

# Over & Willingham 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

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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 visits.

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**

Sightings welcomed by the Conservation Officer. 2020 was an exceptionally poor year across the region. The box at the pumping station is in good condition.

#### **Water Voles**

Drains in the District are all sensitively managed and important habitats and corridors for wildlife. Likely old water vole burrows were evident on a number of drains – proof of their presence.

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. A more comprehensive update is available in the 2020 Natural Level newsletter. New rafts are available to IDBs to loan from WRE.

## **Kingfisher/Sand Martin**

Sightings of these species in the breeding season are welcomed by the CO especially in the vicinity of Board drains with exposed mud or sandy banks.

## **Badger**

A reminder that badgers and their setts are protected in UK law but exclusion work is permissible under licence where a threat may be posed to land drainage. Such work is not always successful and can lead to further, more problematic, incursions so often the best course of action is to work around them. However, if this is not deemed possible the Conservation Officer should be contacted to determine the best course of action. Care must be taken not to disturb setts during routine management.

## **Otter**

Sightings or reports welcomed.

## **Other Environmental 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 planned, however when it is deemed safe to restart events Boards will be notified. In the meantime, the Conservation Officer is happy to assist with any enquiries.

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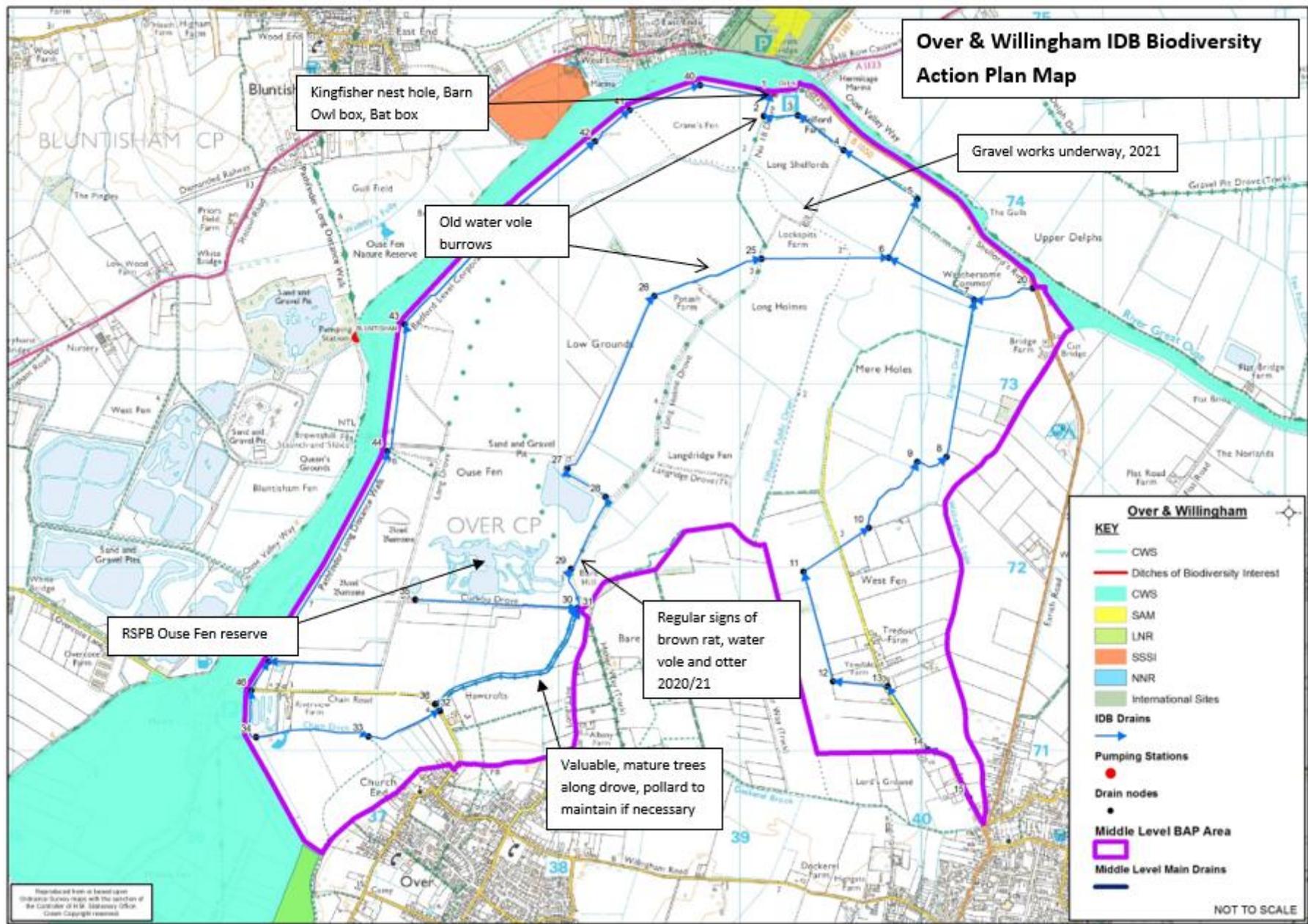


**Figure 1** Over Pumping Station with bat and barn owl boxes



**Figure 2 and 3** Good sedge margins are a characteristic feature of the District





## Arable Margins Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Encourage use of buffer strips adjacent to watercourse	1.1	Encourage use of buffer strips adjacent to watercourse by promoting the Environmental Stewardship Scheme	Landowners	As approached	Number of approaches	<i>Advice will be provided as required. Land owners have other direct sources of information on Stewardship, e.g. Natural England, FWAG, agri-environmental farm advisors</i>

## Rivers Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Maintain the interest of the River Great Ouse CWS	1.1	During works on outfalls ensure that at least 50% of available bank within 50m radius remains undisturbed	Environment Agency	As required	% affected	<i>Best Practise is adhered to by leaving the non-working side unmanaged if water voles are present.</i>

## Fenland Drainage Ditches Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Maintain and enhance the biodiversity interests of the fenland drains	1.1	Maintain a regime which supports the biological interest of the ditches and supports the newly created RSPB reserve	RSPB	Ongoing	Length managed	<i>The drain management regime carried out in the past has created and maintains the current good biological interest of the Board drains.</i>

2	Control stands of invasive non-native plant species	2.1	Identify and treat	Landowner	As required	Area treated	<i>No invasive non-native plant species requiring treatment were recorded during the period. See note above about Floating Pennywort.</i>
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## Water Vole Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Monitor water vole populations	1.1	Maintain a database of any sightings of water vole	Wildlife Trust, RSPB	Ongoing	Data supplied to Cambs & P'bro Environmental Records Centre (CPERC)	<i>Water voles are present in many Board drains. Training on the identification of water vole field signs is available to Board members and any others interested.</i>
2	Manage ditches according to best practice	2.1	Include management for water vole within the management protocol		2010	Completed document	<i>An Over &amp; Willingham IDB BAP Map has been produced that will include notes on managing where water voles are present. Control of American mink is the most valuable management action to benefit water voles. Mink signs have been observed in the District in the past.</i>
		2.2	Assume water vole are present when undertaking works in suitable habitat and manage according to protocol		Ongoing	Length of watercourse under sensitive management	<i>19 kilometres under sensitive management</i>

## Otter Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Monitor population	1.1	Maintain a database of any sightings of otter	Wildlife Trust	Ongoing	Data supplied to CPERC	<i>Otter signs found in District.</i>

## Bats Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Ref.	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Provide an artificial bat box for roosting bats at a suitable site within the District.	1.1	Install a bat box. Monitor occupancy, (Conservation Officer).	Conservation Constructions. Cambs Bat Group.	2017	Box installed. Data supplied to CPERC when occupied.	<i>A panel bat box is in place at Over PS. Good condition, no records.</i>

## Kingfisher Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Monitor population	1.1	Maintain a database of any sightings of kingfisher	Wildlife Trust RSPB	Ongoing	Data supplied to CPERC	<i>Kingfishers occur too frequently on Board drains to record every sighting. A record of breeding sites will be maintained and recorded on the Board's BAP Map to guide sensitive management of the sites.</i>
2	Maintain potential nest sites	8.1	Keep earth cliffs where present		Ongoing	No of cliffs present and retained	<i>Any potential sites will be mapped.</i>

## Barn Owl Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Ref	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Monitor population	1.1	Maintain a database of any sightings of barn owl	Wildlife Trust/RSPB	Ongoing	Data supplied to CPBRC	<i>A record of breeding success or otherwise at provided boxes will be maintained.</i>
2	Provide artificial nest boxes in areas of suitable habitat potential nest sites	2.1	Install 2 boxes	Wildlife Conservation Partnership	Ongoing	Boxes present	<i>A barn owl box was installed at the Board's pumping station on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018. CO to arrange check at appropriate time.</i>
	Create and manage a network of rough, tussocky grassland habitat corridors within the IDB district.	2.2	Provide buffer strips (x-ref 8 Arable margins) and maintain a rough, tussocky sward to channel banks	Farmers	Ongoing	Length provided	<i>Arable margins are managed by private landowners within the District. Support and advice will be available from the Conservation Officer if requested.</i>

## European Eel Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Maintain access to ditch system for elvers	1.1	Identify any possible obstructions and discuss with EA to formulate a means of providing access	EA	2011	Action completed	<i>The Board's pumping station presents an obstruction to any silver eels present in the District seeking to migrate to their breeding grounds. Discussions will be undertaken with the Environment Agency with regard to a low-cost by-pass solution that could be trialled (with funding support) at the site.</i>

## Procedural Action Plan

Target Reference	Target	Action Reference	IDB Actions	Partners	Date	Indicators	Report
1	Develop best practice	1.1 (see section 12.5)	Develop a management protocol for all works on the drainage ditches based on the ADA Drainage Manual and other guidance		2010	Completed document	<i>A Biodiversity Action Plan map for the District drains has been produced.</i>
2	Data management	2.1	Establish database for important wildlife records	CPBRC	Ongoing	Database regularly maintained	<i>The above map-based plan will be updated as new records of biodiversity sites and sightings become available.</i>