



# **BLACKPOOL ZOO**

## **MARTON MERE NATIVE SPECIES PROJECT**

### **5-YEAR PLAN**

**December 2025**

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## 1.0. INTRODUCTION

Marton Mere Local Nature Reserve (hereafter referred to as 'the site') is the only local nature reserve (d.1991) within Blackpool and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI; d.1979) located approximately one mile from the Zoo.

The site is owned by Blackpool Council who are responsible for overseeing its management and to ensure it maintains within favourable condition as it was when SSSI status was granted. All SSSI sites must have a management plan in place to facilitate this and the Marton Mere 10-year habitat management plan was approved in January 2024, with the adjacent Lawson's Field area 10- year habitat enhancement plan approved in July 2024. Following the allocation of funding towards native species conservation and numerous meetings between Zoo staff and Blackpool Council, the Marton Mere Native Species project was approved and work began in Spring 2024.

After working with the Friends of Marton Mere Group, gaining an in-depth understanding of the site and collaborative potential, a 5-Year Plan [the present document] was produced to guide and deliver Blackpool Zoo's goal for the native species project at the site until 2029.



## 1.1. ULTIMATE GOAL

To establish a community-driven native species conservation project in partnership with other major stakeholders, working to conserve and promote Marton Mere SSSI, Blackpool Zoo and the surrounding habitats for biodiversity.

## 1.2. AIMS

- a) To create a working partnership between Blackpool Zoo and relevant stakeholders, contributing to the maintenance of the target sites for the benefit of biodiversity.
- b) To contribute to scientific research at the target sites through ecological surveys, social research and measures of conservation impact.
- c) To support learning programs with a native species and ecosystems input, reaching a diverse audience with outreach at the site, at the Zoo and online.
- d) Ultimately establish a reintroduction program for Blackpool Zoo to actively manage, including the breeding, care, release and post-release monitoring of at least one species at the site.

In order to deliver upon each of the above aims within an effective and timely manner, actions to be taken have been categorised within a one/three/five-year timeframe in which we expect to carry them out. Actions are categorised into the following project areas; Practical Conservation and Management, Research and Monitoring, Outreach and Events. Communication and General actions. Year Five also includes actions relevant to Species Reintroduction.



## 2. 0. YEAR ONE – ACTIONS

### General

- 2.1. Begin a positive working relationship with stakeholders Blackpool Council and the Friends of Marton Mere group through a series of introductory staff events.
- 2.2. Present the Marton Mere Native Species project to all Zoo staff to ensure a thorough understanding and awareness of the project.
- 2.3. Create relevant risk assessments and protocols for Zoo staff to work at the site (including research, educational events and practical conservation/management).
- 2.4. Work alongside stakeholders Blackpool Council and the Friends of Marton Mere group to deliver towards the first-year targets for the 10-year habitat management plans for Marton Mere and adjacent Lawson's Field.

### Practical Conservation and Management

- 2.5. Zoo staff to begin carrying out weekly habitat management work in-line with a Blackpool Zoo Field Work Programme developed by Zoo staff and Blackpool Council.
- 2.6. Zoo-funded native species equipment (including bird boxes, litter pickers, gloves etc.) to be integrated into regular management work.
- 2.7. Establish sustainable use of harvested willow from the site for browse at the zoo. System for harvesting and collection to be devised with Blackpool Council and Animal Logistics Co-ordinator at the Zoo.

## **Research and Monitoring**

- 2.8. Liaise with Blackpool Council and the Friends of Marton Mere Group to create a list of priority research projects for the Zoo to carry out (internal) and to offer to external students in Years 1 and 2.
- 2.9. Zoo native species research equipment (including camera traps, mammal footprint tunnels, binoculars etc.) to be integrated into the project.
- 2.10. Research department to begin conducting priority research during weekly visits in-line with the Field Work Programme.
- 2.11. Research projects made available to students at undergraduate and post-graduate level, as well as on the Blackpool Zoo staff priority research list.
- 2.12. Native species research webinar to be recorded and sent out to prospective students at the undergraduate and postgraduate level, advertising opportunities.

## **Outreach and Events**

- 2.13. Identify opportunities for native species events to be held at the site and at the Zoo in collaboration with the Blackpool Zoo and the Friends of Marton Mere Group.
- 2.14. Co-develop and deliver guided nature walks for the local community alongside the Friends of Marton Mere Group throughout the year.
- 2.15. Design and install native species interpretation for the site to raise the awareness of the project and native species conservation.
- 2.16. Deliver a native species input for select educational learning programmes moving forward (including Duke of Edinburgh and Conservation Summer Camp).

## **Communication**

- 2.17. Begin regular posts on zoo social media pages with updates from the project during and following key project milestones.
- 2.18. Emphasise details of the project and the Zoo's involvement during networking events such as the BIAZA Bird Working Group Conference.
- 2.19. Integrate updates from the project into the staff conservation newsletter.
- 2.20. Hold quarterly meetings with the Zoo Native Species Working Group to share updates and discuss ideas to develop the project.



## 3.0. YEAR THREE - ACTIONS

### General

- 3.1. Work alongside stakeholders Blackpool Council and the Friends of Marton Mere Group to deliver towards the third-year targets for the 10-year habitat management plans for Marton Mere and adjacent Lawson's Field.
- 3.2. Set up community links with extended local stakeholders to encourage public involvement in native species events at the site and Blackpool Zoo.
- 3.3. Begin using the Marton Mere visitor centre as a resource (e.g., for educational workshops and other outreach events).
- 3.4. Create a plan for increasing community engagement and participation in native species conservation using social research.

### Practical Conservation and Management

- 3.5. Continue to carry out weekly habitat management work in-line with a Blackpool Zoo Field Work Programme for Year three.
- 3.6. Develop workshops for zoo staff (including dead-hedging, scrub removal etc.) to facilitate upskilling in key areas.
- 3.7. Audit current native species equipment. Highlight required native species equipment with a view to order additional items depending on budgets (e.g., rakes, shovels, backpacks, bird/bat boxes, etc.).

### Research and Monitoring

- 3.8. Liaise with Blackpool Council and the Friends of Marton Mere Group to create a list of priority research projects for the Zoo to carry out (internal) and to offer to external students in Years 3-5.
- 3.9. Data collection to be carried out for long-term projects by Zoo staff during scheduled visits to the site.
- 3.10. Launch and distribute public social research to evaluate native species knowledge and measure conservation impact within the community.
- 3.11. Use scientific research conducted (Year 1-2) to advise management of the site and contribute to designation through Blackpool Council.
- 3.12. Audit current native species equipment. Highlight required native species equipment with a view to order additional items depending on budgets (e.g., drone, audio moth devices, pond dipping nets, species ID guides etc.).

### Outreach and Events

- 3.13. Develop practical management workshops in partnership with the Friends of Marton Mere Group for the wider community (including dead-hedging, scrub removal, litter picking etc.).
- 3.14. Develop wildlife research workshops in partnership with the FoMMVG for the wider public (including camera trapping, acoustic monitoring, citizen science applications etc.).
- 3.15. Regular bioblitz events carried out twice per year (Spring and Autumn) alongside wider public and the Friends of Marton Mere Group.
- 3.16. Design and install native species interpretation for the Zoo site to meet targets for outreach and to promote the project.

3.17. Develop a native species workshop available to schools and groups (based at the Zoo) which reflect the work carried out within the project.

## Communication

3.18. Establish a detailed, regularly updated blog for the project on the Zoo website.

3.19. Establish new ways to promote the project at the Zoo through TV screens and signage at native species areas such as wildlife gardens.

3.20. Integrate yearly updates from the project into an annual conservation report for the Zoo.



## 4.0. YEAR FIVE – ACTIONS

### General

4.1. Use outcomes from Years 1-5 of the action plan to develop a new 5-year plan for 2029-2034.

4.2. Work alongside stakeholders Blackpool Council and the Friends of Marton Mere group to deliver towards the fifth-year targets for the 10-year habitat management plans for Marton Mere and adjacent Lawson's Field.

4.3. Extend the project at Marton Mere and adjacent Lawson's Field to include surrounding habitats within the local area.

4.4. Devise methods of establishing the Zoo as a major stakeholder in the management of Marton Mere and surrounding habitats.

### Practical Conservation and Management

4.5. Continue to carry out weekly habitat management work in-line with a Blackpool Zoo Field Work Programme for Year five.

4.6. Develop a system for co-ordinating wider staff and organised group involvement in the project, with a project lead to manage.

4.7. Work with other local stakeholders to facilitate the extension of practical conservation into surrounding habitats in the local area, with the Zoo to act as a resource and advisory body.

4.8. Audit current native species equipment. Highlight required native species equipment with a view to order additional items (budget dependent; rakes, shovels, backpacks, bird/bat boxes, etc).

## **Research and Monitoring**

- 4.9. Submit scientific research conducted through the project for publication.
- 4.10. Use scientific research conducted (Year 3-5) to advise management of the site and contribute to designation through Blackpool Council.
- 4.11. Collate relevant research to advise a reintroduction project for a target species into the site.
- 4.12. Liaise with Blackpool Council to interpret research outcomes in regards to its contribution to site designation.
- 4.13. Evaluate all social research collected to-date to create a report in partnership with Blackpool Council with the aim of securing additional funding for green spaces and wellbeing.

## **Outreach and Events**

- 4.14. Maximise new community links to organise native species events fair for the wider public.
- 4.15. Launch updates for species-specific reintroduction project (start-finish series).
- 4.16. Present the project at the BIAZA Conservation Conference (or similar research/conservation conference) with a focus on research findings to-date.
- 4.17. Present the project to all staff following completion of the 2024-29 action plan.

## **Species Reintroduction -**

- 4.18. Develop a reintroduction programme plan for a UK BAP priority species from the on-site breeding to post-release monitoring stage.

**4.19. Begin leading the monitoring of a UK BAP priority species at the site.**

**4.20. Submit research project data from priority species projects to national bodies to advise site designation.**

**4.21. Establish links with HE institutions to plan the creation of reintroduction guidelines for the priority species.**

## **Communication**

- 4.22. Continue with all actions listed in Years 1 through 4.**





## 5.0. ACTION PLAN REVIEW

This action plan has been developed solely for an initial five-year period (2024-2029) and upon the end of this period, will be replaced with a further five-year action plan for the project. This action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the aims for the project are being met and amendments to the plan will be made if this is not the case.

## 6.0. CONCLUSION

The Marton Mere Native Species Project 5-year plan has been developed to deliver the goal of a community conservation project led by Blackpool Zoo encompassing native species conservation from 2024-2029.

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