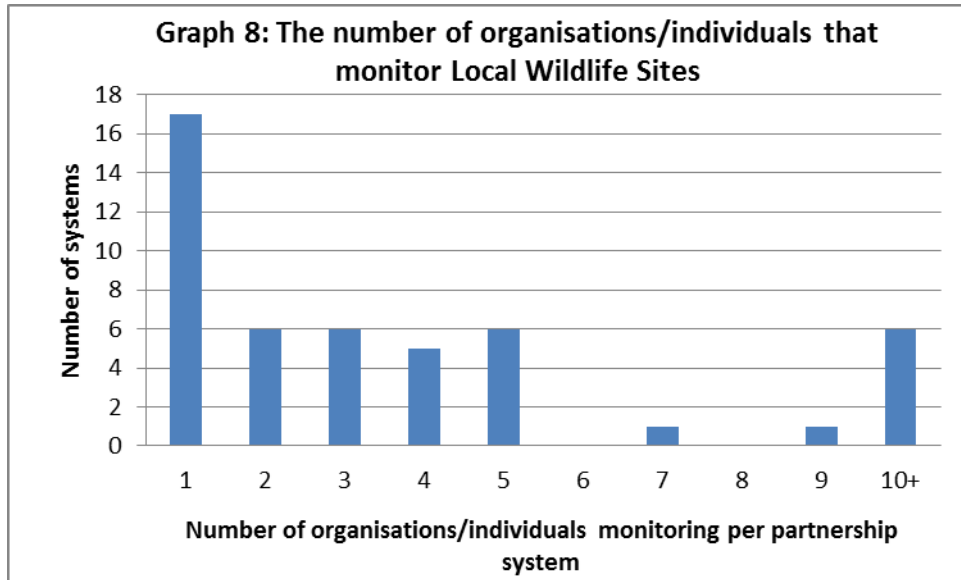
Based on the number of sites in each Local Wildlife Site system, at least 6.0% of all Local Wildlife Sites in England were monitored in 2010. For those 43 partnerships who gave details, an average of 11.4% of sites were monitored in 2010, ranging from zero to 82.7%.

Twenty-two systems monitored between 0.1% and 10% of their sites and only 10 systems monitored more than 10% of their sites.

The following organisations/individuals are involved in monitoring the status of existing sites:

Organisation	
Wildlife Trust	31 systems
Unitary Authority	20 systems
Local Record Centre	14 systems
County Council	10 systems
District/Borough Council	10 systems
Regional Important Geological/Geomorphological Site (RIGS) Group	9 systems
Local specialist(s)	7 systems
Local naturalist group(s)	6 systems
Others	5 systems
Environment Agency	5 systems
Natural England	4 systems
RSPB	3 systems
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)	3 systems
Forestry Commission	2 systems
Landowner	1 system
Academic institutes	1 system

Graph 8 shows the frequency of organisations/individuals that perform monitoring work in a partnership.



## **4.5 LINKS TO PLANNING AND OTHER INITIATIVES**

### **4.5.1 Effective implementation of planning policies**

Forty nine partnerships answered when questioned about the effective implementation of local authority planning policies which are aimed at protecting Local Wildlife Sites. Eight partnerships believe that *yes*, local development policies to protect Local Wildlife Sites are implemented effectively, 24 believe they *usually* are and 17 believe that *some are and some are not*. None believe that the protective policies are not implemented effectively although 3 did not provide an answer.

### **4.5.2 Loss of Local Wildlife Sites**

Forty four partnerships responded to the questions about loss of Local Wildlife Sites, with 40 giving details of the sites lost and sites damaged and four only providing a combined figure.

At least 24.5 sites were lost to development during 2010 based on responses from 40 partnerships, of which 21 stated that no sites were lost and 9 answered 'unknown'.

In addition, at least 117 sites have been damaged (but not lost entirely) during the same period, based on responses from 40 partnerships, of which 15 systems stated that no sites had been damaged and 10 stated that they did not know.

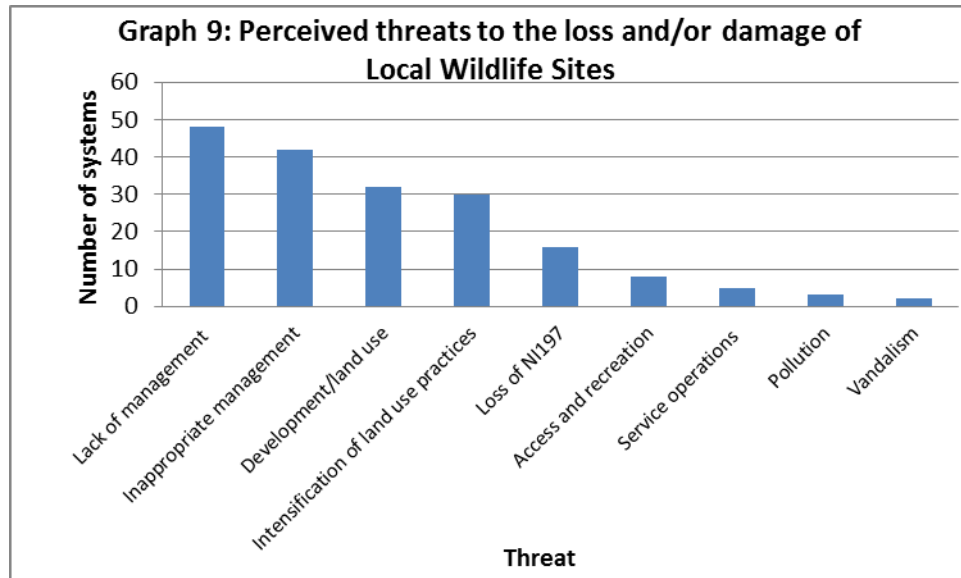
Four partnerships were only able to provide a combined answer for the number of sites lost and/or damaged in the previous year, referring to an additional 31 sites.

In total, at least 173 Local Wildlife Sites in England were lost or damaged as a result of development in 2010.

Interestingly, 4 partnerships who reported that local authority planning policies aimed at protecting Local Wildlife Sites are implemented effectively also reported the loss or damage of at least one Local Wildlife Site as a result of development within the past year.

### **4.5.3 Main factors threatening the loss of and/or damage to Local Wildlife Sites**

Of the 49 partnerships that responded to the question relating to the threats to Local Wildlife Sites, 48 cited lack of management and 42 cited inappropriate management as among the main threats (respondents could list more than one answer). Sixteen partnerships considered the loss of NI197 to be one of the main threats. Graph 12 shows the main threats to Local Wildlife Sites, as perceived by Local Wildlife Sites partnerships.



#### 4.5.4 Impact of loss of NI197 and Local Area Agreement on Local Wildlife Sites

National Indicator 197: *Improved Local Biodiversity*, measured the proportion of Local Sites in the local authority area where positive conservation management had been implemented up to five years prior to the reporting period. It was introduced in 2008 as part of a suite of 198 national indicators against which local authorities were required to report annually. Where NI 197 was selected as one of up to 35 national indicators to be included in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) there was also a requirement to meet and report to central government on ambitious annual improvement targets for the positive management of Local Sites - with good performance being linked to monetary rewards. Following a change in Government policy, the abolition of LAA and national indicators was announced in 2010.

National Indicator 197 enabled all local authorities to get broadly up to speed with respect to the health of their Local Sites - this is reflected in *Making Space for Nature*, which reported that NI 197 had driven improvement in the management and knowledge of Local Sites - supporting the case that reporting on this data has been both achievable and also helped drive positive action through partnership working. As part of the new 'single data set', local authorities are still required to report on the proportion of Local Sites in positive management, but this reporting is no longer linked to performance and improvement targets.

Forty seven respondents commented on the potential impact of the loss of NI197 and Local Area Agreements on Local Wildlife Site systems. The responses were fairly mixed, although it is clear that there is considerable concern amongst Local Wildlife Site partnerships.

In general, 8 partnerships were as yet uncertain about the impact of these changes, 10 partnerships considered there would be no impact on their Local Wildlife Site systems and 29 considered the impact to be a negative one.

The most frequently cited concerns were a fall in the perceived importance of the Local Wildlife Site system (18 partnerships) and a resulting threat to future funding (17 partnerships). Indeed,

one partnership reported that funding for the Local Wildlife Site system had already been completely cut by the local authority partners as a result of the loss of NI197.

One respondent suggested that the removal of NI197 would have a positive impact in terms of more relaxed relationship with local landowners, who are currently suspicious of being 'monitored' by local authorities.

## **4.6 RESOURCES**

### **4.6.1 Staffing levels**

Between the 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011, 48 Local Wildlife Site partnerships had at least one paid member of staff working on the Local Wildlife Site system. One partnership had no paid staff working on Local Wildlife Sites. Three partnerships did not respond.

Based on 49 responses, the average Local Wildlife Site partnership employs 0.9 full time and 2.0 part time members of staff.

#### ***4.6.1.1 Full time staff***

Between the 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011, 25 partnerships had at least one full time paid member of staff working on Local Wildlife Sites, ranging from 1 to 5 members of staff. In total, a minimum of 46 full time members of staff worked on Local Wildlife Sites across England.

#### ***4.6.1.2 Part time staff***

Between the 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011, 35 partnerships had at least one part time member of staff working on Local Wildlife Sites, ranging from 1 to 10 part time members of staff. In total, a minimum of 100 part time members of staff worked on Local Wildlife Sites across England.

### **4.6.2 Volunteer levels**

Forty two partnerships provided details of the numbers of volunteers working on the Local Wildlife Site system between the 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011. One partnership responded 'unknown' and 9 did not provide an answer.

At least 30 Local Wildlife Sites partnerships make use of volunteers. Three partnerships each have a single full time volunteer: otherwise, all the other volunteers were part time. Twelve partnerships do not have any volunteers.

In total, at least 263 volunteers have worked on Local Wildlife Sites in England during the survey period, with the highest number of volunteers working for a single partnership being 63.

Based on 42 responses, the average Local Wildlife Site partnership made use of 6.3 volunteers during the survey period.

Compared to the previous survey, the total number of volunteers has decreased from 601 in 2008 to 263 in 2010.

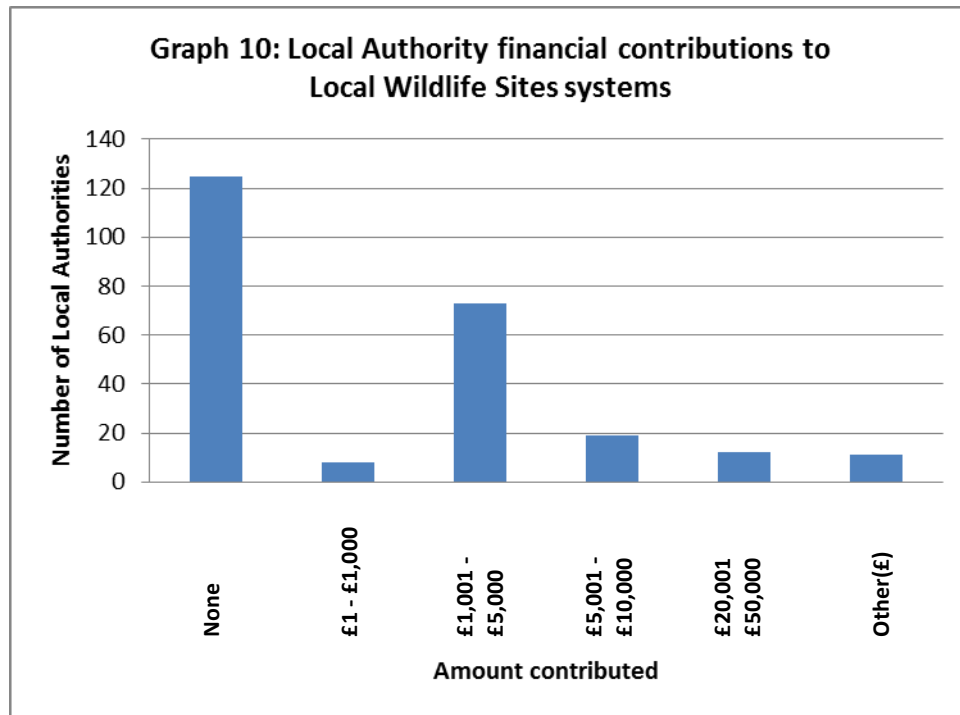
### **4.6.2 Funding**

#### ***4.6.2.1 Local Authority Contribution***

The financial contributions made by local authorities to individual Local Wildlife Site systems can be seen in Graph 10: each system may receive several amounts of funding from different authorities.

Twenty nine Local Wildlife Sites partnerships reported that their system received financial contributions from local authorities. Twenty systems receive no local authority financial contribution: 3 did not provide any information.

As can be seen from the graph, 81 local authorities contributed up to £5000 during the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011, with at least 37 contributing more than £5000. The highest amount contributed was £38,000. At least 125 local authorities make no financial contribution to the running of the Local Wildlife Site system in their area.



Other resources received by Local Wildlife Site partnerships from local authorities during the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 are listed below: 26 systems provided details and some have listed more than one resource:

- Time (13 systems)
- Office space (9 systems)
- Equipment (9 systems)
- Surveys (3 systems)

Other individual systems also reported that they received resources in the form of vehicle use, training, expert advice and landowner liaison.

#### ***4.6.2.2 Natural England Contributions***

Forty nine partnerships answered the question about Natural England contributions, of which just 7 receive financial support from Natural England during the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March

2011: 1 partnership received under £1000; 3 partnerships received £1001-£5000; 1 partnership received £5001-£10,000; 1 partnership received £10,001-£20,000. One partnership reported that they received 'some funds' from Natural England.

Other resources received by systems from Natural England during the survey period included:

- Time (10 systems)
- Landowner liaison (2 systems)

Other individual systems also reported that they received resources in the form of advice on applications, project management and expert advice.

## 4.7 Making Space for Nature

A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Networks (the Lawton Review) concluded its findings in September 2010. The Review Group's report, *Making Space for Nature*<sup>4</sup> included 24 recommendations for practical action to achieve a coherent and resilient ecological network.

The review can be found at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature-pdf>

The recommendations particularly pertinent to Local Wildlife Sites are:

- Planning policy and practice (recommendation 2)
- Ecological Restoration Zones (ERZ) (recommendation 3)
- Identification and monitoring (recommendation 12)

### 4.7.1 Awareness of the Review

When questioned on their awareness of the Lawton Review and its relevance to Local Wildlife Sites, 47 partnerships answered that yes, they are aware of the Review's recommendation, 2 reported that they are unaware of the Review and 3 did not provide an answer.

### 4.7.2 Influencing how the recommendations are taken forward

Twelve Local Wildlife Sites partnerships have considered how they might influence the implementation of the *Making Space for Nature* recommendations in their area, 37 have not, of which 3 are waiting for the publication of the Natural Environment White Paper<sup>5</sup> (published after the questionnaire deadline) and 3 did not provide an answer. Of the 12 that have considered how they might influence the implementation of the recommendations, 4 have used the recommendations to influence planning policies and decisions; 3 have used the recommendations to influence the Natural Environment White Paper consultation<sup>6</sup>; 2 systems are now refocusing Local Wildlife Site work as core to the delivery of ecological networks and landscape scale projects; and 1 system is reviewing its procedures to strengthen the partnership. In addition at least 7 partnerships are convening meetings (some at a regional scale) to consider how best to influence the implementation of the recommendations.

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<sup>4</sup> Lawton, J.H., Brotherton, P.N.M., Brown, V.K., Elphick, C., Fitter, A.H., Forshaw, J., Haddow, R.W., Hilborne, S., Leafe, R.N., Mace, G.M., Southgate, M.P., Sutherland, W.A., Tew, T.E., Varley, J., and Wynne, G.R. (2010) *Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network*

<sup>5</sup> HM Government (2011), *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature*

<sup>6</sup> Defra (July 2010), *An invitation to shape the Nature of England – discussion document*

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Registered Charity Number: 207238

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