

BIODIVERSITY

ACTION PLAN.

BRAUNTON MARSH

INTERNAL

DRAINAGE BOARD.

DATE:

THIS BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN has been prepared by the Braunton Marsh 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.

The water level management and ditch maintenance work have benefits for biodiversity. This Plan will help the Board to maximise its activities for biodiversity benefits. Also demonstrate its contribution to the government's UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets.

The Board is committed to its implementation.

It will review the Plan periodically and update it as appropriate.

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.

..... Date

Name
Chairman of the Board

INTRODUCTION

The Braunton Marsh 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.

The Plan identifies objectives for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity within the Drainage District. Targets and actions will deliver these objectives.

the integration will be through 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.

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.

The Drainage District covers an area of 300,000 hectares.

See Map Fig. 1

Biodiversity is defined simply as 'The Variety of Life' and encompasses the whole spectrum of living organisms including plants, birds, mammals and insects.

It includes common and rare species.

Biodiversity also refers to the habitats and ecosystems that support these species.

The Biodiversity Action Planning Framework

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

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.

Biodiversity - The national Context

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.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on IDBs to conserve biodiversity. The Act states that conserving biodiversity includes restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.

In 2007 the Government's IDB Review Implementation Plan established a commitment that IDBs should produce their own B.A.P.s.

The Aims of the IDB Biodiversity Action Plan

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 with 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 programmes 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

Braunton Marsh was formerly notified as a SSI under the national Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, for freshwater ditches and bird population.

Site denotified in 1988 under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, following loss of special ditch wildlife through improvement in saline intrusion from nearby Taw Estuary in Drainage Ditches.

The majority of the marshland classed by Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries as Grade 3 agricultural land.

Braunton Marsh is a coastal and lowland grazing Marsh which is identified as a priority habitat under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan - as it is becoming increasingly rare following habitat loss since WWII.

Grazing Marsh is also identified as a priority habitat within the Devon B.A.P. owing to its scarcity within the Country.

THE PROCESS

To produce this IDB B.A.P. information on the habitats and species present in the catchment was first obtained.

The targets are set to focus IDB programmes of action and to identify outcomes that can be monitored to measure achievement.

The audit covers the entire District of the IDB as was shown in Fig. 1.

The development of the Plan is an iterative process which will be subject to regular review.

SOURCES OF DATA

Environment Agency (Devon Area)

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Natural England

Devon Wildlife Trust

National Monuments Records Centres

North Devon Heritage Coast

Devon Biodiversity Action Plan

Devon Birdwatching and Preservation Society

BRAUNTON MARSH MANAGEMENT

The Braunton Marshes are managed primarily through the actions of three major stakeholders.

1. The Marsh landowners
2. The Braunton Marsh Internal Drainage Board
3. The Marsh Inspectors

The management of the Marsh drainage system is carried out by the IDB and includes the maintenance of many of the key archaeological features and systems of the Marsh.

The management of the communal lands of the Marsh owners including the embankments and internal roads is held under the Trusteeship of the Marsh Inspectors.

The Braunton Marshes lie near the mouth of the Taw Torridge Estuary and are situated on a former tidal saltmarsh following the enclosure in 1811.

It is a landscape of flat pastures, interspersed with slow flowing freshwater channels and historic linhays and stone walling.

The Braunton Marshes lie between the SSI designations of the Taw Torridge Estuary to the South and Swanpool to the North.

To the West the Marshes are bordered by Braunton Burrows, an area which constitutes part of the North Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

It is also protected as a special area of conservation and forms the core area of the Unesco International Biosphere Reserve.

So Braunton Marsh lies within the Biosphere Reserve buffer zone and the 1992 designation of the North Devon Heritage Coast.

NATIONAL CONSERVATION SITES

Site Name: Braunton Swanpool SS 471368 (11.9ha)

Designation: Site of Special Scientific Interest

Notified 1988

Features Relevant to IDB:

Reedbed habitat

Herb rich Marsh grassland

Breeding warblers/bunting

Operation that could damage habitat

Management of aquatic and bank vegetation for drainage purposes.

The changing of water levels.

Infilling of ditches and drains.

Machinery likely to disturb or damage features of interest.

The introduction of cutting vegetation.

See Map Fig. 2

SPECIES DEPENDANT ON HABITAT

Reed Beds

Birds - Reed Warbler
Serge Warbler
Grasshopper Warbler? (1990's) (Rare)

Flora - Marsh Arrowgrass (Rare)
Common Reed
Fleabane
Common Marsh Bedstraw
Marsh Cirquefoil
Ragged Robin
Marsh Pennywort
Wild Angelica
Purple Loosestrife
Parsley Water Dropwort

MEADOW RICH

Flora - Meadow Sweet
Marsh Marigold
Yellow Rattle
Marsh Ragwort
Yellow Iris
Water Mint
Southern Marsh Orchid
Meadow Vetchling
Greater Birds Foot Trefoil

SITE NAME: Greenaways and Freshmarsh (13.5ha)

SS 464353 SS 472356

Last remaining area of herb rich grazing Marsh and probably within County as a whole

Designation: Site of Special Scientific Interest

Notified 1988

Feature: Low lying flat land with high water table. Soils derived from Marine alluvium with a peaty surface horizon.

Features Relevant to IDB.

Rich water plant communities in drainage areas.

Breeding birds.

Operation of concern that could damage habitat.

Introduction of cutting vegetation.

Removal of plants.

Management of aquatic and bank vegetation for drainage purposes.

Changing of water level tables.

Infilling of ditches and drains.

Use of machinery to disturb features of interest.

See Map. Fig. 3

SPECIES DEPENDANT ON HABITAT

Herb rich Grazing Marsh

Flora -

- Greater Pond Sedge
- False Fox Sedge
- Glaucous Sedge
- Marsh Marigold
- Meadowsweet
- Fleabane
- Silverweed
- Water Mint
- Greater Birds Foot Trefoil
- Meadow Vetchling
- Ragged Robin
- Southern Marsh Orchid
- Marsh Arrowgrass (Rare)
- Yellow Iris
- Yellow Rattle
- Hairy Sedge
- Common Knapweed
- Crested Dog's Tail

Drainage Ditches

Aquatic Flora - Common Starwort
Broad-Leaved Pondweed
Common Duckweed
Ivy Leafed Duckweed (Rare)
Water Plantain
Lesser Water Parsnip
Gipsywort
Parsley Water Dropwort
Branched Bur-Reed
Pink Water Speedwell
Tasteless Water-Pepper (Rare)
Marsh Woundwort
Common Reed

NON STATUTORY DESIGNATION

COUNTY WILDLIFE SITE

Site Name: Code 022 Saunton

Designation: Devon Wildlife Trust

Feature: Semi-improved neutral grassland

Features Relevant to IDB: Grassland plant communities

Operations of Concern that could damage habitat

Changing of water level tables

Introduction of cutting vegetation

See Map. Fig. 4

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES OF INTEREST.

Historic Structures

	<u>Building Type</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Entry Type</u>
1815-1820	Cattle Shelter	40 metres N.E. of Great Sluice	Grade II
1820-C19	Cattle Shelter	35 metres N of Great Sluice	Grade II
1825-20	Cattle Shelter	95 metres N.N.W.of Great Sluice	Grade II
1815-1820	Cattle Shelter	95 metres N of Great Sluice	Grade II
1815-1820	Cattle Shelter/Wall	48 metres N.W. of Great Sluice	Grade II
1815-1820	Cattle Shelter/Wall	60 metres W.S.W.of Great Sluice	Grade II
1815-1820	Cattle Shelter/Wall	70 metres W of Great Sluice	Grade II
Mid C19	Cattle Shelter Fold/Yard/Wall:	62 metres N.E. of Great Sluice	Grade II
1811-1815	Great Sluice		Grade II
1815-1820	Linhay/Fold/Wall/Yard	110 metres N.N.W. of Great Sluice	Grade II
1815	Stile/Flanking Walls	20 metres N.E. of Great Sluice	Grade II
1815	Stile/Flanking Walls	40 metres S.W. of Great Sluice	Grade II
1815	Vellator Bridge		Grade II
1815	Stile/Flanking Walls	90 metres S.W. of Great Sluice	Grade II

BRAUNTON MARSH SPECIES LIST.

Fisheries

Based on Environment Agency 1998

Eel (Anguilla Anguilla)

Stickleback (Gasterosteus Aculeatus)

Trout (Salmo Trutta)

Fish density poor.

The density of Sticklebacks recorded is the highest in Devon. (Maintains good populations of Kingfishers and Little Grebe).

Density of Eels low (sporadic Otter activity) and Trout was only recorded at one site.