

**WITHAM FIRST  
DISTRICT INTERNAL  
DRAINAGE BOARD**



**BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN  
2010**

This Biodiversity Action Plan has been prepared by the Witham First Internal Drainage Board in accordance with the commitment in the Implementation Plan of the DEFRA Internal Drainage Board Review for IDBs to produce their own Biodiversity Action Plans by April, 2010.

It also demonstrates the Board's commitment to fulfilling its duty as a public body under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 to conserve biodiversity.

Many of the Board's activities have benefits for biodiversity, not least its water level management and ditch maintenance work. It is hoped that this Biodiversity Action Plan will help the Board to maximise the biodiversity benefits from its activities and demonstrate its contribution to the Government's UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets.

The Board has adopted the Biodiversity Action Plan as one of its policies and is committed to its implementation. It will review the plan periodically and update it as appropriate.

*B S Leggate*

*26<sup>th</sup> February 2010*

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Date .....

B S Leggate Esq  
Chairman of the Board

This Biodiversity Action Plan is a public statement by the Board of its biodiversity objectives and the methods by which it intends to achieve them.

We would welcome appropriate involvement in the delivery of the Plan from interested organisations, companies, and individuals.

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## SUMMARY OF WITHAM FIRST INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD ACTIONS

<b>THEME</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>
RECORDING	Record location and extent of common reed margins Record location and extent of wet woodlands Record water voles, otters, reed buntings, barn owls, grass snakes, toads and toad spawn, eels, bats, UK Biodiversity animal species not directly associated with watercourses, and other fauna of interest
MAPPING	Use GIS to map location and extent of common reed margins Use GIS to map location and extent of wet woodlands Use GIS to map location of records of water voles, otters, reed buntings, barn owls, grass snakes, toads and toad spawn, eels, bats, UK Biodiversity animal species not directly associated with watercourses, and other fauna of interest
CREATION	Create new common reed margins Create new lengths of watercourses to offset lengths lost to culverting Create new water vole habitat Create otter holts Create habitat for reed buntings Create additional barn owl nesting sites Create bat roosting sites
MAINTENANCE	Resist culverting of watercourses Maintain existing barn owl nest boxes Habitat suitable for grass snakes
BIODIVERSITY TRAINING	Provide Biodiversity related training to Board staff and contractors
PROVISION OF ADVICE	Provide Biodiversity related advice to landowners and developers
PUBLICITY	Publicise Biodiversity related work undertaken by the Board

## IDB BIODIVERSITY – AN INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

The IDB has conducted a biodiversity audit of its district and identified those habitats and species that would benefit from particular management or actions by the IDB. Using this information, which is presented in later sections, the IDB's Biodiversity Action Plan has been developed. The Plan identifies objectives for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity within the drainage district, and goes on to describe targets and actions that will hopefully deliver these objectives. The intention is to integrate, as appropriate, biodiversity into the Board's activities, such as annual maintenance programmes and capital works projects.

The action plan will help to safeguard the biodiversity of the drainage district now and for future generations. In particular, it is hoped that implementing the plan will contribute to the achievement of local and national targets for UK BAP priority species and habitats. Species and habitats which are not listed in the UK BAP but may be locally significant for a variety of reasons have also been considered.

The Plan is an evolving document that will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. It covers the entire drainage district of the IDB, as shown in Figure 1.

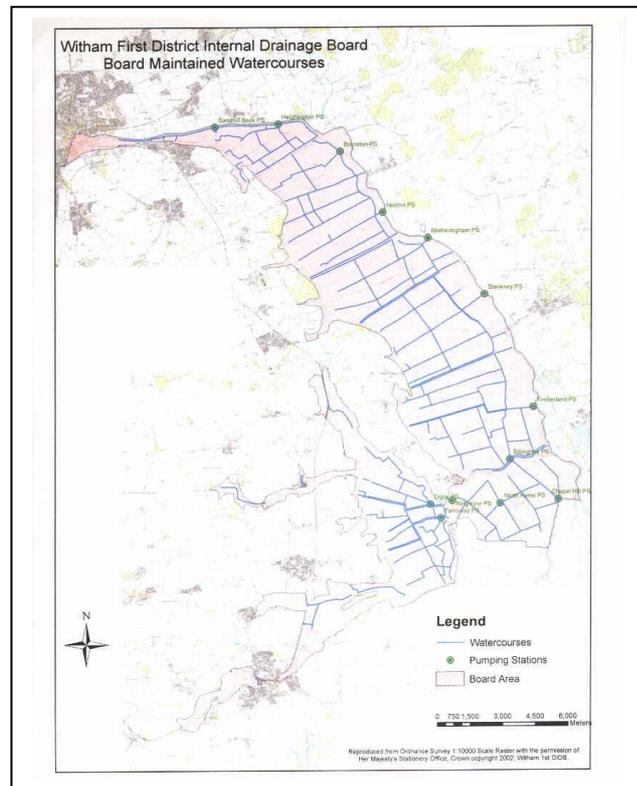


Figure 1. Witham First District Internal Drainage Board area.

### What is Biodiversity?

The Convention on Biodiversity agreed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 defined biodiversity as:

*“The variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.”*

Biodiversity can be defined simply as “the variety of life” and encompasses the whole spectrum of living organisms, including plants, birds, mammals, and insects. It includes both common and rare species, as well as the genetic diversity within species. Biodiversity also refers to the habitats and ecosystems that support these species.

### **The Importance of Conserving Biodiversity**

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Biodiversity is a vital resource and it is essential to acknowledge its importance to our lives along with the range of benefits that it produces:

- Supply of ecosystem services – water, nutrients, climate change mitigation, pollination
- Life resources – food, medicine, energy and raw materials
- Improved health and well-being
- Landscape and cultural distinctiveness
- Direct economic benefits from biodiversity resources and ‘added value’ through local economic activity and tourism
- Educational, recreational and amenity resources

### **The Biodiversity Action Planning Framework**

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This IDB Biodiversity Action Plan is part of a much larger biodiversity framework that encompasses international, national and local levels of biodiversity action planning and conservation.

### **Biodiversity – The International Context**

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The international commitment to halt the worldwide loss of habitats and species and their genetic resources was agreed in 1992 at United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development, commonly known as the Rio Earth Summit. Over 150 countries, including the United Kingdom, signed the Convention on Biological Diversity, pledging to contribute to the conservation of biodiversity at the global level. These states made a commitment to draw up national strategies to address the losses to global biodiversity and to resolve how economic development could go hand in hand with the maintenance of biodiversity.

The Rio Convention includes a global commitment to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level ([www.biodiv.org/convention/default.html](http://www.biodiv.org/convention/default.html)). The 2002 World Summit in Johannesburg on Sustainable Development subsequently endorsed this target.

### **Biodiversity – The National Context**

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The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) is the UK commitment to Article 6A of the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity. It describes the UK's priority species and habitats, and seeks to benefit 65 priority habitats and 1149 species in total. It identifies other key areas for action such as the building of partnerships for conserving biodiversity and gathering vital biodiversity data.

In England, *Working with the Grain of Nature* sets out the Government's strategy for conserving and enhancing biological diversity, and establishes programmes of action for integrating biodiversity into policy and planning for key sectors, together with appropriate targets and indicators. The Strategy has a Water and Wetlands Working Group and an associated programme of action that includes:

- Integrating biodiversity into whole-catchment management.
- Achieving net gain in water and wetland BAP priority habitats through Water Level Management Plans, Catchment Flood Management Plans, and sustainable flood management approaches.

### **Local Biodiversity Action Plans**

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For the UK Biodiversity Action Plan to be implemented successfully it requires some means of ensuring that the national strategy is translated into effective action at the local level. The UK targets for the management, enhancement, restoration, and creation of habitats and species populations have therefore been translated into targets in Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs), which tend to operate at the county level.

## **Internal Drainage Boards and Biodiversity**

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The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on IDBs to conserve biodiversity. As a public body, every IDB must have regard in exercising its functions, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

The Act states that conserving biodiversity includes restoring or enhancing a population or habitat. In so doing, an IDB should have regard to the list published by the Secretary of State of living organisms and types of habitat that are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. In effect, this list comprises the Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and habitats for England.

In 2007, the Government's IDB Review Implementation Plan established a commitment that IDBs should produce their own Biodiversity Action Plans.

This IDB Biodiversity Action Plan has been produced to help fulfil these requirements and seeks to set out targets and actions that complement the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

## **The Aims of the IDB Biodiversity Action Plan**

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The aims of this IDB BAP are:

- To ensure that habitat and species targets from the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and the local LBAP are translated into effective action within the drainage district.
- To identify targets for other habitats and species of local importance within the drainage district.
- To develop effective local partnerships to ensure that programs for biodiversity conservation are maintained in the long term.
- To raise awareness within the IDB and locally of the need for biodiversity conservation, and to provide guidance to landowners, occupiers and their representatives on biodiversity and inland water management.
- To ensure that opportunities for conservation and enhancement of biodiversity are fully considered throughout the IDB's operations, and
- To monitor and report on progress in biodiversity conservation.

## THE IDB BAP PROCESS

### **The Biodiversity Audit**

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To produce this IDB Biodiversity Action Plan, information on the habitats and species present in the catchment was first obtained. This “Biodiversity Audit” involved the collation of existing data held by the IDB and by other biodiversity partners.

### **Evaluating and Prioritising Habitats and Species**

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The Biodiversity Audit identified those priority habitats and species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan that can be found in the drainage district. Additional non-BAP habitats and species deemed to be important within the drainage district were also identified.

Further habitats and species, together with additional targets and actions, may be added in the future, as knowledge is improved and delivery of the IDB BAP is reviewed.

A range of criteria was then used to select those species and habitats that are of particular importance to the IDB – that is to say, those habitats and species that could benefit from IDB actions. The criteria used included their national and local status, the opportunities for effective IDB action and the resources available.

### **Setting Objectives, Targets and Indicators**

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For each habitat and species identified as being important to the IDB, conservation objectives and targets have been drawn up and set out in the Plan. The objectives express the IDB’s broad aims for benefiting a particular habitat or species. The related targets have been set to focus IDB programmes of action and to identify outcomes that can be monitored to measure achievement. For each target an indicator has been set – a measurable feature of the target that, when monitored over time, allows delivery to be assessed.

In order for this BAP to be as effective as possible the targets and actions have been devised to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-limited). The targets are ambitious, but are also considered to be proportionate and practicable given the resources available.

Procedural targets and actions have also been considered. These are targets that the Board will use to measure the way in which it considers and incorporates biodiversity across the whole range of its operations. These may involve changes to administrative, management and operating procedures.

### **Implementation**

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Once targets have been set for habitats and species, it is important that the actions to deliver the Biodiversity Action Plan are described. The Plan sets out how the Board intends to implement the actions in the plan, often in partnership with other organisations or individuals.

### **Monitoring**

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Achievement of the Plan targets will be measured by a programme of monitoring which the Board will undertake, in some instances with assistance from its partners, and the methods to be used are described in the Plan.

### **Reporting and Reviewing Progress**

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It is important to review the implementation of the BAP, assess changes in the status of habitats and species and the overall feasibility of objectives and targets. In addition, it is vital that the successful achievement of targets is recorded and the gains for biodiversity registered in the public domain.

The Plan sets out the methods the IDB will be using to review the delivery of targets and to communicate progress to partner organisations and the public.

## THE BIODIVERSITY AUDIT

### Introduction

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The following Sections 4, 5 and 6 summarise the results of the Biodiversity Audit, undertaken in 2009. Section 4 provides information about the drainage district and a list of the nature conservation sites that occur within or bordering its boundaries. Sections 5 and 6 list respectively the habitats and species occurring within the district that are of potential importance to the IDB.

### Local Biodiversity Action Plans

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The following Local Biodiversity Action Plans cover the IDB's drainage district:

- Lincolnshire
- Lincoln City

### IDB Biodiversity Audit Boundary

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The Biodiversity Audit covers the entire district of the IDB, as shown in Figure 1. Where data has been obtained that shows a record of a species in a 1km square or 10km square which the district wholly or partially covers, this has been included in the area of the audit.

### Sources of Data - Habitats

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Information on habitats of relevance occurring within the drainage district was obtained from the following sources:

- The conservation files of Witham First IDB
- Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre

### Sources of Data - Species

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Information on species of relevance occurring within the drainage district was obtained from the following sources:

- The conservation files of Witham First IDB
- Ecological surveys undertaken by Witham First IDB
- Protected species surveys undertaken by Witham First IDB
- Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre

## NATURE CONSERVATION SITES

### The Drainage District

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The rated drainage district covers an area of 157.5 km<sup>2</sup> and contains 269 km of IDB-maintained watercourses.

It is an area of Lincolnshire fenland which stretches north and north-west from Chapel Hill near Billingham as far as Lincoln, on the south and south-west side of the River Witham. It includes the fens of the villages lying to the west on the adjacent high ground ie Billingham, Walcott, Thorpe Tilney, Timberland, Martin, Blankney, Metheringham, Dunston, Nocton, Potterhanworth, Branston, Heighington and Washingborough. A small north running side-arm of fenland lies within the Boards' area and this extends from between North Kyme and Anwick north to near Metheringham, and it includes the fens of Anwick, Ruskington, Dorrington and Digby. There are two arms of land within the Board's area which extend west away from the fens. One runs from Digby Fen, west past Digby village as far as Ashby-de-la Launde. The other runs from Anwick Fen west past Anwick village (near which there is a small "island" of high ground outside the Board's area), then south-west through the outskirts of Sleaford, to Quarrington, Rauceby Station and South Rauceby.

### Geology

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The geology of the Board's area which lies in the arms of fenland is fen peat. The arms of the Board's area which extend outside the fens have geology of boulder clay, sand and gravel, and limestone.

### Landscape

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#### Landscape Designations

There are no National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the drainage district.

#### Landscape Character

Natural England has divided the whole of England into a number of Joint Character Areas (JCA) based on characteristic landforms, wildlife and land use. They are not designations and are not confined by traditional administrative boundaries. For each JCA, Natural England has prepared a profile that characterises the wildlife and natural features, identifies the influences that act upon those features and sets objectives for nature conservation.

The fenland parts of the Board's area are within The Fens character area. The arms of the Board's area which extend outside the fens, however lie within the Southern Lincolnshire Edge character area.

#### Sites and Monuments Records

Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM) are not directly related to Biodiversity matters. Information held by the Board and other sources has not therefore been collated. SAM are only relevant where they abut the Board's watercourses and they would be referred to on a site by site basis as appropriate.

#### Tree Preservation Orders

Tree Preservation Orders(TPO) are not directly related to Biodiversity matters since they are made on individual trees, groups or woods for landscape and visual amenity reasons. Information held by the Board and other sources has not therefore been collated. TPO are only relevant where they occur adjacent to the Board's watercourses and they would be referred to on a site by site basis as appropriate.

## Statutory Nature Conservation Sites

### International Sites

There are no internationally designated nature conservation sites within the district.

### National Sites

Two nationally designated nature conservation sites are found within or close to the boundary of the district, as follows:

Site name	Designation	Features Relevant to IDB
Potterhanworth Wood	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Ancient broad-leaved woodland
Wilsford & Rauceby Warren	SSSI	Unimproved limestone and sandy grassland, wet woodland, open water

### Local Nature Reserves

The following Local Nature Reserves, which are designated by local authorities under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, are found within the district:

Site name	Designation	Features Relevant to IDB
Lollycocks Field	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Pond, wetland vegetation
Mareham Pastures	LNR	Grassland

### Non-statutory Local Sites

A number of sites have been identified locally as being important for wildlife. Whilst these designations do not have statutory status, the sites themselves are important for their contribution to biodiversity and planning policy requires that they are given consideration. The following local sites are to be found within or bordering the drainage district:

Site name	Designation	Features Relevant to IDB
Sleaford Fen TF 054 457	Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	Wet woodland, ditches, open water
Sleaford Meadows TF 061 456	LWS	Damp grassland, ditches
Branston Booths Pits TF 060 691	Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI)	Open water, swamp, marsh
Nocton Delph TF 085 643-127 664	LWS	Open water, swamp
Sincil Dyke TF 056 714	SNCI	Open water
Branston Delph TF 061 691-089 709	LWS	Open water, marsh, ditches
Washingborough Junction TF 012 708	LWS	Open water, damp grassland, ditches

Metheringham Delph TF 108 622-155 651	SNCI	Open water, reedbeds
Bardney Ponds TF 115 680	SNCI	Open water, water birds
Timberland Delph TF 132 592- 179 611	SNCI	Open water
Billingham Skirth TF 140532- 150 534	SNCI	Open water
Fish Nursery TF 145 539	SNCI	Open water, reedbed
Billingham Skirth Borrow Pit TF 149 531	SNCI	Open water, swamp
North Kyme Common TF 148 532-170 552	SNCI	Open water, marsh
Chapel Hill Osier Bed TF 199 539	SNCI	Wet woodland

## HABITAT AUDIT

### Habitat Audit Summary

This habitat audit summary lists the broad habitat types and UK BAP priority habitats that occur within the IDB district as identified by the information gathering exercise. Also listed are habitats deemed to be of local importance and/or featured in the county Local Biodiversity Action Plan that occur in the IDB district. Habitats that are of potential importance for the IDB, where water level management or other IDB activities may be of benefit, are identified. Finally, brief notes are included on the potential for the IDB to maintain, restore or expand its important habitats.

Broad Habitat Types	UK BAP Priority Habitat	Local Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat	Habitat of Importance for IDB	Location of Habitat of Importance for IDB	IDB Potential for Maintaining, Restoring or Expanding Habitat
Fen, marsh & swamp	Reedbeds	Fens & wet reedbeds	Reedbed	Isolated open water bodies. Extensive reed margins on some watercourses	Potential to expand reedbed habitat by extending existing margins
Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland	Wet woodland	Wet woodland	Wet woodland	Marginal to isolated open water bodies and some larger channels	Very limited potential to expand this habitat by extending existing stands, for which information is needed
Rivers and streams & Standing open water and canals	N/A	Rivers, canals and drains	Drains	All of the Board's watercourses with permanent water	Potential to restore permanent water to dry or only seasonally wet drains, and to create new watercourses to offset loss to culverting

## **Habitats of Importance for the IDB**

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The following section provides more information on the status and location of the habitats within the drainage district that are of importance for the IDB and may benefit from water level management or other IDB activities.

### **Reedbeds**

Reedbeds within the Board's watercourses are linear features, often of considerable length but of limited width. Other reedbeds in the area are associated with bodies of standing water, such as old pits, where the reeds form marginal stands.

### **Wet woodland**

Wet woodlands are those which are dominated by species of willow, with alder and less often downy birch. Their ground flora resembles reedbed, fen and marsh vegetation, so woodlands which are composed of willows but which have a dry land ground flora are excluded from this habitat category. Wet woodlands in the Board's area typically occur as small and very small stands at sites where there are open water, reedbed and fen habitats.

### **Drains**

Watercourses which retain at least some depth of water all year round fall into this habitat category, which therefore excludes those which are dry or only seasonally wet. The drains occur throughout the Board's area.

**SPECIES AUDIT**

**Species Audit Summary**

This species audit summary lists the BAP priority species that occur within the IDB district as identified by the information gathering exercise. Also listed are species deemed to be of local importance and/or identified in the county Local Biodiversity Action Plan that occur in the IDB district. Species that are of potential importance for the IDB, where water level management or other IDB activities may be of benefit, are identified. Finally, brief notes are included on the potential for the IDB to maintain or increase the population or range of species of importance.

Common Name	Group	Order	Scientific Name	UK BAP Priority Species	Local Biodiversity Action Plan(s) Species	Non-BAP Species But Important in IDB District	Location of Species of Importance for IDB	IDB Potential for Maintaining or Increasing Species Population or Range
Water Vole	Terrestrial mammals	Terrestrial mammals	<i>Arvicola terrestris</i>	Yes	Local Biodiversity Action Plans for Lincoln City and Lincolnshire	No	Probably throughout the Board's area with the exception of smaller headwaters	Creating suitable habitat
Reed bunting	Birds	Bird	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus schoeniclus</i>	Yes	Local Biodiversity Action Plans for Lincoln City and Lincolnshire	No	Likely to be breeding throughout the Board's area	Creating suitable habitat
Barn owl	Birds	Bird	<i>Tyto alba</i>	No	Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Lincolnshire as part of a suite of farmland birds	Yes	Channel banks. Owl boxes at 20 locations	Providing nesting sites

**Witham First District Internal Drainage Board – Biodiversity Action Plan**

Otter	Terrestrial mammals	Terrestrial mammals	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Yes	Local Biodiversity Action Plans for Lincolnshire	No	Scattered	Creating artificial holts
Eel	Fish	Fish	<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>	Yes	Not yet added to Local Plans	No	Probably throughout the Board's area	Establishing baseline
Grass snake	Reptile	Reptile	<i>Natrix natirx</i>	Yes	Not yet added to Local Plans	No	Channels and their banks, including drying out weed rakings	Creating suitable habitat
Toad	Amphibian	Amphibian	<i>Bufo bufo</i>	Yes	Not yet added to Local Plans	No	Probably throughout the Board's area	Establishing baseline
Bats	Terrestrial mammals	Terrestrial mammals	<i>Chiroptera</i>	Yes	Local Biodiversity Action Plans for Lincoln City and Lincolnshire	No	Channels and possibly buildings	Provide suitable roosting sites

**Species of Importance for the IDB**

The following section provides more information on the status and location of the species within the drainage district that are of importance for the IDB and may benefit from water level management or other IDB activities.

**Water Vole**

Water voles are probably widespread throughout the Board's area.

In the period 2002-2009 records were made from Bottom Carrier Drain, Timberland Cross Drain, Boathouse Drain, Dales Dyke, Tyndells Witham Bankside Drain, Roberts Drain, Middle Drain, New Drain, Sharpes Drain, Little Todhill Drain, Branston Causeway Drain, Main Drain, Black Drove, Dorrington Middle Drain, Swallows Drain, Walcott Bank Drain South, Timberland Town Dyke, Black Fen Lane Drain, Bells Drain, Sandhill Bankside Drain East, Bentons Drain, Ruskington Middle Drain, Dunns Dyke, Walcott Bank North Drain, Blankney Town Dyke, Mill Drain, Dorrington Middle Drain, Martin Town Dyke, Horseshoe Drain, Metherringham Delphside, Nocton Delphside, Lintins Drain, Branston Beck, Fletchers Dyke, Whittakers Dyke, Smallholding Dyke, Blankney Delphside Drain, Branston Sewer, North Drain, Dogdyke Fen Drain, Dales Head Drain South, Odds Dyke, Dorrington Bankside Drain, Billinghay Soak Dyke, twenty Foot Drain, Twelve Foot Drain.

### **Barn Owl**

Barn owls occur across the Board's area, making use of the grasslands of the watercourse banks for hunting. The extensive network of watercourses with their rough grassland banks within the arable dominated landscape of the Board's area doubtless helps to maintain to population of barn owls.

Boxes have been erected for barn owls at pumping stations and on poles at Sandhill Beck, 5 Mile Lane, Heighington Pumping Station, Middle Fen Lane, Branston Booths, Nocton Fen, Nocton Delph Side, Dunston Washway, Blankney, Kirkby Green, Timberland Fen, Timberland Boat House Drain, Walcott, Digby Fen, North Kyme Fen, Billingham, Billingham Skirth, North Kyme Pumping Station, Chapel Hill, North Kyme Farroway.

### **Otter**

In keeping with the general expansion of otters within Lincolnshire and neighbouring counties, due to release and natural spread, otters are now probably resident within the Board's area but remain elusive and sightings and signs are sparse.

### **Reed Bunting**

Reed buntings are probably widespread throughout the Board's area wherever the tall marginal vegetation of the watercourses, including reed fringes, is of sufficient size and appropriate quality from the bird's perspective. The distribution of drains enables reed buntings to occur across tracts of arable dominated land which they would not otherwise find suitable. Current records are from Farroway Bankside Drain, Ruskington Middle Drain and Longstongs.

### **Grass snake**

There are several recent records of grass snake from the Board's area, which is surprising since the arable dominated farmland would not be expected to be the most promising habitat. Grass snakes are probably widespread throughout the Board's area. Records from the period 2002-2009 are from Timberland Town Dyke, Sandhill Bankside Drain West, Sandhill Beck Pumping Station, Main Engine Drain Timberland, Timberland Pumping Station, Timberland Fen.

### **Eel**

Eels are probably widespread through the Board's area.

**Toad**

Toads may be widespread through the Board's area but records are few.

**Bats**

Bats are probably widespread throughout the Board's area, using the watercourses for foraging and commuting. Buildings may be used for roosting.

## HABITAT AND SPECIES ACTION PLANS

### Habitat and Species Action Plans

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The following sections contain action plans for each of the habitats and species that have been prioritised for action by the IDB. The plans set out the objectives, targets and actions that the IDB believes are appropriate for each. These plans will be reviewed and updated periodically.

## HABITAT ACTION PLANS

### Reedbeds

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Reedbeds are important nationally, regionally and in Lincolnshire for plants and animals which are specially adapted to this habitat, including bittern, marsh harrier and reed warbler.

Reedbeds is a UK Biodiversity Priority Habitat and is the subject of a UK Habitat Action Plan. Reedbeds are included in the Lincolnshire BAP under the heading of Fens, Swamps and Wet Reedbeds.

### National UK BAP Targets

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National BAP Targets for reedbeds are to rehabilitate priority areas of existing reedbed (targeting those of 2ha or more); maintain priority areas of existing reedbed by active management; and to create 1,200 ha of new reedbed on land of low nature conservation interest.

### Local Biodiversity Action Plan Targets

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Targets for reedbeds in the Lincolnshire BAP (included in with fens and swamps) are to establish a baseline for extent and condition of the habitat; maintaining the current extent of the habitat; achieving favourable condition of the habitat on 95% of sites; and expand the area of the habitat by 280 ha.

### Local Status

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In Lincolnshire large reedbeds are now rare. Large areas of the habitat are confined to a few sites and there are many smaller examples, such as in pits and along watercourses.

### Status within the Drainage District

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Records of areas of this habitat in the drainage district are as yet scarce. Reedbeds are likely to be confined to a few watercourses where common reed forms a margin to the channel on one or both sides. The information is not available to state whether the extent of the habitat has changed in the recent past.

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Reporting
1	Identify location and extent of watercourse margins which are dominated by common reed	1.1	Record in the field the location of stands of common reed, and record length and width	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Reed stand length and width (m), and area (sqm)	2010 onwards
		1.2	Map location and extent of reedbed margins on GIS	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of GIS polygons	2010 onwards
2	Create 500m of new reedbed habitat in the drainage district	2.1	Extend existing stands of common reed	Landowners	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Reed stand length and width (m), and area (sqm)	Annual
		2.2	Create new stands of common reed which are not associated with existing stands	Landowners	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Reed stand length and width (m), and area	Annual

### Associated Species

Reed bunting, reed warbler

## **Wet Woodland**

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Wet Woodlands are important nationally, regionally and in Lincolnshire for plants and animals which are specially adapted to this habitat, including mosses and invertebrates.

Wet Woodlands is a UK Biodiversity Priority Habitat and is the subject of a UK Habitat Action Plan. Wet Woodlands are included in the Lincolnshire BAP.

### **National UK BAP Targets**

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National BAP Targets for Wet Woodlands are to maintain the total extent and distribution of this habitat, create and/or restore new wet woodland on unwooded sites or by conversion of plantations, and to achieve favourable condition in wet woodlands on designated and other sites.

### **Local Biodiversity Action Plan Targets**

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Targets for Wet Woodlands in the Lincolnshire BAP are to establish a baseline for existing extent and condition, maintain the current extent of this habitat, achieve favourable condition on 75% of sites, and create new areas of wet woodland.

### **Local Status**

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Wet Woodlands occur throughout Lincolnshire but extensive areas are scarce. Large areas of the habitat are confined to a few sites (eg woods on the springlines at the junction of clays with sandstone in the Spilsby area) and there are many smaller examples, such as in and beside old mineral workings and along watercourses.

### **Status within the Drainage District**

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Records of areas of this habitat in the drainage district are as yet scarce. The information is not available to state whether the extent of the habitat has changed in the recent past.

**IDB Objectives and Targets**

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Reporting
1	Identify location and extent of wet woodlands	1.1	Record in the field the location of stands of wet woodland, and record length and width	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Woodland stand length and width (m), and area (sqm)	2010 onwards
		1.2	Map location and extent of wet woodland on GIS	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of GIS polygons	2010 onwards

**Associated Species**

Water vole, otter

## **Drains**

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Drains and extensive systems of drains are important nationally, regionally and in Lincolnshire for aquatic and riparian plants and animals.

Drains are a UK Biodiversity Broad Habitat (as part of Rivers and Streams). Drains are included in the Lincolnshire BAP under the heading of Rivers, canals and drains.

### **National UK BAP Targets**

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There is no UK BAP Habitat Action Plan.

### **Local Biodiversity Action Plan Targets**

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Targets for Drains in the Lincolnshire BAP are to achieve favourable condition for all designated stretches of drains, and to restore degraded areas of floodplain, including drains.

### **Local Status**

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Drains occur throughout Lincolnshire and are most extensive in the Fens, Isle of Axholme and the Lindsey Middle Marsh and Outmarsh. There is considerable variation in size of drain channels and the degree to which they hold water.

### **Status within the Drainage District**

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Drains are widespread within in the drainage district. The information is not available to state whether the extent of the habitat has changed in the recent past.

**IDB Objectives and Targets**

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Reporting
1	No net loss of length of watercourse within the drainage district	1.1	Resist culverting of watercourses	Local Authorities	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of applications for watercourses culverting	Annual
		1.2	Create new lengths of watercourses to equal or exceed lengths lost to culverting, at least in the same catchment as the culverting	Landowners	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Length (m) of watercourse created	Annual

**Associated Species**

Water vole, otter, reed bunting, reed warbler, invertebrates, fish

## SPECIES ACTION PLANS

### **Water Vole**

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Water vole is a UK BAP Priority Species and is a Priority Species in the Lincolnshire BAP.

Water voles occur found throughout Britain but they are confined mainly to lowland areas near water. Once nationally common and widespread, this species has suffered a significant decline in numbers and distribution. A national survey in 1989-90 failed to find signs of voles in 67% of sites where they were previously recorded and it is estimated that this will rise to 94% by the turn of the century. As reaches of rivers, stream and drains become unsuitable for habitation, or water voles are lost from, the distribution of water voles becomes discontinuous and existing sites become isolated and vulnerable.

The same picture holds true in a regional context but water voles remain widespread in Lincolnshire, with little or no evidence of the severe national decline being seen.

### **Legal Protection Status**

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Water vole is fully protected under Section 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

### **National UK BAP Targets**

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National BAP Targets for water voles are to maintain the current distribution and abundance of the species in order to arrest the decline in Britain, and to restore water voles to their former widespread distribution.

### **Local Biodiversity Action Plan Targets**

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Targets for water voles in the Lincolnshire BAP are to maintain the current distribution of the species and to implement the Lincolnshire Key Water Vole Sites project.

### **Local Status**

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Water voles remain widespread in Lincolnshire, with little or no evidence of the severe national decline being seen.

### Status within the Drainage District

Water voles are probably widespread throughout the Board's area. In the period 2002-2009 records were made from many watercourses. The information is not available to state whether there has been a significant trend in the population in the recent past.

### Objectives and Targets

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Reporting
1	Collection and maintenance of water vole records within the Board's area	1.1	Continue with current system of employees and contractors recording water voles	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Recording forms returned to office	Annual
		1.2	Map location and extent of water vole records on GIS	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of GIS symbols	Annual
2	Ensure routine maintenance of water vole habitat is carried out sympathetically for this species	2.1	Continue with current system of undertaking pre-works water vole surveys	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Distance (km) of watercourses surveyed	Annual
3	Create 250-300 m of new water vole habitat	3.1	Identify suitable locations for creation of water vole habitat, working with adjacent landowners to increase the area of habitat available for vole	Landowners	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Distance (m) of watercourses so enhanced	Annual

## **Otter**

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Otter is a UK BAP Priority Species and is a Priority Species in the Lincolnshire BAP.

Formerly widespread throughout the UK, the otter underwent a rapid decline in numbers from the 1950s to 1970s and was effectively lost from midland and south-eastern counties of England by the 1980s. Populations remained in Wales, south-west England and much of Scotland, where sea loch and coastal colonies comprise one of the largest populations in Europe. The decline has now been halted and sightings are being reported in former habitats, due to natural spread and/or releases.

Otters are increasingly common in a regional context and are spreading in Lincolnshire in terms of distribution and numbers.

### **Legal Protection Status**

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The otter is listed on Appendix 1 of CITES, Appendix II of the Bern Convention and Annexes II and IV of the Habitats Directive. It is protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations, 1994 (Regulation 38). The European sub-species is also listed as globally threatened on the IUCN/WCMC RDL.

### **National UK BAP Targets**

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National BAP Targets for otters are to maintain and expand existing otter populations, and to restore breeding otters to all catchments and coastal areas where they have been recorded since 1960.

### **Local Biodiversity Action Plan Targets**

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Targets for otters in the Lincolnshire BAP are to maintain the existing populations, maintain the existing extent of suitable habitat, survey the Ancholme valley in order to determine if they are present, and to expand the range of otters in the county to all catchments if not found in the Ancholme valley.

**Local Status**

Otters are spreading in Lincolnshire in terms of distribution and numbers.

**Status within the Drainage District**

Otters are probably widespread but only scattered throughout the Board’s area, although are probably increasing.

**Objectives and Targets**

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Reporting
1	Collection and maintenance of otter records within the Board’s area	1.1	Continue with current system of employees and contractors recording otters	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Recording forms returned to office	Annual
		1.2	Map location and extent of otter records on GIS	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of GIS polygons	Annual
2	Create artificial otter holts	2.1	Locate suitable sites of creation of holts	Landowner	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of sites identified	Annual
		2.2	Create 2 holts	Landowner	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of holts created	Annual

## **Reed Bunting**

---

Reed bunting is a UK BAP Priority Species and is a Priority Species in the Lincolnshire BAP as part of a suite of farmland birds.

Reed buntings inhabit reedbeds and other wetland habitats, as well as drier farmland sites such as overgrown ditches and hedges. The species is found throughout Britain and Ireland, although it is scarcer in the uplands and the far north and west. There are also some gaps in distribution elsewhere but with no clear pattern. A decline in numbers has occurred in recent years. In Britain, BTO census results show a relatively high population level from the late 1960s to the mid 1970s, followed by a decrease of more than 50% to a new, more stable lower level during the early 1980s. The species also decreased in range by around 12% between 1968-72 and 1988-91. Reed bunting is not a species of conservation concern elsewhere in Europe where it is common and widespread.

Reed bunting is a common resident and passage Lincolnshire bird, although there has been a decline in recent years.

## **Legal Protection Status**

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Reed bunting is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and EC Birds Directive, and is listed on Appendix II of the Berne Convention.

## **National UK BAP Targets**

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National BAP Targets for reed buntings are to In the short term, halt or reverse the decline in numbers and, in the long term, recover numbers in wetland and farmland habitats.

## **Local Biodiversity Action Plan Targets**

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Targets for reed buntings, as part of a suite of lowland farmland birds, in the Lincolnshire BAP are to determine current population extent and status, determine appropriate future action, and to identify important breeding sites and to ensure their appropriate management.

## **Local Status**

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Reed bunting is a common resident and passage Lincolnshire bird, although there has been a decline in recent years.

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### Status within the Drainage District

Reed buntings are probably widespread throughout the Board's area wherever the tall marginal vegetation of the watercourses, including reed fringes, is of sufficient size and appropriate quality from the bird's perspective. The distribution of drains enables reed buntings to occur across tracts of arable dominated land which they would not otherwise find suitable. The information is not available to state whether there has been a significant trend in the population in the recent past.

### Objectives and Targets

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Reporting
1	Collection and maintenance of reed bunting records within the Board's area	1.1	Continue with current system of employees and contractors recording reed buntings	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Recording forms returned to office	Annual
		1.2	Map location and extent of reed bunting records on GIS	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of GIS polygons	Annual
2	Extend population by increasing length of reed fringe	2.1	Increase extent of marginal common reed by 500m	Landowners	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Length of new reed margin created	Annual

### **Barn Owl**

---

Barn owl is a Priority Species in the Lincolnshire BAP as part of a suite of farmland birds. Barn owl is not a UK BAP Priority Species.

Barn owls are widespread throughout the UK except for the far north of Scotland and the larger mountainous areas. Barn owl is a common resident Lincolnshire bird.

### **Legal Protection Status**

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Barn owls are fully protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 and as amended).

### **National UK BAP Targets**

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Not applicable

### **Local Biodiversity Action Plan Targets**

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Targets for barn owls, as part of a suite of lowland farmland birds, in the Lincolnshire BAP are to determine current population extent and status, determine appropriate future action, and to identify important breeding sites and to ensure their appropriate management.

### **Local Status**

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Barn owl is a common resident Lincolnshire bird.

### **Status within the Drainage District**

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Barn owls occur across the Board's area, making use of the grasslands of the watercourse banks for hunting. The extensive network of watercourses with their rough grassland banks within the arable dominated landscape of the Board's area doubtless helps to maintain the population of barn owls.

**Objectives and Targets**

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Reporting
1	Collection and maintenance of barn owl records within the Board's area	1.1	Continue with current system of employees and contractors recording barn owls	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Recording forms returned to office	Annual
		1.2	Continue with current system of checking use of and maintaining existing owl boxes	Landowners, Hawk & Owl Trust	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Recording forms returned to office	Annual
		1.3	Map location and extent of barn owl records on GIS	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of GIS polygons	Annual
2	Provide 3 new barn owl nesting boxes	2.1	Identify suitable locations for barn owl nesting boxes and install nesting boxes	Landowners, Hawk & Owl Trust	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of boxes installed	Annual

### **Grass snake**

---

Grass snake is a recently added UK BAP Priority Species. It is not yet part of the Lincolnshire BAP.

Grass snakes are found throughout England but becoming scattered to the north, often being seen close to water. They are found in the lowland parts of Wales and are only scattered and in the lowlands in Scotland.

Grass snake is widespread in Lincolnshire, including the Fens.

### **Legal Protection Status**

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Grass snakes are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 and as amended).

### **National UK BAP Targets**

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Not yet available.

### **Local Biodiversity Action Plan Targets**

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Not applicable.

### **Local Status**

---

Grass snake is widespread in Lincolnshire, including the Fens.

### **Status within the Drainage District**

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Grass snakes are probably widespread, although not common, throughout the Board's area.

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**Objectives and Targets**

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Reporting
1	Collection and maintenance of grass snake records within the Board's area	1.1	Continue with current system of employees and contractors recording grass snakes	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Recording forms returned to office	Annual
		1.2	Map location and extent of grass snake records on GIS	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of GIS polygons	Annual
2	Maintain and increase population by promoting suitable habitat	2.1	Continue current weed raking practices	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Length of channel weed raked (km)	Annual
		2.2	Continue current bank management practices	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Length of bank managed (km)	Annual

## **Toad**

---

The common toad is a recently added UK BAP Priority Species. It is not yet included in the Lincolnshire BAP.

Toads are found throughout the UK. The common toad is widespread in Lincolnshire but becomes scarcer in the Fens.

## **Legal Protection Status**

---

Toads are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 and as amended).

## **National UK BAP Targets**

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National BAP targets are not yet available.

## **Local Biodiversity Action Plan Targets**

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Not applicable.

## **Local Status**

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In Lincolnshire, toads are widespread but become scarcer in the Fens.

## **Status within the Drainage District**

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Toads are probably widespread through the Board's area.

**Objectives and Targets**

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Reporting
1	Collection and maintenance of toad records within the Board's area	1.1	Continue with current system of employees and contractors recording toads	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Recording forms returned to office	Annual
		1.2	Expand current system of recording toads to specify presence of toad spawn	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Recording forms returned to office	Annual
		1.3	Map location and extent of toad records on GIS	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of GIS polygons	Annual

## **Eel**

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Eel is a recently added UK BAP Priority Species. It is not yet included in the Lincolnshire BAP.

Eels are found throughout the UK and are widespread in Lincolnshire

### **Legal Protection Status**

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The European eel is listed on Annex 2 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species; it is deemed to be critically endangered by IUCN (ie included on its red list) and is the subject of EC Regulation 1100/2007 which requires member states to establish measures for the recovery of stock. The current eel bye laws were introduced in 2002.

### **National UK BAP Targets**

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Not yet available.

### **Local Biodiversity Action Plan Targets**

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Not applicable.

### **Local Status**

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In Lincolnshire, eels are widespread.

### **Status within the Drainage District**

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Eels are probably widespread through the Board's area.

**Objectives and Targets**

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Reporting
1	Collection and maintenance of eel records within the Board's area	1.1	Continue with current system of employees and contractors recording eels	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Recording forms returned to office	Annual
		1.2	Map location and extent of eel records on GIS	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of GIS polygons	Annual

## **Bats**

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Some species of bats are UK BAP Priority Species. All species are grouped as Priority Species in the Lincolnshire BAP. Bats are widespread in Britain and also in Lincolnshire where 11 species have been recorded.

### **Legal Protection Status**

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All species of bats are protected under Section 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Schedule 5); as amended by The Environmental Protection Act 1990, and The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994. Bats, and their roost sites, are also protected at all times from 'reckless' disturbance or damage, along with 'intentional' damage, under The Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, irrespective of whether bats are present.

### **National UK BAP Targets**

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National BAP Targets for bats include the maintenance of existing populations and geographical ranges, and restoring populations to earlier levels.

### **Local Biodiversity Action Plan Targets**

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Targets for bats in the Lincolnshire BAP are to survey and monitor the status of populations, to maintain and enhance existing populations, enhance bat foraging habitats, promote understanding of bats, and encourage appropriate building techniques.

### **Local Status**

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Bats are widespread in Lincolnshire.

### **Status within the Drainage District**

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Bats are probably widespread throughout the Board's area, using the watercourses for foraging and commuting. Buildings may be used for roosting. The information is not available to state whether there has been a significant trend in the population in the recent past.

**Objectives and Targets**

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Reporting
1	Collection and maintenance of bat records within the Board's area	1.1	Continue with current system of employees and contractors recording bats	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Recording forms returned to office	Annual
		1.2	Survey Board buildings for bats	Bat Group	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Recording forms returned to office	Annual
		1.3	Map location and extent of bat records on GIS	-	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of GIS polygons	Annual
2	Provide suitable roosting sites	2.1	Assess suitability of Board buildings for bat box siting	Bat Group	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of buildings assessed	Annual
		2.2	Assess suitability of mature trees along watercourses for bat box siting	Bat Group, Landowners	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of trees assessed	Annual
		2.3	Install 3 bat roosting boxes	Bat Group, Landowners	2010 onwards as a rolling programme	Number of boxes installed	Annual

## PROCEDURAL ACTION PLAN

### Introduction

A number of procedural targets and actions have been established within this Procedural Action Plan. These are intended to integrate biodiversity considerations into IDB practices and procedures.

### Objectives and Targets

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Reporting
1	Collect information on UK and county BAP Priority Species which are not included in this plan	1.1	Continue recording of animals such as hare and skylark as part of routine works	Contractors	Ongoing	Number of records	Annually
		1.2	Map location and extent of species records on GIS	Contractors	Ongoing	Number of GIS polygons	Annually
2	Collect information on animals which are not UK and county BAP Priority Species and which are not included in this plan	2.1	Continue recording of animals such as deer and mink as part of routine works	Contractors	Ongoing	Number of records	Annually
		2.2	Map location and extent of species records on GIS	Contractors	Ongoing	Number of GIS polygons	Annually

3	Provide BAP related training	3.1	Establish programme of short courses for Board staff	Natural England, Wildlife Trusts, EA	Ongoing	Staff and course numbers	Annually
		3.2	Establish programme of short courses for Contractors	Natural England, Wildlife Trusts, EA	Ongoing	Contractors and course numbers	Annually
4	Promote best practice in all Board functions	4.1	Require developers to follow environmental best practice guidelines	Developers, Local Authorities	Ongoing	Number of developers advised	Annually
		4.2	Advise landowners on environmental best practice	Landowners	Ongoing	Number of landowners advised	Annually
5	Promote the Board's BAP work	5.1	Publicise major and successful examples of BAP related work undertaken by the Board on its web site	-	Ongoing	Number of articles published	Annually

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Implementation**

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The actions detailed in the habitat and species action plans will be implemented predominantly through minor changes to Board management and maintenance methods. Any capital works undertaken but the Board will also allow implementation of BAP actions.

Partnership working will also allow several actions to be implemented.

## **MONITORING**

### **Monitoring**

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Monitoring of the Board's BAP will be required to ensure that the actions detailed in the habitat and species action plans are being implemented.

Monitoring of the indicators detailed in the action plans will be undertaken and recorded, generally on an annual basis.

## REVIEWING AND REPORTING PROGRESS

### **Reviewing and Reporting Progress**

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Progression of the Board's BAP require reporting to the Board, to the Lincolnshire BAP and to the UK BAP.

Progress towards each of the targets is likely to be assessed annually and it is anticipated that the Board's BAP will be fully reviewed after 5 years. The production and long-term development of the BAP is a flexible process.

Annual reporting will be done through Board meetings, and through the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS). As far as possible, targets and actions for the individual plans have been written so they fit the national BARS, which is the approved system for reporting. Using BARS, annual progress reports will be produced.