

BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

FEBRUARY 2023



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**BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

A Biodiversity Action Plan was originally prepared by the Bedfordshire and River Ivel Internal Drainage Board (B&I IDB) 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.

This updated plan demonstrates the B&I IDB's commitment to fulfilling its duty as a public body to conserve and enhance biodiversity under various legislation and policy, but not limited to, the Environment Act 2021, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, the 25-year Environment Plan and the Water Framework Directive.

Importantly, it reflects the Board's aspiration to maximise the support that it provides to biodiversity, particularly priority UK species and habitats, and the wider environment in general through its day-to-day activities, by setting clear objectives, actions and targets.

The Bedfordshire and River Ivel IDB 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.

Date

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Chairman
Bedfordshire and River Ivel Internal
Drainage Board

Date

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Mr Phil Camamile, Chief Executive
Bedford Group of Internal Drainage Boards

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This Biodiversity Action Plan is a public statement by the Bedfordshire and River Ivel IDB 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.

You can contact us about this Biodiversity Action Plan by writing to the following address:

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CONTENTS

1. IDB BIODIVERSITY – AN INTRODUCTION.....	5
2 THE IDB BAP PROCESS.....	7
3 THE BIODIVERSITY AUDIT	10
4 HABITAT AUDIT	15
5 SPECIES AUDIT	19
6 INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES	21
7 HABITAT AND SPECIES ACTION PLANS.....	22
8 PROCEDURAL ACTION PLAN.....	33
9 MONITORING.....	35
APPENDIX 1: EXCERPTS FROM ADA BAP GUIDANCE DOCUMENT	36
APPENDIX 2: COUNTY WILDLIFE SITES/ LOCAL WILDLIFE SITES WITHIN BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL IDB DISTRICT	39

1. IDB BIODIVERSITY – AN INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Bedfordshire and River Ivel Internal Drainage Board (B&I IDB) has conducted a biodiversity audit of its district and identified those habitats and species that would benefit from particular management or actions. Using this information, which is presented in later sections, the B&I IDB's Biodiversity Action Plan has been developed. The Plan identifies objectives for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity within the drainage district and describes targets and actions that will 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.

1.1.2 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 and/or 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.

1.1.3 This latest iteration of the BAP is based on, but does not exclusively follow, the template produced by ADA in 2020. A description of biodiversity, background legislation and policy as given in the Guidance is given in Appendix 1. The Plan is an evolving document that will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. It covers the entire drainage district of the Bedfordshire and River Ivel IDB, as shown in Figure 1.

1.2 What is Biodiversity?

1.2.1 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.

FIGURE 1: BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL IDB DISTRICT

1.3 Vision and Aims for this BAP

1.3.1 The IDB's vision is:

A drainage district where thriving wildlife is an integral part of delivering efficient and effective water-level management.

1.3.2 The aims of this BAP are:

- To ensure that opportunities for conservation and enhancement of biodiversity are fully considered throughout the IDB's operations;
- To enable more effective monitoring and reporting of progress and outcomes;
- To ensure that Priority species and habitats receive effective action within defined targets within the drainage district;
- To identify targets and appropriate actions for other habitats and species of local importance within the drainage district. This includes invasive non- native species;
- To contribute to local environmental partnerships such as the Local Nature Partnership to ensure that programmes and priorities for biodiversity conservation are aligned and maintained in the long term;
- To raise awareness within the IDB and locally of the need for biodiversity conservation, and to communicate with the local and wider community what actions the IDB are undertaking to support biodiversity.

2 THE IDB BAP PROCESS

2.1 The Biodiversity Audit

2.1.1 To produce this B&I 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 B&I IDB and by other biodiversity partners and included data collected for the original BAP.

2.1.2 Information on habitats and species of relevance, covering the original and updated BAPS, occurring within the drainage district was obtained from the following sources:

- Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Action Plan (various dates)

- Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre
- Cambridge Biodiversity Partnership, 2019 'Mapping Natural Capital and opportunities for habitat creation in Cambridgeshire'.
- Hertfordshire Environmental Forum 2006. A Biodiversity Action Plan for Hertfordshire.
- JBA Consulting – BAP Habitats within the Bedfordshire and River Ivel Internal Drainage Board
- MAGIC Data base
- Nature Conservation Strategy for Central Beds 2015
- NBN Gateway
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan (various dates)

2.2 Evaluating and Prioritising Habitats and Species

2.2.1 This BAP focuses on nationally important priority habitats and species, namely those that have been deemed of 'principal importance' in England under the NERC Act 2006 and were formerly UK BAP species. However, non-priority species or habitats, which may be locally significant for a variety of reasons have also been considered. Invasive non-native species have also been included.

2.2.2 The information gathered, which is presented in later sections, has been used to develop this IDB's Biodiversity Action Plan.

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

2.2.4 A range of criteria was then used to select those species and habitats that are of particular importance to the B&I IDB – that is to say, those habitats and species that could benefit from its actions. The criteria used included their national and local status, the opportunities for effective B&I IDB action and the resources available as well as Local Nature Recovery Strategies if present.

2.3 Objectives, Targets and Indicators

- 2.3.1 For each relevant habitat and species, conservation objectives have been identified. The action plan then details individual actions required to achieve the objectives, and associated monitoring and reporting of progress and impact.
- 2.3.2 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).
- 2.3.3 Procedural targets and actions have also been considered allowing the Board to measure the way in which it considers and incorporates biodiversity across the whole range of its operations. These involve changes to administrative, management and operating procedures.

2.4 Implementation

- 2.4.1 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.

2.5 Monitoring and reporting

- 2.5.1 Monitoring is the on-going process of regularly collecting and analysing relevant information to make sure the actions within the Plan are positively contributing towards the targets and to capture any additional benefit achieved. The Plan sets out how and when this monitoring will take place for example, to regularly review the progress of actions against the plan at Board meetings throughout the life of the plan.
- 2.5.2 The frequency and type of information reported is also defined by the Plan and includes the publication of progress reports in the public domain via the IDB's website and in accordance with the duty set out in the Environment Act 2021.
- 2.5.3 The overall plan will be updated at least every 5 years but as this is a dynamic document it may change more frequently. For example, in the light of routine monitoring, changes may be necessary to ensure an objective can be met.

3 THE BIODIVERSITY AUDIT

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The following Sections summarise the results of the Biodiversity Audit within the district of the B&I IDB (Figure 1), undertaken in 2022, updated from 2010. Section 3 provides information about the drainage district and a list of the nature conservation sites that occur within or bordering its boundaries. Sections 4 and 5 respectively list the habitats and species occurring within the district that are of potential importance to the IDB.

3.2 The Drainage District

3.2.1 The drainage district covers an area of 77 317 ha and contains 471 km of IDB-maintained watercourses. Also within the district is 64 km of Main River. The district is predominantly situated to the south of Bedford and includes tributaries to the River Great Ouse; the Ivel and its tributaries such as the Elstow Brook, the Flit and the Potton Brook. Major urban areas include Bedford, Biggleswade, Sandy, Shefford, Stotfold, Flitwick, Letchworth and Hitchin.

3.3 Geology

3.3.1 Given the large area covered by the Bedfordshire and River Ivel IDB, there is a wide range of geological conditions present. The land to the north of the district is predominantly comprised of the moderately permeable calcareous clayey soils overlying chalky boulder clay or, in the south, Jurassic cretaceous clays. The broader river valleys of the Ivel and its tributaries have well drained soils over alluvium and river terrace gravels.

3.3.2 In the centre of the district, running south-west to north-east is the Greensand Ridge, a narrow escarpment of lower Greensand which comprises Cretaceous sands and sandstones with sandy acidic soils. In contrast, to the extreme south-east of the district is the band of chalk which forms the Chilterns and then, north-eastwards, the East Anglian chalk ridge.

3.4 Landscape

3.4.1 Landscape Designations

3.4.1.1 No landscape designations apply to the district.

3.4.2 Landscape Character

3.4.2.1 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. Information on Joint Character Areas is found at: www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/CC/jca.asp.

3.4.2.2 Bedfordshire and River Ivel IDB district is predominantly within the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands JCA with a gently undulating topography and plateau areas divided by broad shallow valleys. Predominantly arable, fields are bounded by either open ditches or sparse, trimmed hedges. The river corridors of the Great Ouse and the Ivel hold flood-plain grassland, riverine willows and larger hedges. The Greensand Ridge JCA is a narrow escarpment with mixed land use and a high proportion of woods, heath and pasture. Arable is present on the dip slope.

3.4.2.3 The extreme south-east of the IDB district is within the Chilterns JCA and the East Anglian Chalk JCA. The latter is a continuation of the Chilterns and is typified by rolling downland, mainly arable, with beech woodland.

3.5 Sites and Monuments Records

3.4.3.1 There are 45 Scheduled Ancient Monuments within, overlapping or immediately adjacent to the B&I IDB district. The Board's maintenance operations are long-established and therefore will have a negligible effect on these sites.

3.6 Tree Preservation Orders

3.6.1 There are a large number of TPOs in the district and these are available on the web sites of Central Bedfordshire Council, Beds Borough Council South Cambridgeshire Council, North Hertfordshire Council and Huntingdonshire Council.

3.7 Nature Conservation Sites

3.7.1 International Sites

3.7.1.1 No internationally designated sites are present within the Bedfordshire and River Ivel IDB district.

3.7.2 National Sites

3.7.2.1 There are two nationally designated sites that are hydrologically sensitive within the Bedfordshire and River Ivel IDB district. Their location is shown in Figure 2.

Table 1: National Designations

Site name	Designation	Features Relevant to IDB
Flitwick Moor	SSSI	Flitwick Moor is the largest semi-natural wetland in Bedfordshire with a range of swamp, mire with acid springs, fen and mesotrophic grassland communities with carr woodland and some drier wood. The site contains a rich assemblage of notable vascular and lower plants and fungi and is renowned for its invertebrate interest.
Fancott Woods and Meadows	SSSI	Fancott Meadows are mainly ancient ridge and furrow. The meadows exhibit a variety of vegetation types, chiefly dependent on the drainage conditions.

3.7.3 Local Nature Reserves

3.7.3.1 There are five Local Nature Reserves, designated by local authorities under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, within the district. All are within Bedfordshire and none is present within Cambridgeshire or Hertfordshire.

FIGURE 2: LOCATION OF SSSI

Table 2. Local Nature Reserves

Site name	Grid Reference	Borough
Flitwick Wood	TL 023 348	Central Bedfordshire
Flitton Moor	TL 056 360	Central Bedfordshire
Fenlake Meadow	TL 066 489	Bedford Borough
Henlow Common and Langford Marsh	TL 184 405	Central Bedfordshire
The Riddy	TL 166 487	Sandy Town Council

3.7.4 *Non-statutory Local Sites*

3.7.4.1 There are 71 County Wildlife Sites within the Bedfordshire and River Ivel IDB district in Bedfordshire, 8 sites in Hertfordshire and 3 in Northants. None are present within the Board's District in Cambridgeshire. Two sections of the River Hiz in Hertfordshire are notified as are sections of the River Flit, the River Great Ouse, and the Rivers Ivel and Hiz in Bedfordshire. A list is given in Appendix 2.

3.7.4.2 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.

3.8 Water Level Management Plans

3.8.1 Water Level Management Plans (WLMPs) provide a means by which the water level requirements for a range of activities in a particular area, including agriculture, flood defence and conservation, can be balanced and integrated. Guidance for the production of WLMPs by the operating authorities for sites of conservation interest was produced by MAFF/Defra in 1992, 1999 and 2004. This guidance concentrated on SSSIs, especially those of international importance (SPA or SAC sites).

3.7.2 Water Level Management Plans have been prepared for Flitwick Moor SSSI and for Fancott Woods and Meadows SSSI.

4 HABITAT AUDIT

4.1 Habitat Audit Summary

This summary lists the UK BAP priority habitats, defined by the Report on the Species and Habitats Review (2007) and the NERC Act 2006, within the B&I IDB district as identified by the information gathering exercise. Also listed are habitats considered as of local importance and/or featured in the county local nature strategies where they may be affected by the IDB. Habitats that are of potential importance for the B&I IDB, where water level management or other activities may be of benefit, are identified. Finally, the potential for the B&I IDB to maintain, restore or expand its important habitats is identified. This has taken into account local BAPS (LBAP) produced by Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. The Bedfordshire BAP has 13 habitat action plans of which 7 are relevant to the IDB and 7 species action plans of which 2 are relevant. The Hertfordshire BAP has 7 habitat action plans of which 3 are relevant to the IDB and 17 species action plans of which 3 are relevant. The BAP for Cambridgeshire is no longer extant but consideration has been given to the report 'Mapping Natural Capital and opportunities for habitat creation in Cambridgeshire' (Cambridge Biodiversity Partnership, 2019).

Flitwick Moor is the most important site within the Board's district with a wide range of water dependent habitats and multiple adjacent designations to take account of these. For that reason, habitat action plans are included which only cover the Board's involvement with the Moor and its adjacent sites.

Table 3. Habitat Audit Summary

UK Priority Habitat	National Extent and Status	Local Status and Extent	Habitat of Importance for B&I IDB	Extent, status and location of Habitat of Importance for B&I IDB	B&I IDB Potential for Maintaining, Restoring or Expanding Habitat
Arable Field Margins (only includes land managed specifically for wildlife)	Agricultural land comprises 67% of the total land area of the United Kingdom and of this 33% is in arable production. In Eastern England the figures are 71% and 86% respectively. (Defra).	Widespread. Within Cambridgeshire 70% of the land area is under arable production (Source: Cambridgeshire Environment Report, 1990). Bedfordshire holds 79,000 ha arable. (Bedfordshire LBAP). Bedfordshire local BAP habitat; included within wider Hertfordshire farmland LBAP.	Field margins within Defra agri-environment schemes.	Common throughout district. Arable is the dominant habitat.	Moderate – Enable farmers to promote sensitive management via Defra agri-environment schemes. No land owned by Board.
Hedgerows	450 000 km with 329 000 km in England (UK Steering Group).	No recent data. 8000 km in Cambridgeshire with a loss of 30% between 1984 and 1990 (Cambridgeshire Environment Report, 1990). In Bedfordshire, the total length of hedge in 1991 was estimated to be 4,500 km (Beds LBAP) Bedfordshire local BAP habitat; included within wider Hertfordshire farmland LBAP.	Hedgerows	Present along watercourses in the IDB District. Most are poor or heavily managed.	High - Maintain and enhance through sensitive management and planting where possible.
Rivers	90000 km+ widespread in all valleys.	>600 km	Rivers	Limited to those watercourses that contain	Low – treated under species. Reduce

**BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

UK Priority Habitat	National Extent and Status	Local Status and Extent	Habitat of Importance for B&I IDB	Extent, status and location of Habitat of Importance for B&I IDB	B&I IDB Potential for Maintaining, Restoring or Expanding Habitat
				Priority species (see Section 5). Bedfordshire Elstow Brook at Shortstown.	sediment loading.
Watercourses	Not known, widespread.	N/A	Watercourses	636 km of watercourse, partly urban, primarily rural.	High – sensitive management.
Ponds	500,000 ponds in Great Britain, + circa three million garden ponds. (Wildlife Trusts). Significant long-term loss of ponds despite the loss slowing in recent years.	Declining due to land drainage, and infilling. Few natural ponds in Cambridgeshire. 2,865 ponds in Bedfordshire (Beds LBAP) 3,595 in Hertfordshire in 1978 (Herts County Council, 1987). Declining in all counties both in number and quality.	Ponds	Across the district.	Moderate - Promote by sensitive management, creation via planning duties and partnership creation.
Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh	300 000 ha floodplain grassland.	2784 ha in Cambridgeshire, principally Ouse and Nene catchments.	Floodplain grazing marsh	The largest areas of located in the Ivel, and Flit valleys. Some in the Hiz valley.	Moderate - under private landowner, potential to assist with water level management. Overlaps with wet meadow and treated together for the purposes of this BAP.
Lowland Meadows	Estimated extent of less than 15,000 ha of species-rich neutral	87 hectares of unimproved neutral grassland and 113 hectares of marsh or marshy	Meadow	Primarily in the Flit valley in Bedfordshire and Hiz valley in Hertfordshire.	Moderate - under private landowner, potential to assist with

**BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

UK Priority Habitat	National Extent and Status	Local Status and Extent	Habitat of Importance for B&I IDB	Extent, status and location of Habitat of Importance for B&I IDB	B&I IDB Potential for Maintaining, Restoring or Expanding Habitat
	grassland (UK BAP) with 97% loss).	grassland (Beds LBAP). No figures for Hertfordshire or Bedfordshire.			water level management. Overlaps with Grazing Marsh and treated together for the purposes of this BAP.
Fens	Not known. Sporadic in river valleys. Much declined.	Not known. Sporadic in river valleys. Much declined.	Fens	Primarily in the Flit valley in Bedfordshire and Hiz valley in Hertfordshire with isolated SSSIs.	Moderate - under private landowner, potential to assist with water level management. Overlaps with Grazing Marsh and treated together for the purposes of this BAP.
Wet woodland	50-70,000 ha.	320 ha in Bedfordshire of which 180 ha is in good condition.	Wet woodland.	Important site in Flitwick Moor SSSI and fragments along the River Flit valley. Little wet woodland in Hertfordshire.	Moderate - under private landowner, potential to assist with water level management. Pollarding willows.
Reedbeds	Approximately 5000 ha in the UK, some 50 sites exceeding 20 ha.	Small patches, principally along rivers. Of 22 ha in Bedfordshire 20 ha is in Marston Vale Country Park.	Reedbed.	Small patches, principally along rivers. Sandy Smith Reserve at Chicksands.	Low – small, disparate areas.

5

SPECIES AUDIT

5.1 Species Audit Summary

This summary will include Priority and other species, that occur within the drainage district and are considered to be likely to be influenced by the IDB’s activities. Also listed are species considered as of local importance and/or identified by local strategies. Finally, the potential for the B&I IDB to maintain or increase the population or range of species of importance is identified.

Table 4. Species Audit Summary

Common Name	National Status	Local status	Location of Species of Importance for IDB	B&I IDB Potential for Maintaining or Increasing Species Population or Range
Water Vole <i>Arvicola terrestris</i>	S41 species. Protected by Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Long term decline Now 132 000 (GB) (Mammal Society 2020).	Few and sporadic records with isolated ‘hotspots’ declining. Key Water Vole Areas have been identified in the Bedfordshire and Luton BAP (Appendix 3).	River Ivel catchment north of Biggleswade, small populations along the Potton Brook (Beds and Cambs), Renhold Brook and isolated populations in the Flit Valley and at Yeldon in the north of the county (Beds LBAP). River Hiz (Herts).	High – Appropriate watercourse management and predator control.

**BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i>	S41 species. Protected by Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Long term decline now reversed 11 000. Range increasing.	Most watercourses.	Ditches, rivers.	Medium - Sympathetic ditch management to benefit otter.
Reed bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	S41 species. 275 thousand territories (summer) in Britain. Partial recovery from decline of 31% between 1970 and 2007.	Found throughout district. Populations currently near stable showing little change (BTO).	Ditches/ grasslands, wetlands.	Medium – sympathetic bank management and extend areas of adjacent grassland (Considered under Action Plan for Arable Field Margins).
Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Specially protected by Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Amber listed in Birds of Conservation Concern due to European status. Formerly declining with contraction of range. Currently 3800- 6400 pairs.	Found throughout district.	Ditches, rivers.	High - Maintain nesting banks; artificial nest sites along suitable watercourses.
Barn owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	Protected by Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Not a s41 species. Increasing.	Present across the district.	Grassy banks and field margins.	Low - Increase range via new nest box introductions and bank management.
European eel <i>Anguilla anguilla</i>	S41 species. Protected by European Eel Regulations 2009 and enabling legislation. Significant decline of 70%+ in recruitment since the 1980s.	No	Isolated records on R Ivel.	Low - Ensure easy passage of elvers.

White clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* is no longer considered to be present in the B&I IDB's district.

6 INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES

6.1 Invasive Non- Native Species Summary

The IDB has identified the following high-risk aquatic and riparian invasive non-native species within the drainage district that are identified as likely to be influenced by, or affect the Board's activities.

Table 5: High Risk INNS

Common Name	National Status	Location in IDB (if known) Extent / Status	B&I IDB Potential for controlling species population / range
Mink	Throughout. Recently eradicated from Norfolk and Suffolk.	Widely distributed in all counties in B&I district.	High – control. (Considered under Action plan for water vole).
Japanese knotweed	Widespread and Common.	Few records. Elstow Brook.	Low – recognition and notification to landowners.
Giant Hogweed	Widespread and common, especially by rivers.	Few records near Toddington.	High – control.
Floating Pennywort	Water systems across the UK, the closest being River Great Ouse.	Not known to be present.	Low – recognition and removal of populations if they develop.
Signal Crayfish	Common and widespread.	Common and widespread.	Low – maintain records.

SPECIES ACTION PLANS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

7.1.1 The Action Plans contained in the following sections comprise the objectives, targets and actions that the B&I IDB has identified for each habitat and species so far as they are relevant to the pursuance of its functions. Full details of each habitat and a discussion of the associated species were given in the 2010 BAP and are not repeated here.

7.1.2 Actions are proposed for those habitats, or species where it is considered that the IDB, over a period of time, can make a moderate or high impact to their status in the Board's District. Actions are proposed for the INNS species where, either there is a legislative requirement for the Board itself or where the Board can make a moderate or high impact. This ensures maximum benefit.

7.1.3 A Procedural Action Plan (Section 8) has also been devised including implementation of the routine management prescriptions with the Biodiversity Handbook. These will benefit all species by providing suitable habitat and the provisions of this overarching Action Plan, e.g., sensitive watercourse management, will not be incorporated into individual species Action Plans to avoid duplication.

7.2 ARABLE MARGINS

7.2.1 Arable Field Margins (as Cereal Field Margins) were the subject of a UK Biodiversity Action Plan whose targets related to improved management via Agri-Environmental Schemes. Only Bedfordshire LBAP (2015) had specific objectives to maintain and where possible expand the length or area of arable field margins managed to biodiversity enhancement prescriptions and to maintain and where possible improve the condition of existing arable field margins in Bedfordshire with known populations of key species.

7.2.2 B&I IDB Objectives

1. Encourage the enhancement of habitats adjacent to watercourses where eligible for ELMS. (This will not preclude their use for maintenance access on occasion.)

2. Reduce soil wash off into the watercourses.

7.2.3 B&I IDB Actions

Action No	Target	B&I IDB Action	Measurable Indicator	Date	Action Lead	Partner
2.1.1	Enhance adjacent habitats and reduce siltation.	Encourage use of buffer strips adjacent to watercourse by promoting the Environmental Land Management Scheme.	Length of buffer strip.	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Landowner
2.2.1	Reduce siltation.	Upgrade cattle drinks.	No installed	2027	IDB Ops	Landowner

Action 2.1.1 will also benefit reed bunting and barn owl which are not further considered individually.

7.3 PONDS

7.3.1 Ponds were the subject of a UK Biodiversity Action Plan although not all qualify under the criteria which largely relate the presence of protected and other species of high conservation importance and important assemblages of species. Irrespective of whether they qualify ponds are an important habitat. The Bedfordshire LBAP (2015) had an objective to Maintain and expand the number and geographical extent of high-quality ponds in Bedfordshire and Luton. Hertfordshire BAP (2006) has no specific objectives which cover the IDB's district but envisages a 'necklace' of high-quality wetland sites.

7.3.2 B&I IDB Objectives

1. Encourage management of existing ponds.
2. Facilitate the creation of new ponds, either by their inclusion within the planning system via e.g., SUDS or by standalone creations

7.3.3 B&I IDB Actions

Action No	Target	B&I IDB Action	Measurable Indicator	Date	Action Lead	Partner
3.1.1	Manage existing ponds.	Provide advice on suitable management.	No of advice given.	Ongoing	IDB Ops / Ecologist	Landowner
3.1.2	Manage existing ponds.	Provide manpower and machinery to assist others.	No ponds managed.	2027	IDB Ops	Landowner
3.2.1	Create ponds.	Provide a leaflet to landowners seeking consent on pond and SUDS creation.	Leaflet produced.	2025	IDB Consenting / Ecologist	N/A

7.4 HEDGEROWS

7.4.1 Hedgerows were a UK BAP Habitat and are a primary habitat for at least 47 species of conservation concern in the U.K. The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 provides protection for ‘Important’ hedges. The Hertfordshire BAP (2006) has as an objective to increase the total length of all hedgerows where appropriate within the farmland environment. The Bedfordshire LBAP (2015) has two objectives, to maintain and where possible and appropriate expand the network of hedgerows and to maintain and where possible improve the condition and species richness of hedgerows in Bedfordshire.

7.4.2 B&I IDB Objectives

1. Ensure no net loss of hedgerows during Board’s activities and increase where appropriate.
2. Enhance hedgerows along Board’s drains.

7.4.3 B&I IDB Actions

Action No	Target	B&I IDB Action	Measurable Indicator	Date	Action Lead	Partner
4.1.1	No net loss.	Ensure compensation planting takes place if any hedges are removed with a wider range of species.	Length in m of hedges removed and hedges planted.	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Landowner
4.1.2	No net loss.	Prevent damage to existing hedges (does not preclude management to allow watercourse management, including coppicing).	Length in m of hedges unmanaged.	2027	IDB Ops	Landowner
4.2.1	Enhance hedgerows.	Identify areas where species rich hedges could be beneficial to watercourse maintenance and plant.	Length in m of hedges planted.	2027	IDB Ops	Landowner

7.5 RIVERS AND WATERCOURSES

7.5.1 Rivers and watercourses of all types and size are treated together as, within the IDB district, the same management principles are applied. Certain types of rivers were listed as a UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitat. Hertfordshire BAP (2006) has no specific objectives which cover the IDB's district but envisages a 'necklace' of high-quality wetland sites. Bedfordshire does not have a LBAP for Rivers and Watercourses.

7.5.2 B&I IDB Objectives and Targets

1. To manage watercourses according to best practice to maintain and enhance the biodiversity interest, including within the riparian zone, while retaining the important land drainage function.
2. To ensure that the B&I IDB does not adversely affect designated sites.

7.5.3 B&I IDB Actions

Action No	Target	B&I IDB Action	Measurable Indicator	Date	Action Lead	Partner
5.1.1	Retain and enhance biodiversity.	Maintain the current regimes which supports the biological interest of the watercourse CWS.	Documented job card.	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Wildlife Trusts
5.1.2	Retain and enhance biodiversity.	Follow advised practices in the Conservation Manual.	Documented job card.	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Landowner
5.1.3	Retain and enhance biodiversity.	Review 5% of works to ensure consistent working practices.	Works as per job card.	Ongoing	IDB Ops/ Ecologist	
5.1.4	Retain and enhance biodiversity.	Resist culverting of drains by exploring alternatives.	No net loss.	On going	IDB Consenting	Applicant
5.2.1	Ensure that the B&I IDB does not adversely affect designated sites.	Discuss works in advance with NE for SSSIs and County Ecologists for CWS.	Consultation held.	Ongoing	IDB Ops/ Ecologist	County Ecologists, Natural England,

7.6 FLOODPLAIN GRAZING MARSH/ WET MEADOWS/ FENS

7.6.1 This combined action plan covers grasslands and fens which are hydrologically sensitive within the B&I IDB's district. The Bedfordshire LBAP (2015) has two objectives for grazing marsh, to maintain and where possible expand the range of floodplain grazing marsh and to maintain and where possible improve the condition of floodplain grazing marsh in Bedfordshire and Luton. They are more specific for lowland meadow as they relate to SSSIs and CWS: to maintain and where possible expand, link and buffer from adverse influences, all lowland meadow SSSI's and CWS in Bedfordshire and to maintain and where possible improve the condition of lowland meadows in Bedfordshire and Luton. The Hertfordshire BAP (2006) has no specific objectives for either but has targets for neutral meadows, to ensure no further loss of long-established unimproved neutral grasslands through improvement or development, to ensure that all remaining unimproved neutral grasslands are under appropriate management regimes and has restoration and creation targets. (It should be noted that these relate to dry as well as

hydrologically sensitive land). Fens were a UK Priority Habitat with a BAP objective of appropriate management of 1200 ha by 2010. There are no specific targets within the county BAPS covered by the B&I IDB district.

7.6.2 B&I IDB Objectives

1. To assist in maintaining appropriate hydrological conditions for grazing marsh, wet meadow and fen.
2. Seek opportunities for the creation of these habitats.

7.6.3 B&I IDB Actions

Action No	Target	B&I IDB Action	Measurable Indicator	Date	Action Lead	Partner
6.1.1	Appropriate hydrological conditions.	Assist in the maintenance of water levels within Flitwick Moor and other designated or priority sites as requested.	Annual Report.	Ongoing	IDB Ops/ Ecologist	NE/ WT/ Greensands Trust
6.2.1	Seek opportunities for creation.	Promulgate the potential during consenting duties.	No of times promulgated.	Ongoing	IDB Consenting	Planning Authorities
6.3.2	Seek opportunities for creation.	Creation and management of habitat when flood storage or NFM projects are being undertaken.	No.	Ongoing	IDB Ops/ Ecologist	Landowner

7.7 WET WOODLAND

7.7.1 Wet woodlands, a S41 Priority Habitat, was the subject of a UK BAP Action Plan. Objectives were to maintain the current extent of semi-natural wet woodland and encourage a balance of appropriate management regimes, initiate restoration and creation of habitat. Objectives within the Bedfordshire LBAP (2007) were similar – to maintain and where possible expand the range of wet woodland and to maintain and where possible improve the condition of wet woodland in Bedfordshire.

7.7.2 B&I IDB Objectives

1. To assist in maintaining appropriate hydrological conditions for wet woodland.
2. Seek opportunities for the creation and management of this habitat.

7.7.3 B&I IDB Actions

Action No	Target	B&I IDB Action	Measurable Indicator	Date	Action Lead	Partner
7.1.1	Appropriate hydrological conditions.	Assist in the maintenance of water levels within Flitwick Moor and other designated or priority sites as requested.	Annual Report.	Ongoing.	IDB Ops/ Ecologist	NE/ WT/ Greensands Trust
7.2.1	Seek opportunities for creation.	Promulgate the potential during consenting duties.	No of times promulgated.	Ongoing.	IDB Consenting	Planning Authorities
7.3.2	Seek opportunities for creation.	Creation and management of habitat when flood storage or NFM projects are being undertaken.	No.	Ongoing.	IDB Ops/ Ecologist	Landowner

7.8 WATER VOLE

7.8.1 This species was the subject of a UK Species Action Plan with the objective to arrest the decline and maintain the (then) current distribution and status of water voles. The Bedfordshire LBAP (2009) had a similar objective – to maintain and expand the range and population of the water vole in Bedfordshire. That for Hertfordshire was to maintain and expand the range of water voles in Hertfordshire and to maintain and increase their population size. Recently research has shown that the presence of mink is the principal factor affecting water voles and, given the steep decline in the species, actions to benefit water voles are considered the principal target of this BAP. The actions within this section overlap with those for mink – see Section 6 which is not considered further.

7.8.2 B&I IDB Objectives

1. Establish baseline information on distribution and numbers of the species.
2. Provide appropriate habitat conditions for water voles to breed successfully via Procedural Action Plan.
3. Reduce predator numbers.

7.8.3 B&I IDB Actions

Action No	Target	B&I IDB Action	Measurable Indicator	Date	Action Lead	Partner
8.1.1	Monitor water vole populations.	Maintain an IDB data base of any sightings of water vole and submit records to Environmental Records Centre.	Annual Report.	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Environmental records Centre
8.3.1++	Predator control.	Set out and operate 20 mink traps.	Mink numbers recorded.	Ongoing	IDB Ops/ Ecologist	Mink Free East Anglia Steering Group

++ This is the most important action to be funded within this BAP.

7.9 OTTER

7.9.1 This was a UK BAP species whose action plan had the objective of expanding the distribution of otters to achieve 85% occupancy of 10 km squares by 2015 (878 occupied 10-km squares). The objective of the Bedfordshire LBAP (2009) was to maintain and expand the range and population of the European otter in Bedfordshire. Those for Hertfordshire (2009) were to achieve a viable population in Hertfordshire within 10 years, to achieve a regular presence of Otters throughout Hertfordshire River catchments by 2010 and enhance river habitat quality. Since then, otters are now widely distributed across the B&I IDB district.

7.9.2 B&I IDB Objectives

1. Establish baseline information on distribution and numbers of the species.
2. Provide appropriate habitat conditions for otters to breed successfully via Procedural Action Plan

7.9.3 B&I IDB Actions

Action No	Target	B&I IDB Action	Measurable Indicator	Date	Action Lead	Partner
9.1.1	Monitor otter populations.	Maintain an IDB data base of any sightings of otter and submit records to Environmental Records Centre.	Annual Report.	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Environmental records Centre

7.10 KINGFISHER

7.10.1 A characteristic bird on watercourses, kingfishers are a fish-eating species which nests in holes in earth banks. They are listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act but with no associated UK BAP or LBAP. There were therefore no targeted actions.

7.10.2 B&I IDB Objectives

1. Establish baseline information on distribution and numbers of the species.
2. Provide appropriate habitat conditions for kingfisher to breed successfully in part via Procedural Action Plan.

7.10.3 B&I IDB Actions

Action No	Target	B&I IDB Action	Measurable Indicator	Date	Action Lead	Partner
10.1.1	Monitor kingfisher populations.	Maintain an IDB data base of any sightings of kingfisher and submit records to Environmental Records Centre.	Annual Report.	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Environmental records Centre
10.2.1	Provide suitable habitat conditions.	Encourage developers and other parties to include kingfisher tubes in culverts and headwalls.	Nesting holes created.	Ongoing	IDB Consenting	Landowner

7.11 EUROPEAN EEL

7.11.1 A declining species with no BAP but the subject of an Eel Management Plan for the Anglian Region, currently being implemented. The B&I IDB district is at the upper end of the catchment for this species and thus actions are limited.

7.11.2 B&I IDB Objectives

1. Establish baseline information on distribution and numbers of the species.
2. Ensure access to watercourses for elvers.

7.11.3 B&I IDB Actions

Action No	Target	B&I IDB Action	Measurable Indicator	Date	Action Lead	Partner
11.1.1	Monitor elver populations.	Maintain an IDB data base of any sightings of eels and submit records to Environmental Records Centre.	Annual Report.	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Environmental records Centre
11.2.1	Maintain access.	Identify possible obstructions and formulate proposals to facilitate access.	Obstructions identified and access facilitated.	2026	IDB Ops	Landowner

7.12 POLLARD WILLOWS

7.12.1 A characteristic landscape feature in the B&I district, pollard willows receive no protection or listing as a S41 species.

7.12.2 B&I IDB Objectives

1. Establish baseline information on distribution and numbers of the pollard willows.
2. Maintain and enhance their longevity.

7.12.3 B&I IDB Actions

Action No	Target	B&I IDB Action	Measurable Indicator	Date	Action Lead	Partner
12.1.1	Monitor distribution.	Maintain an IDB data base of pollard willows and submit records to Environmental Records Centre.	Annual Report.	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Environmental records Centre
12.2.1	Encourage longevity.	Pollard 20 willows annually to preserve mature trees along watercourses and maintain wet woodland species.	Trees pollarded.	Ongoing	IDB Ops/ Ecologist	NE/ WT/ Greensands Trust
12.2.2	Encourage longevity.	Encourage landowners to pollard willows.	No of landowners advised.	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Landowner

7.13 INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES

7.13.1 Of those species identified in Section 6, mink are fully covered under the Action plan for water voles. Other bank species are technically the responsibility of the landowner.

7.13.2 B&I IDB Objectives

1. Establish baseline information on distribution and numbers of the species.
2. Instigate control measures.

7.13.3 B&I IDB Actions

Action No	Target	B&I IDB Action	Measurable Indicator	Date	Action Lead	Partner
13.1.1	Monitor populations of INNS.	Maintain an IDB data base of any sightings and submit records to Environmental Records Centre.	Annual Report	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Environmental records Centre
13.2.1	Control INNS,	Notify landowner and provide with information on control measures.	Owner notified	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Landowner
13.2.2	Control INNS,	Undertake control of INNS as required where landowner unable/ unwilling to do so.	Site controlled	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Landowner

8 PROCEDURAL ACTION PLAN

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 A number of procedural targets and actions have been established within this Procedural Action Plan. These are intended to fully integrate biodiversity considerations as described in the newly published Conservation Manual into IDB practices and procedures to benefit all species and habitats whether or not they are included within this BAP.

8.2 B&I IDB Objectives

1. Develop and implement Good Practice across all aspects of the Board's activities.
2. Ensure that staff are trained in requirements for good practice.

**BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

8.3 B&I IDB Actions

Action No	Target	B&I IDB Action	Measurable Indicator	Date	Action Lead	Partner
P1	Implement the Conservation Manual	Follow the practices advised in the Conservation Manual	Documented job card	Ongoing	IDB Ops/ Ecologist	
P2	Implement the Conservation Manual	Provide training on species legislation and requirements, management techniques	No of staff training days	Ongoing	IDB Ops/ Ecologist	External providers as necessary
P3	Implement the Conservation Manual	Require developers to follow best practice via consents procedures	Consents issued	Ongoing	IDB Consenting	Planning Authorities
P4	Implement the Conservation Manual	Provide training and advice to Planning Authorities.	Advice given	Ongoing	IDB Consenting	Planning Authorities
P5	Implement the Conservation Manual	Manage biodiversity data by establishing a data base of conservation sites and species distribution data and create suitable gis layers for incorporation on job cards	Data base complete and layers created	Ongoing	IDB GIS/ ecologist	Wildlife Trust Environmental Records Centre
P6	Implement the Conservation Manual	Maintain relationships with conservation bodies	None	Ongoing	IDB Ops/ Ecologist	Including but not exclusively Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Greensands Trust, Marston Vale Trust, Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity, County Ecologists

9 MONITORING

9.1 Monitoring

9.1.1 Monitoring of the B&I IDB BAP will be required to ensure that the actions detailed in the habitat and species action plans are being implemented.

9.1.2 Monitoring of the indicators detailed in the action plans will be undertaken and recorded, generally on an annual basis so as to comply with the Environment Act 2021.

APPENDIX 1: EXCERPTS FROM ADA BAP GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

1.1. Purpose

This BAP has been produced to demonstrate how the IDB fulfils its legal obligations to conserve and enhance biodiversity and sets out targets and actions that contribute to local, national and international strategies and policies.

While the IDB has a statutory duty to have regard for the environment whilst carrying out their functions, for example on or within drainage assets such as watercourses and their banks, the IDB has also to give consideration to how they can contribute to the enhancement of the wider environment.

It is not within the scope of this document to set out the IDBs' objectives and actions in relation to wider environmental topics, such as reducing carbon emissions or reducing waste. However, strategies to address such topics may be mentioned in connection to the enhancement of habitats and species, such as peatland restoration and carbon sequestration.

The opportunity to work together to support and enhance biodiversity in partnership with other organisations is sought wherever possible, as the IDB recognises the additional value working in such ways can bring to the overall objectives.

The intention is that biodiversity is fully integrated into the Board's activities, policies and procedures such as annual maintenance programmes, capital works projects, training and communications.

1.2. What is Biodiversity and why is it important?

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.

Biodiversity is part of our natural capital, a vital resource providing:

- Supply of ecosystem services including water, nutrients, climate change mitigation, flood mitigation, carbon storage and pollination;
- Life resources including 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.

This Biodiversity Action Plan is part of a much larger biodiversity framework that encompasses international, national and local levels of legislation and policy and which also include ecosystem services and climate change.

1.3. Legislative Background

When carrying out its functions, an IDB must pay particular regard to the effect on the environment. Some environmental legislation relates specifically to maintaining or restoring the condition of protected sites or protecting certain species, but there are also statutory duties for IDBs to conserve and enhance biodiversity in and alongside the watercourses they manage and the wider landscape.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on IDBs to conserve biodiversity. The Environment Bill (Act) 2020, when enacted, extends this duty on IDBs to also enhance biodiversity and report periodically on its actions. Therefore, as a public authority, every IDB must consider what action it can take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in England.

Below is a list of key environmental legislation (by no means an exhaustive list) relevant to the work of IDBs:

- The Environment Bill (Act) 2020
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
- Eels (England and Wales) Regulations 2009
- Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2003
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (Section 40)
- The Environmental Impact Assessment (Land Drainage Improvement Works) (Amendment) Regulations 2017
- Land Drainage Act 1994
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- Flood and Water Management Act 2010
- Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975

1.4. Policy & Strategic Background

In 1992 at the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development, commonly known as the Rio Earth Summit, the UK signed the Convention on Biological Diversity which pledged its commitment to contribute towards halting the worldwide loss of habitats and species and their genetic resources. At the 2010 biodiversity summit in Nagoya, Japan, the UK re-affirmed this commitment, and the “Biodiversity 2020” white paper was developed setting out how those commitments would be put into action.

The 2010 report by Sir John Lawton “Making Space for Nature” set out that ecological networks were required in order to halt and reverse the declines seen in many threatened species and habitats. The report succinctly made clear that these ecological networks needed to be bigger, more frequent, better in quality, and more joined up in order to be successful in their ambitions.

The concept of Nature Recovery Networks featured in the Government’s Biodiversity 2020 strategy (2011) and 25 Year Environment Plan (2018). The Environment Bill (Act) 2020 and the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) expands this concept by also take into account the value of the ecological services provided by non-priority species and habitats such as the carbon sequestration of wetlands, the flood alleviation of tree-planting in the uplands and the wellbeing benefits brought about by green space. As such, this BAP presents the actions planned by the IDB to support both priority and non-priority species.

International reports such as by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) have found that climate change in particular is considered to be one of the biggest threats to our biodiversity now, and in the future. Supporting the continuity, connectivity and quality of habitat through management, restoration and expansion may help even the less mobile species to adapt more easily to climate change. This BAP presents the actions the IDB can take to support climate resilience for biodiversity.

**APPENDIX 2: COUNTY WILDLIFE SITES/ LOCAL WILDLIFE SITES WITHIN
BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL IDB DISTRICT**

Bedfordshire

Apsleybury Wood CWS
Arlesey Meadows CWS
Arlesey Road Pit CWS
Biggleswade Allotments Meadow CWS
Biggleswade Common CWS
Birchfield Farm Meadows CWS
Blunham Disused Railway CWS
Buckle Grove CWS
Cainhoe Lakes CWS
Castle Dairy Farm Meadows CWS
Chapel End Meadows, Wilstead CWS
Cople Pits CWS
Coronation Pit CWS
Derek White's Eggs CWS
Elstow Pit CWS
Exeter Wood CWS
Fancott Woods and Meadows CWS
Fenlake Meadows CWS
Flit Valley CWS
Flitwick Manor CWS
Flitwick Moor CWS
Foxhole Wood CWS
Great Barford Gravel Pits CWS
Gypsy Lane East CWS
Henlow Park Woods CWS
Henlow Pit CWS
Hill Farm Pit CWS
Hipseley Spinney CWS
Hooked Lane Meadows CWS
Kempston Hardwick Pit CWS
Lady Wood CWS
Langford Common CWS
Latch Pool and Ditch CWS
Lower Alders CWS
Marston Thrift CWS
Meadhook Wood CWS
Millbrook Warren CWS
Moorhen Farm Meadow CWS
Moors Plantation CWS
Northley Farm Meadows CWS
Northwood Lane Meadows CWS
Old Warden Disused Railway CWS
Poplars Nursery CWS

Poppyhill Pits CWS
Priory Country Park CWS
Priory Park Railway CWS
Putnoe Wood CWS
Quest Pit CWS
River Flit CWS
River Great Ouse CWS
Rivers Ivel and Hiz CWS
Sandy Disused Railway CWS
Sandy Meadows CWS
Sharpenhoe Grove CWS
Shillington Little Fields CWS
Simpsonhill Plantation CWS
South Mills Pits CWS
St. Macute's Wood CWS
Stewartby Lake CWS
Stotfold Watermill Wetland CWS
Stratton Park Balancing Pond CWS
Sutton Fen and Woods CWS
Tebworth Meadow CWS
Upper Alders CWS
Warren Villas CWS
Waterloo Thorns CWS
Wilden Road Verges CWS
Willington Moat CWS
Wilstead Meadows CWS
Wilstead Wood CWS
Wood End Alders CWS
Woodbury Moats and Spinneys CWS
Wrest Park Grounds CWS
Zwetsloots Pits CWS

Cambridgeshire

None

Hertfordshire

Radwell Lake LWS
Pirton Grange Farm LWS
Ickleford Common North LWS
Lower Green, Ickleford LWS
River Hiz, Ickleford North LWS
Cadwell Grove Meadows LWS
Cadwell Marsh & Burymead Springs LWS
River Hiz, Cadwell LWS