

## REEDBEDS

### LOCAL HABITAT ACTION PLAN FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Last updated: August 2003

## 1 CURRENT STATUS

### 1.1 National Status

Reedbeds are wetlands dominated by stands of the reed *Phragmites australis*, where the water table is at or above ground level for most of the year.

There are around 5,000 ha of reedbeds in the UK, but less than 6% of the sites are over 20 ha, and these make a large contribution to the total area. Reedbeds support a diverse fauna, including 6 nationally rare Red Data Book bird species (including bittern, bearded tit and marsh harrier). 5 GB Red Data Book invertebrates are closely tied to this habitat (including reed leopard moth and swallowtail butterfly).

Reedbeds are often associated with other habitats such as open water, grazing marsh and carr woodland any proposals must also be sensitive to the needs of these other habitats.

### 1.2 Local Status

In Cambridgeshire, Wicken Fen NNR, Woodwalton Fen NNR, Nene Washes RSPB reserve, Fowlmere RSPB reserve, Wilbraham Fen, Ely Beet Pits, and the Counter Drain all hold substantial areas of reeds. The importance of linear reedbeds, for example the Board Walks LNR adjoining the River Nene in Peterborough is often understated. The drainage ditches within Cambridgeshire also hold an unknown amount of this type of habitat (see Drainage Ditches Action Plan).

Fringe reedbed habitat can be found at a number of sites in Cambridgeshire, including Holme Fen NNR and gravel pits at St. Ives, Needingworth (Barleycroft), Earith, Hemingford Grey (Marsh Lane), Fenstanton, Somersham, Colne (new pit) and Cow Lane, Godmanchester.

Sea level rise is expected to change or destroy large areas of coastal reedbed. As indicated in the UK BAP, compensatory reedbeds should be created to reduce the net loss. Cambridgeshire already holds areas of reedbeds, and the potential for expanding these or creating new reedbeds, so the county may become very important for the proportion of the national resource in future years.

## **2 CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING REEDBEDS IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

- Loss of area by excessive water extraction and, in the past, land drainage and conversion to intensive agriculture.
- Lack of, or inappropriate hydrological management of existing reedbeds, allowing them to dry out and succeed to carr woodland is one of the greatest threats.
- Water supply: toxic chemicals in the water may lead to loss of diversity in the faunal and floral assemblage; eutrophication can lead to a loss of reeds and silt deposition can cause reedbeds to dry out.
- Encroachment, pollution and direct loss of habitat from industrial activities.

## **3 CURRENT ACTION**

- Reedbed is being restored and recreated at Wicken Fen NNR as part of the EU LIFE Bittern project and at Woodwalton Fen NNR.
- The nature reserves in the county, which already hold areas of reedbed, manage their resource sensitively.
- Cambridge University is currently studying the effects on reedbed communities of different management regimes (cutting and burning, and the frequency of management).
- A very large reedbed creation project is currently being considered as an after use of gravel extraction between Needingworth and Over.

## **4 OBJECTIVES AND LONG TERM TARGETS**

### **4.1 Objectives**

- Rehabilitate the priority areas of existing reedbed in Cambridgeshire (targeting those of 2 ha or more) and maintain this thereafter by active management.
- Create new reedbed on land of low nature conservation interest. The creation should ideally be in blocks of at least 20 ha with priority for creation in areas near to existing reedbeds, and linking wherever possible.
- Encourage smaller scale reedbed creation, for example as part of water purification systems.

### **4.2 5 Year Targets for 2005**

- Ensure all reedbed of nature conservation importance is designated and managed for conservation
- Create 100 ha of new reedbed on land of low conservation value

### **4.3 10 Year Targets for 2010**

- Create 400 ha of new reedbed on land of low conservation value including reedbed as a component of at least one major wetland creation project (ie over 200 ha)

## **5 PROPOSED ACTION WITH TARGETS**

Action for the next three years is detailed in the attached programme.

### **5.1 Policy and Legislation**

- Ensure the creation of reedbed and wetland habitats through Countryside Stewardship targets and after use of mineral workings.
- Ensure that conservation needs are met through an integrated approach to river basin management, which also includes reedbed restoration and management.

### **5.2 Site Safeguard and Management**

- Create and restore existing reedbeds where possible.
- Ensure that development schemes do not affect the integrity of the conservation interest.

### **5.3 Advisory**

- Initiate training courses and advise on reedbed creation and management.

### **5.4 Future Research and Monitoring**

- Ensure that all reedbeds in the county are surveyed and monitored, and research outputs reviewed
- Assess the efficacy of reedbeds in water purification.

### **5.5 Communications and Publicity**

- Promote wetland creation and publicise the importance of reedbeds to nature conservation.

## **6 LINKS TO OTHER PLANS**

This plan should be considered in conjunction with those for fens, floodplain grazing marsh and drainage ditches.

When implemented, this Action Plan will also benefit the bittern, *Vertigo moulinsiana* (Desmoulin's whorl snail), *Segmentina nitida* (shining ram's-horn snail) and *Myxas glutinosa* (glutinous snail).

## **7 REVIEW OF ACTION PLAN**

Arrange monitoring and review of these targets annually and reset targets according to resources and responsibilities for the following 3 years.

## **8 REFERENCES**

Hawke, C J and Jose, PV (1996) *Reedbed Management* for commercial and wildlife interests. RSPB, Sandy.

DoE (1995) *Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report. Volume 2: Action Plans*. HMSO, London

Much information was gathered at a workshop held in winter 1998.

## **9 LIST OF INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED**

Anglian Water Services Ltd  
Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator  
Butterfly Conservation  
Cambridge City Council  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust  
East Cambridgeshire District Council  
English Nature  
Environment Agency  
Farming and Rural Conservation Agency  
Fenland District Council  
FWAG  
Huntingdonshire District Council  
Landscape 2000  
National Trust  
Peterborough City Council  
RSPB - East Anglia  
South Cambridgeshire District Council  
The Wildlife Trust  
University of Cambridge, Department of Zoology

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE LHAP: REEDBEDS**  
**LAST UPDATED: AUGUST 2003**

<b>Target</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>3-5 Years</b>	<b>6-10 Years</b>
1) Ensure all reedbed of nature conservation importance is designated and managed for conservation by 2005	Ensure that opportunities for reedbed creation as part of SUDS associated with new development are taken.	LA's		2005
2) Ensure that all SSSI reedbed is in favourable condition by 2010	Ensure that all reedbeds managed by public bodies and conservation organisations are being managed appropriately (with an up-to-date management plan that is being implemented) to achieve favourable condition			2010
3) Ensure that 75% (by site) of County Wildlife Site designated for reed communities are in favourable condition by 2010	Create new reedbeds as part of large wetland creation projects (Needingworth, Wicken Fen, the Great Fen)	RSPB, Hansons, NT, WiT, EN		2010
4) Create 400ha of new reedbed on land of low conservation importance, including reedbed as a component of at least one major wetland creation project (over 200ha)	Initiate training courses for land managers and countryside management advisors on techniques of reedbed creation and management	RSPB, EN	Ongoing	
	Provide advice on reedbed management, restoration and creation projects	RSPB	Ongoing	
	Public bodies and conservation organisations to ensure that interpretation materials explaining reedbed issues are provided at all suitable wetland sites and that site walks, talks and events are used to promote understanding of reedbed conservation issues (Needingworth)	RSPB	Ongoing	