

Woodwalton Drainage Commissioners Biodiversity Action Plan Report 2014-15

Drainage Ditch Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Manage ditches for biodiversity as well as for drainage	1.1	Establish and maintain a management plan for routine IDB operations incorporating key biodiversity features	Environmental Officer	2015	Plan finalised and followed each year	<i>A map-based plan is in the process of establishment.</i>
		1.2	Look for opportunities to provide natural erosion protection such as marginal plant ledges when re-profiling ditches	Environmental Officer	Ongoing	If re-profiling is carried out, opportunities identified	<i>No appropriate sites for this method were identified during the period.</i>
		1.3	Provide natural erosion protection as in 1.2 if opportunities available	Environmental Officer	Ongoing	Length of ditch with ledge / natural vegetation revetment	<i>As above.</i>
2	Identify ditches of conservation interest and manage appropriately	2.2	Ensure appropriate management of ditches for priority species	Environmental Officer, Plantlife, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	Specified in management plan	<i>Any priority ditches will be identified as the management plan map is developed.</i>
3	Support the Environmental Officer in working with landowners to benefit wildlife in the district	3.1	Refer private landowners to the Environmental Officer for advice on creating field margin buffer zones and wildlife-friendly ditch management	Environmental Officer, Natural England, Wildlife Trust, FWAG	Ongoing	Number of contacts received and passed to Environmental Officer	<i>No formal contacts received.</i>

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4	Control invasive species	4.1	Report any sightings of non-native invasive species immediately to the Environmental Officer and control as appropriate (see Appendix F for species list)	Environmental Officer, Environment Agency, Plantlife, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	Reports to Environmental Officer	<i>Japanese knotweed stands at the south end of Monks Lode near the railway line require further Glyphosate treatment. MLC will treat.</i>
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Reedbed Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Identify, assess and map any areas of reedbed over 0.5ha in size	1.1	Pass details of any known areas to MLC Environmental Officer	Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Environment Agency	2012	Review of reedbed areas carried out	<i>No areas of reedbed over 0.5ha identified.</i>
2	Support appropriate reedbed creation	2.2	Manage the District adopted drains, where possible, to assist private landowners who wish to create areas of reedbed on their own land	Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency	Ongoing	(a) Number of requests received (b) Number of landowners assisted	<i>MLC supported the Great Fen Project as a Partner. No other approaches received.</i>
3	Take conservation value of reedbed into account when planning and carrying out ditch and river maintenance	3.2	Where reeds are present, commence mowing or cleansing work outside the bird breeding season (7 th April – 15 th July). Where reeds are growing in water be aware of the potential for late-nesting reed warblers being present until late August and avoid mowing in that location. In exceptional circumstances where this is not possible, seek advice from the Environmental Officer.	Environmental Officer, Wildlife Trust, RSPB	Ongoing	Reeds not cut during bird nesting season	<i>Reeds or other marginal vegetation were not cut during the bird nesting season.</i>

Open Water Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Promote the creation of ponds, lakes and reservoirs in appropriate areas	1.1	Consider pond creation as mitigation when a ditch has to be filled in or culverted	Local authorities, Amphibian & Reptile Conservation, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	(a) Number of mitigation opportunities (b) Number of ponds created	<i>(a) No ditch infilling occurred, (b) No pond creation opportunities in mitigation necessary.</i>
		1.2	Support creation of flood storage areas and reservoirs	Environment Agency, Natural England, Wildlife Trust, RSPB	Ongoing	Number of projects involved with	<i>One. As a Partner in the Great Fen Project the Middle Level Commissioners Engineers are involved with the planning for flood event storage in the Great Fen area.</i>
		1.3	Assist private landowners with advice, information or contacts as necessary	Amphibian & Reptile Conservation, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	(a) Number of information requests (b) Number responded to	<i>(a) None (b) Nil</i>
2	Look for opportunities to create open water habitat when managing ditches	2.1	Create a pool at an appropriate ditch junction when re-profiling (see the Drainage Channel Biodiversity Manual, technique CL3))	Environmental Officer	2010	One pool successfully created	<i>No opportunities for this on Board drains were identified during the period. The creation of various water areas is being undertaken by the Great Fen Project.</i>

Water Vole Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Manage ditches according to the law and to best practice for water vole	1.1	Assume water voles are present when carrying out works (discuss special circumstances with the Environmental Officer) and follow the ADA water vole mitigation guide	Environmental Officer	Ongoing	Measures incorporated in management plans	<i>Water vole friendly ditch maintenance practices were adhered to.</i>
		1.2	Publicise good practice for rat control near drainage ditches	Environmental Officer, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	Good practice publicised	<i>Good practice for rat control was publicised via Environmental Officers newsletter issue 5.</i>
2	Enhance drainage ditch habitat to benefit water vole	2.1	Look for opportunities to add a marginal shelf when re-profiling banks	Environmental Officer	Ongoing	(a) Opportunities identified (b) Measures taken	<i>(a) No opportunities identified during the period (b) No measures taken.</i>
		2.2	Consider using coir roll to stabilise banks and provide marginal vegetation	Environmental Officer	Ongoing	(a) Sites considered (b) Measures taken	<i>No appropriate sites for this measure identified.</i>
3	Monitor water vole populations	3.1	Set up a survey programme to monitor water vole populations	Environmental Officer, Wildlife Trust	2010	Surveys carried out	<i>Informal checks are carried out by the EO. Other surveys are being carried out in the Great Fen Project area.</i>
		3.2	Provide data on water vole to the relevant Biological Records Centres	Environmental Officer, CPBRC, NBIS	Ongoing	Data sent via Environmental Officer annually	<i>Records passed on.</i>

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4	Control mink as necessary	4.2	Carry out mink control as part of the Middle Level programme and report all sightings to the Environmental Officer	Environmental Officer	Ongoing	(a) Number of trapping days (b) Number of mink caught	<i>Mink traps & support available from the Environmental Officer.</i>
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Otter Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Improve otter habitat	1.1	Identify and maintain existing key bushes and trees near watercourses likely to be important for otters	Environmental Officer	2012 and ongoing	Sites identified and listed in management plans	<i>Any key bushes and trees will be identified as the management plan map is developed.</i>
2	Monitor otter populations	2.3	Ensure any dead otters are reported to the Environmental Officer and transferred to the Environment Agency for post mortem	Environment Agency	Ongoing	Otters reported to Environmental Officer, if found	<i>No dead otters recorded. Otter signs regularly recorded on the Great Raveley Drain and Monks Lode.</i>
3	Reduce otter deaths related to eel and crayfish trapping and road traffic	3.1	Report incidents of suspected illegal netting, trapping or fishing to the Environment Agency Fisheries Officers and the MLC Environmental Officer	Environment Agency, Angling Clubs & syndicates	Ongoing	Incidents reported, if discovered	<i>No illegal netting incidents recorded however incidents of otters being drowned in illegal eel nets increased elsewhere in 2014. Members are requested to be watchful for suspicious activity and report it to the Environmental Officer on 07765 597775 immediately.</i>

Bats Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Improve habitat for bats	1.1	Put up at least one bat box at an appropriate site, e.g. a pumping station	Bat Conservation Trust	2015	Number of bat boxes sited	<i>One. Installed at Conington Mill PS in 2012.</i>
		1.2	Pollard suitable trees to provide bat roosts		Ongoing	Number of trees pollarded	<i>Any suitable trees to be identified.</i>
		1.3	Identify potential sites for a bat hibernaculum, e.g. in disused buildings or tunnels	Environmental Officer , Bat Conservation Trust	As opportunities arise	(a) Potential sites looked for (b) Site created	<i>Potential sites are being looked for.</i>
2	Collect information on bat populations	2.1	Monitor bat boxes	Bat Conservation Trust	2015 onwards	(a) Number of boxes monitored (b) Number of boxes used by bats	(a) One (b) One <i>The bat box on the old Conington Mill Pumping Station was checked on 04/05/15 and recent bat droppings were found in it confirming its use.</i>
		2.2	Pass bat box information to CPBRC and NBIS	Environmental Officer, CPBRC, NBIS	2015 onwards	Data via Environmental Officer annually	<i>Data will be forwarded.</i>

Kingfisher Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Improve the quality of kingfisher habitat	1.1	Provide at least one potential nest hole in sheet pilings	Environmental Officer	Ongoing	Number of nest sites provided	<i>A kingfisher hole was drilled in steel piles at Conington Mill PS in May 2014.</i>
		1.2	Leave kingfisher fishing perches where possible (e.g. occasional branch)	Environmental Officer	Ongoing	Number of perch sites left	<i>Many natural perching sites exist on Board drains.</i>
2	Collect records of kingfisher breeding between March and July	2.1	Note sightings of potential breeding kingfisher and pass information to CPBRC and NBIS via the Environmental Officer	Environmental Officer, CPBRC, NBIS	Ongoing	Data sent via Environmental Officer annually	<i>No specific breeding sites identified but kingfishers are regularly active on the drains around the District.</i>

Barn Owl Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Improve the quality of barn owl habitat	1.1	Put up at least one barn owl nest box in a suitable location	Wildlife Conservation Partnership	2015	Number of nest boxes provided	<i>One, box installed at Conington Mill PS in 2012.</i>
		1.2	Pollard suitable trees to provide natural nest sites	Environmental Officer	Ongoing	Number of trees pollarded	<i>Suitable trees to be identified.</i>

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2	Collect records of barn owl presence	2.1	Monitor nest boxes for use. Have occupied boxes checked for success by licensed barn owl ringers.	Wildlife Conservation Partnership	2015	(a) Number of nest boxes checked by licensed ringers (b) Number of nest boxes used	(a) One. (b) Barn owls produced two broods from the Conington Mill PS box in 2014. 1st brood 4 fledged, 2 nd brood 3 fledged. Stock doves present in May 2015.
		2.2	Pass barn owl box information to CPBRC and NBIS	Environmental Officer, Wildlife Conservation Partnership, CPBRC, NBIS	2015	Data sent via Environmental Officer annually	Data sent..

Procedural Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Provide training on IDB BAP and conservation management of drainage channels for all relevant staff by 2013	1.1	Establish programme of 1-day courses for IDB staff and members	Environmental Officer, Wildlife Trust, Natural England, other specialists	Ongoing	(a) Number of courses held (b) Number of Board members / staff attending courses	(a & b) 5 events held during the period,- an evening and morning training course on Water Vole and Otter Field Sign Identification on 20 th & 22 nd March 2014 and on 8 th & 11 th and 15 th & 18 th April 2015, a course on Identifying Non-native Invasive Water Plants on 26/09/14 and the annual IDB BAP Meeting on 03/12/14 (b) One, Russell Wright attended. All Board members are very welcome to attend the next BAP meeting which will be held at the Oliver Cromwell Hotel on Wednesday 2nd December 2015.

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		1.2	Establish suitable training for contractors' staff	Environmental Officer, Contractors	As required	Contractors attended training course	<i>One contractor (Aquatic Control) attended the Invasive Plants ID course and one contractor (Fen Ditching) attended the Water Vole & Otter Field Signs course</i>
2	Take biodiversity into account when planning and undertaking capital works	2.1	Consult with the Environmental Officer and choose the best possible mitigation solutions for biodiversity, e.g. fish-friendly pumps	Environmental Officer	Ongoing	(a) Number of capital schemes undertaken (b) Number of schemes commented on	<i>(a) No capital schemes undertaken. (b) No schemes commented on.</i>

Cliff Carson Environmental Officer 06/05/15



A check on 04/05/15 revealed bat droppings inside the box installed at Conington Mill Pumping Station indicated it had been occupied, probably by just a single bat at present.



Badger non-return gates were installed at six holes near Conington Mill Pumping Station during November 2014. Activity in the area has resumed in 2015. New exclusion licences will be applied for that area and two other sites around the District.



Badger activity at the side of Monks Lode south of Conington Fen Bridge at March 2015.



A black poplar cutting planted at the south end of Monk's Lode on 04/05/15.



Stock doves made an early nesting start in the Conington Mill nest box producing two near fledged young by 4th May 2015. It is possible the barn owls that produced two broods there in 2014 may return to re-claim it.