

Needham & Laddus IDB

Biodiversity Action Plan Report 2020-21

Note on 2020-21 report

In November 2020 ADA published the new updated IDB Biodiversity Plan along with guidance and a press release here:

<https://www.ada.org.uk/2020/11/ada-launches-updated-biodiversity-action-plan-for-idbs/>



Internal Drainage Board Biodiversity Action Plan

Guidance Document

November 2020

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Biodiversity Action Planning for IDBs.....	3
1. The Biodiversity Audit.....	5
2. Evaluating and Prioritising Habitats and Species.....	6
3. Defining Objectives and Actions.....	8
4. Implementation.....	10
5. Monitoring and Reporting.....	12
Further Assistance.....	12



The Conservation Officer will begin moving Board reports into this new format as soon as possible and keep the Board informed of progress. The new reports are good news for the drainage industry as they reflect years of work by many people to ensure that the most up to date legislation, policy and approaches are accessible and practicable for those involved with water level management and, by extension, wildlife conservation. The existing BAP reports provide a good foundation on which to build and update as necessary.

Report Summary

Invasive species

None noted during survey visits but please report any invasive species to the Conservation Officer so that a best course of action can be devised. See note below re mink.

Floating Pennywort continues to be found sporadically at the fringes of the Middle Level system but has not currently found its way in. All Boards are asked to keep an eye out for large rafts of a 'lily-leaf type' mass floating in the main channels as this is likely where it will turn up first. An information sheet will be shared separately and a training session has been suggested for later in the year.

Barn Owls

Reportedly active in the District. Sightings welcomed by the Conservation Officer. 2020 was an exceptionally poor year across the region.

Water Voles

Those drains where habitat is suitable appear to be well managed with consideration of marginal and bankside vegetation; the District has a good variety of drains and associated habitats of varying maturity. Water Vole burrows were noted in drain 16-11 with early feeding signs in an adjacent farm drain. The majority of drains in the District are likely to support or be capable of supporting this species – maintain existing management. Boards are reminded to contact the Conservation Officer *before* any bank reprofiling or other works that may impact water voles take place. If unsure, please contact the Conservation Officer regardless.

Mink

Mink project underway across the Middle Level; Cambridgeshire now has a dedicated mink officer, a funded position hosted by the Countryside Restoration Trust and Waterlife Recovery East (WRE). All sightings of this and other invasive species are important. All offers of financial support or physical assistance (despatch/trap checking) are welcomed for this long-term project. A more comprehensive update is available in the 2020 Natural Level newsletter.

A trap placed on the Old River Nene, adjacent the District, in response to confirmed sightings in February 2020 is active but has caught nothing to date (long may that continue!).

Kingfisher

Sightings of this species in the breeding season are welcomed by the CO to help build a picture of how the populations fare across the region. The holes provided on the Well Creek are blocked and will be cleared by the CO in 2021. Others appear in good condition.

Otter

Sightings or reports welcomed.

Other issues

Outbreaks of Bird Flu were reported in small numbers across the fens through winter 2020. Please contact the CO if you come across dead wildfowl, birds of prey or gulls.

Training/Advice

At present, the ongoing situation regarding coronavirus means no public events are allowed, however when this changes Boards will be notified. In the meantime, the Conservation Officer is happy to assist with any enquiries.

The Conservation Officer was consulted on culverting works at drain 2-1. Bank cutting of affected area suggested per guidelines and underway.

Peter Beckenham

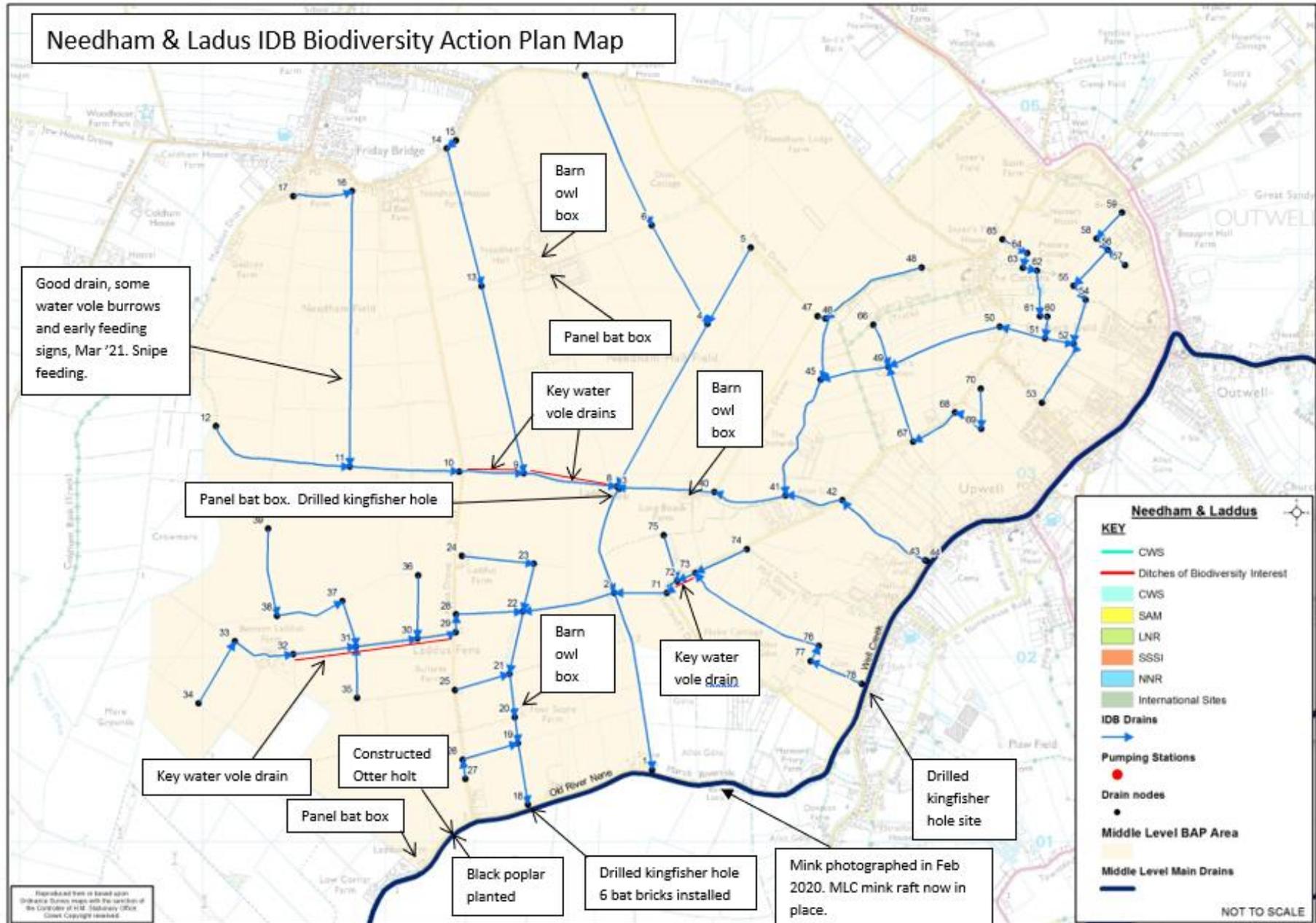
Peter.beckenham@middlelevel.gov.uk
07765 597775



Figure 1 water vole burrow on drain 16-11, late-March 2021.



Figure 2 Sensitive drain management in practice with a good margin left at the water's edge. The sunny cut side provides opportunity for early season pollinators.



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	Conservation Officer	2015	Plan finalised and followed each year	<i>A map-based is attached. It will be amended as further information is gathered.</i>
		1.2	Look for opportunities to provide natural erosion protection such as marginal plant ledges when re-profiling ditches	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	If re-profiling is carried out, opportunities identified	<i>No re-profiling carried out during the period.</i>
		1.3	Provide natural erosion protection as in 1.2 if opportunities available	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	Length of ditch with ledge / natural vegetation revetment	<i>No opportunities available.</i>
2	Identify ditches of conservation interest and manage appropriately	2.2	Ensure appropriate management of ditches for priority species	Conservation Officer, Plantlife, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	Specified in management plan	<i>Ditches of interest identified on Management Plan map.</i>
3	Support the Conservation Officer in working with landowners to benefit wildlife in the district	3.1	Refer private landowners to the Conservation Officer for advice on creating field margin buffer zones and wildlife-friendly ditch management	Conservation Officer, Natural England, Wildlife Trust, FWAG	Ongoing	Number of contacts received and passed to Conservation Officer	<i>No enquiries were received during the period</i>
4	Control invasive species	4.1	Report any sightings of non-native invasive species immediately to the Conservation Officer and control as appropriate	Conservation Officer, Environment Agency, Plantlife, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	Reports to Conservation Officer	<i>No non-native invasive species seen or reported during the period. See note on mink.</i>

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 Conservation Officer	Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Environment Agency	2013	Review of reedbed areas carried out	<i>No areas of reedbed over 0.5ha identified. The District has a good amount of drains with significant reed margins.</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	Number of landowners assisted	<i>No requests received.</i>
3	Take conservation value of reedbed into account when planning and carrying out ditch and river maintenance	3.2	Undertake work outside the bird breeding season (7th April – 15th July). Where this is not possible take conservation advice and carry out breeding bird surveys prior to works.	Conservation Officer, Wildlife Trust, RSPB	Ongoing	Reeds not cut during bird nesting season	<i>Management work was not carried out during the bird nesting period.</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	Number of ponds created	<i>None</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>No flood storage areas or reservoir projects arose during the period</i>

		1.3	Assist private landowners with advice, information or contacts as necessary	Amphibian & Reptile Conservation, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	Number of landowners assisted	<i>None</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)	Conservation Officer	2010	One pool successfully created	<i>No opportunities for this method arose.</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 and follow the ADA water vole mitigation guide	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	Measures incorporated in management plans	<i>Water vole Best Practice methods were used</i>
		1.2	Publicise good practice for rat control near drainage ditches	Conservation Officer, Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	Good practice publicised	<i>Best Practice for rat control has been previously publicised in the Environmental Officer's Natural Level newsletter.</i>
2	Enhance drainage ditch habitat to benefit water vole	2.1	Look for opportunities to add a marginal shelf when re-profiling banks	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	(a) Opportunities identified (b) Measures taken	<i>No opportunities identified; no measures taken during the period.</i>
		2.2	Consider using coir roll to stabilise banks and provide marginal vegetation	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	(a) Sites considered (b) Measures taken	<i>No appropriate sites or opportunities arose during the period.</i>
3	Monitor water vole populations	3.1	Set up a survey programme to monitor water vole populations	Conservation Officer, Wildlife Trust	2010	Surveys carried out	<i>Conservation Officer surveys key drains annually.</i>

		3.2	Provide data on water vole to the relevant Biological Records Centres	Conservation Officer, CPERC, NBIS	Ongoing	Data sent via Environmental Officer annually	<i>Data sent to CPERC.</i>
4	Control mink as necessary	4.2	Carry out mink control as part of the Middle Level programme and report all sightings to the Conservation Officer	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	Number of sightings/minks caught	<i>Mink trap in place on Old River Nene adjacent the District.</i>

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	Conservation Officer	2012 and ongoing	Sites identified and listed in management plans	<i>Suitable habitat and popular sprainting sites represented on map</i>
2	Monitor otter populations	2.3	Ensure any dead otters are reported to the Conservation Officer	Conservation Officer, Environment Agency	Ongoing	Otters reported to Conservation Officer, if found	<i>No dead otters were reported but the Old River Nene remains a key waterway for the species.</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 Conservation Officer	Environment Agency, Angling Clubs & syndicates	Ongoing	Incidents reported, if discovered	<i>No reports or indications of illegal trapping noted. Members are encouraged to report any suspicious activity or illegal fishing to the EA or Conservation Officer.</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>3 previously installed at Needham Hall Farm, Ladus Farm and node 3 headwall.</i>
		1.2	Pollard suitable trees to provide bat roosts		Ongoing	Number of trees pollarded	<i>No trees identified.</i>
		1.3	Identify potential sites for a bat hibernaculum, e.g. in disused buildings or tunnels	Conservation Officer, Bat Conservation Trust	As opportunities arise	Site created	<i>Six bat bricks were previously installed inside the brick culvert at Laddus Drain (node 1). Still in place (2021)</i>
2	Collect information on bat populations	2.1	Monitor bat boxes	Bat Conservation Trust	2015 onwards	Number of boxes used by bats	<i>Bat checks will be made when possible.</i>
		2.2	Pass bat box information to CPBRC and NBIS	Conservation Officer, CPBRC, NBIS	2015 onwards	Data via Conservation Officer annually	<i>Annually if box found to be occupied by bats.</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 3 potential nest holes	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	Number of nest sites provided	<i>Four sites provided - at Laddus outfall culvert, inlet 44, inlet 78 and culvert 3.</i>
		1.2	Leave kingfisher fishing perches where possible (e.g. occasional branch)	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	Number of perch sites left	<i>There are many natural perch sites for kingfishers available</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	Conservation Officer, CPBRC, NBIS	Ongoing	Data sent via Conservation Officer annually	<i>Routinely observed on Old River Nene/Well Creek</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>3 barn owl boxes previously erected at Four Score Farm, Common Farm and Needham Hall Farm.</i>
		1.2	Pollard suitable trees to provide natural nest sites	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	Number of trees pollarded	<i>Few trees suitable for pollarding are present but many nest sites exist in the District.</i>
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	<i>Few opportunities to check in 2020, CO to review in 2021.</i>
		2.2	Pass barn owl box information to CPBRC and NBIS	Conservation Officer, Wildlife Conservation Partnership, CPBRC, NBIS	2015	Data sent via Conservation Officer annually	<i>Annual, when box is occupied.</i>

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	Conservation Officer, Wildlife Trust, Natural England	2013	Staff numbers attending	<i>An update will be sent later in the year when opportunities for meetings are clearer.</i>
		1.2	Establish suitable training for contractors' staff	Conservation Officer, Contractors	2013	Contractors covered	<i>The contractor has previously attended conservation workshops.</i>

2	Take biodiversity into account when planning and undertaking capital works	2.2	Consult with the Conservation Officer and choose the best possible mitigation solutions for biodiversity, e.g.fish-friendly pumps	Conservation Officer	Ongoing	Number of schemes commented on	<i>CO consulted over culverting works – best practice advised and observed so far..</i>
---	--	-----	---	----------------------	---------	--------------------------------	---