Rea Internal Drainage Board

Biodiversity Action Plan

2022

1. Statement

This Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has been prepared by the Rea Internal Drainage Board in accordance with the commitment in the Implementation Plan of the Defra Internal Drainage Board Review of 2007 for internal drainage boards (IDBs) to produce their own Biodiversity Action Plans. It demonstrates the Board's commitment to fulfilling its duty as a public body to conserve and enhance biodiversity under various legislation and policy including, but not limited to, the Environment Bill (Act) 2020, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, the 25 Year Environment Plan and Water Framework Directive.

Importantly, it reflects the Board's aspiration to maximise the support 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 Board has adopted this 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.

……Andrew Bebb…… Date 20.10.22…….

Andrew Bebb

Chairman of the Board

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.

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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Shrewsbury

SY2 6JA

Or via email:

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Further information is available on the Board's website:

www.reaidb.org.uk

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2. Introduction

2.1. 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.

2.2. 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

2.3. 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.

2.4. 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.

2.5. Vision

The IDB's vision is:

To achieve effective water management whilst enhancing and protecting the natural environment within our drainage district.

2.6. Aims

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.

3. The IDB BAP Process

3.1. The Biodiversity Audit

The Rea IDB has conducted a biodiversity audit of its drainage district (Figure 1) and identified those habitats and species that would benefit from particular management or actions by the IDB.

This BAP focuses on nationally important priority habitats and species, that is to say those that have been deemed of 'principal importance' in England under the NERC Act 2006. However, those that are not priority species or habitats, but may be locally significant for a variety of reasons have also been considered. Invasive non-native species have also been included.

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

3.2. Objectives, Targets and Actions

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.

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).

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 may involve changes to administrative, management and operating procedures.

3.3. Monitoring and Reporting

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.

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 (Bill) Act 2020.

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.

4. The Biodiversity Audit

4.1. The Rea Internal Drainage District

The drainage district is located in Shropshire

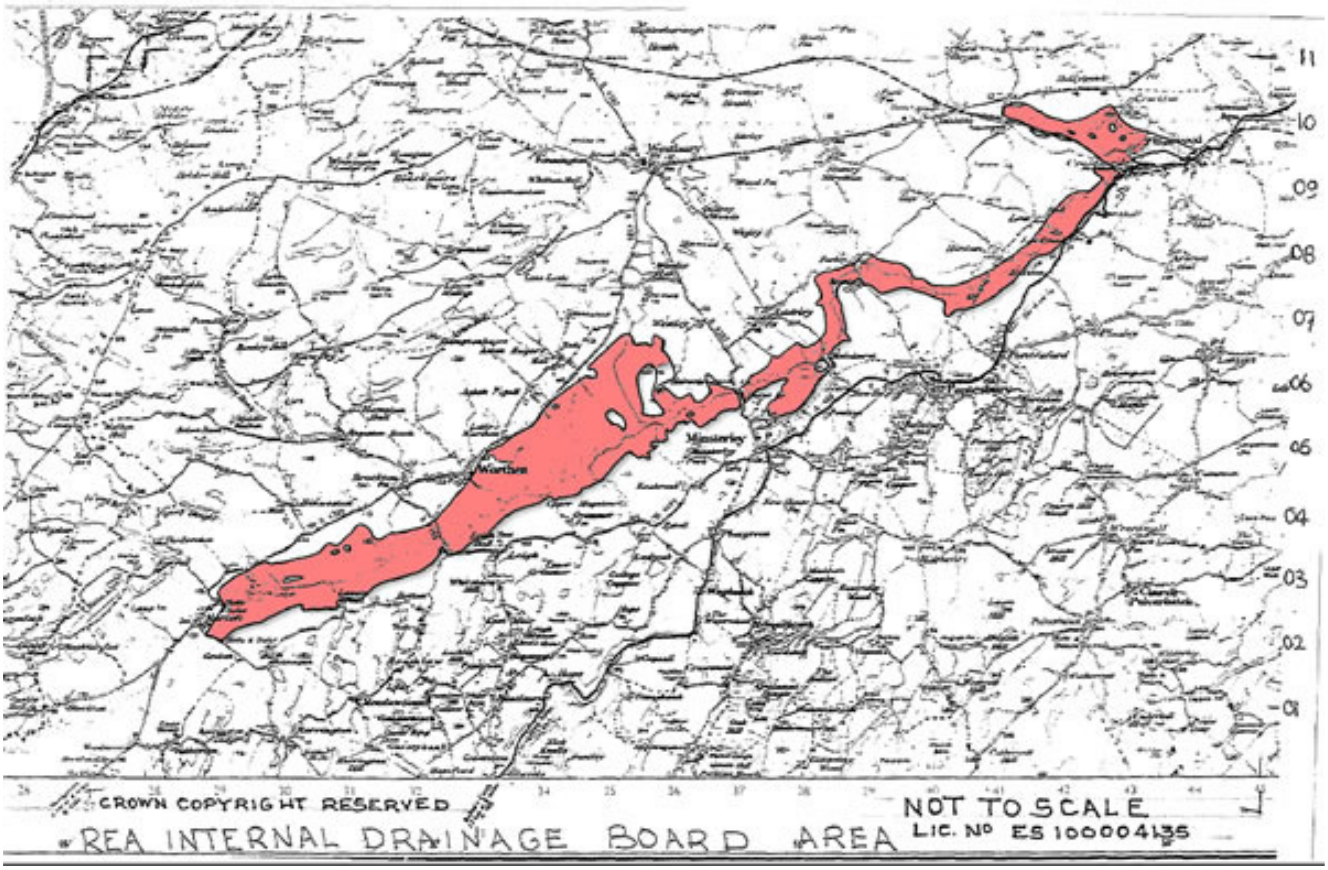
The following outlines the key details of the District:

- Total area of the drainage district: 1260 ha
- Watercourses (maintained): 32 km

4.2. Map of Audit Area (Drainage District)

The area covered by the drainage district of the IDB is shown below in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Rea Internal Drainage District.



4.3. Geology

4.4. The Landscape Character

Natural England has divided the whole of England into a number of National Character Areas (NCA) based on characteristic landforms, wildlife and land use. For each NCA, there is a prepared profile that characterises the wildlife and natural features, identifies the influences that act upon those features and sets objectives for nature conservation.

The Rea IDB straddles 2 character areas: -

NCA61 – the Shropshire, Cheshire & Staffordshire plain. This is the northern, downstream part of the catchment and the area is described as flat or gently undulating, lush pastoral farmland. The landscape owes much to its glacial origins, with variable soil types with mosses and ponds a feature of the area. The NCA61 Statement of Environmental Opportunities identifies the following areas relevant to the Rea drainage district: -

SEO1 Restore, manage & protect rivers, streams, lakes, pond and wetlands from diffuse pollution, including flood plain grazing marsh & wet woodland.

SEO2 Protect the landscape of the plain, recognising its importance to food production and incorporating well-maintained hedgerows, ponds and lowland grassland margins within agricultural systems, to secure resource protection and maintain productivity, while reducing fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, landscape character, sense of place, water quality and biodiversity.

SEO3 Manage and restore ancient and plantation woodland. Support appropriate new woodlands particularly where they will link with existing woodlands and reinstate orchards & biomass provision.

NCA65 – **Shropshire Hills**. The upper reaches of the catchment are located in the Shropshire Hills character area and this is a landscape of rugged and mostly bare-topped hills, contrasting with mixed agriculture in intervening valleys and dales. The AONB is present along the southern edge of the drainage district from south of Minsterley through to Rorrington. The NCA65 Statement of Environmental Opportunities identifies the following areas relevant to the Rea drainage district: -

SEO 2 Create (where appropriate) significant amounts of characteristic woodland, wetland and grassland habitats to enhance and extend the strong habitat network, and to improve soil quality and the regulation of water.

4.5. Landscape Designations

The Rea IDB lies adjacent to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and within a medium priority area for Water Quality. A small area around Marton Pool is designated High Priority for nitrates.
Soils in the drainage district include fen peat around Marton Pool and loamy / clayey soils, with high water table in much of the rest of the district. There is a small area of freely draining loamy soils to the north of the IDB area, around Cruckmeole.

4.6. Sites and Monuments

There are no scheduled monuments within the drainage district; the nearest to the authority's area being a moated site at Leigh Hall, south of Worthen.

4.7. Statutory Nature Conservation Sites

4.7.1 Internationally / Nationally Designated Sites

adjacent to the drainage district.

The following internationally & nationally-designated conservation sites are found within the Rea drainage district.

Table 1.

Site name	Designation	Features Relevant to IDB
Marton Pool	**RAMSAR, SSSI**	**Wetland site, with lowland fen at peripheries**

4.7.2 Local Nature Reserves

There are no local Nature Reserves or County wildlife sites within the IDB.

4.7.3 Non-statutory Nature Conservation Sites

None identified in the drainage district.

4.8. Habitat Audit Summary

This habitat audit summary lists the UK priority habitats that occur within the drainage district and are identified as likely to be influenced by the Board's activities. Also listed are habitats deemed to be of local importance and/or featured in local nature strategies that occur in the drainage district. Finally, brief notes are included on the potential for the IDB to maintain, restore or expand its important habitats. https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-bap-priority-habitats/

Table 2.

National Priority Habitat	Local Priority Habitat	Local Status and Extent	Habitat Importance for IDB	Extent, status and Location of Habitat of Importance within drainage district	IDB Potential for Maintaining, Restoring or Expanding Habitat (high/medium/low)
Hedgerows	**Species rich traditional hedgerows**	**Extensive hedgerow network defining old field patterns**	**High**	**Varying in quality across district. Important feature in area.**	**High – not managed by IDB but encourage land owners**
Reed beds	**Reed bed / lowland fen**	**Areas around Marton Pool**	**High**	**Specific to soil type adjacent to Marton Pool**	**Moderate – by working with EA and land owners**
Woodland	**Deciduous woodland**	**Fragmented pockets of woodland on farms and estates**	**Moderate**	**Small pockets but fragmentation of habitat**	**Moderate – potential conflict with priority bird species in area**
Ditches	**Ditches of high biodiversity value**	**Extensive in IDB**	**Moderate**	**Some ditches present are or have the potential to be classed as high biodiversity value**	**High- maintain and enhance through careful management approach**

4.9. Species Audit Summary

This species audit summary will include priority and other species including INNS that occur within the drainage district and are identified as likely to be influenced by the Board's activities. Also listed are species deemed to be of local importance and/or identified by local nature strategies. Finally, brief notes are included on the potential for the IDB to improve the status of the species in the drainage district. https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-bap-priority-species/

Table 3.

Common & scientific name	National Status	Local Status	Location of Species of Importance within drainage district	IDB Potential for Maintaining or Increasing Species Population or Range (High/medium/low)
Lapwing, Curlew, Yellow wagtail	**Red status**	**Decline**	**Known nest sites within drainage district**	**High – support land owners to restore habitat where possible. Work with BTO to protect nests**
Water vole	**Threatened**	**Decline**	**Reintroduced at Worthen**	**High- through careful bankside habitat management when maintaining watercourses**
Otter	**Threatened**	**Decline**	**Multiple records & sightings of otters in the IDB**	**High – Training staff to recognise otter activity & bankside habitat management**
kingfisher	**Amber list species**	**Unknown**	**Multiple records & sightings of kingfishers in the IDB**	**High – careful bank management, Install artificial nest sites along watercourses**

4.10. 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 impact upon the Board's activities.

Table 4: High risk aquatic invasive non-native species summary

Common & scientific name	Location within IDB if known	Year first recorded	Local status / Extent within drainage district	IDB potential for controlling species population or range
Himalayan Balsam	**On Rea main river**	**25 years +**	**Moderate levels on bottom end of main river**	**Limited – main river responsibility**

5. Habitat and Species Action Plans

5.1. Introduction

Action plans comprise the objectives, targets and actions that the IDB has identified for each habitat and species to be included within the BAP. The following sections contain action plans for each of the habitats and species that have been prioritised by the IDB.

5.2. Habitat Action Plans

5.2.1 Hedgerows

5.2.1.1 IDB Objectives

To encourage sensitive maintenance of hedgerow assets within the drainage district and work with landowners to restore and improve this key habitat.

Table 5:

	IDB Objectives
1	Ensure no net loss of hedges as a result of IDB activities
2	Increase extent and quality of hedgerows within IDB

5.2.1.2 IDB Actions

Table 6:

Action Plan					
Objective ref.	Action number	Action	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	1a	Prevent damage to existing hedges (does not preclude management to allow watercourse maintenance, including coppicing)	Ongoing	IDB ops	Landowners
2	2a	Identify locations for hedgerow restoration, planting and enhancement	Ongoing	IDB ops	Landowners
3	2b	Provide signposting to landowners interested in enhancing and improving the hedgerow network on their land	Ongoing	IDB ops	Landowners

5.2.2 Reed beds / lowland fen

5.2.2.1 IDB Objectives

Table 7:

IDB Objectives	
1	Ensure IDB activity does not affect the water levels and wetland characteristics of reed beds & fen in the drainage district
2	Support landowners to extend and enhance these habitats within the IDB

5.2.2.2 IDB Actions

Table 8:

Action Plan						
Objective ref.	**Action number**	**Action**	**Measurable / Indicators**	**Completion date**	**Action Lead**	**Partners**
1	1a	Monitor habitat and engage with landowners to ensure requirements are being met	Habitat quality does not degrade as a result of IDB activity.	On-going	IDB	Landowners
2	2a	Signpost landowners to grant funding supporting cost & management of restoring and expanding habitat	Habitat expansion & improvement	On-going	IDB	Landowners

5.2.3 Ditches

Though were not included specifically within the priority habitats in section 4.9, however they form a key element in target habitat such as flood plain grazing marsh, and therefore should be considered individually here

5.2.3.1 IDB Objectives

Table 9:

IDB Objectives	
1	Maintain existing biodiversity in ditch habitats within the IDB
2	Increase and enhance biodiversity in ditches whilst maintaining conveyance

5.2.3.2 IDB Actions

Table 10:

Action Plan						
Objective ref.	**Action number**	**Action**	**Measurable / Indicators**	**Completion date**	**Action Lead**	**Partners**
1	1a	Maintain fringe vegetation where it does not increase flood risk.	Assess performance at the end of each maintenance season	On-going	IDB	
1	1b	Spread cuttings and spoil from channel / bankside works thinly so that fringe habitat is not impacted upon negatively	Assess performance at the end of each maintenance season	On-going	IDB	
1	1c	Prioritise channels in terms of importance for flood water conveyance and identify management needs for each	Written plan for maintenance of IDB channels	December 2023	IDB	
2	2a	Identify channels of low risk for 'light touch' / limited management approach	Written plan for maintenance of IDB channels	December 2023	IDB	

5.2.4 Deciduous woodland

5.2.4.1 IDB Objectives

Table 11:

IDB Objectives	
1	Maintain existing tree cover in IDB and ensure IDB activity does not adversely impact on it
2	Identify suitable locations where tree planting could be extended without impacting on other target species within the IDB

5.2.4.2 IDB Actions

Table 12:

Action Plan						
Objective ref.	**Action number**	**Action**	**Measurable / Indicators**	**Completion date**	**Action Lead**	**Partners**
1	1a	Communicate with IDB staff to ensure woodland cover and trees are not impacted upon	Assess performance at the end of each maintenance season	On-going	IDB	Landowners
2	2a	Signpost landowners to grant funding for tree planting and advice regarding placement of trees	Assess performance at the end of each maintenance season	On-going	IDB	Landowners

Species Action Plans

5.2.5 Kingfisher

5.2.5.1 National and Local Targets

Table 13:

IDB Objectives	
1	Provide an environment where kingfisher population thrives and is not impacted on by IDB activity
2	Look at ways to enhance kingfisher habitat

5.2.5.2 IDB Objectives

Table 14:

Action Plan						
Objective ref.	**Action number**	**Action**	**Measurable / Indicators**	**Completion date**	**Action Lead**	**Partners**
1	1a	Maintain and avoid disturbance to potential nest sites on earth cliffs. Avoid working too close to these sites where possible	Monitor activity each year and assess performance at end of season	On-going	IDB	Landowners
2	2a	Consider and research habitat enhancement opportunities within IDB	Research ideas and funding opportunities	On-going	IDB	Landowners

5.2.6 Lapwing, Curlew, Snipe, yellow wagtail

We are considering wading bird species together for the benefit of this BAP report as many of their habitat requirements related to IDB activity are the same.

5.2.6.1 IDB Objectives

Table 15:

IDB Objectives	
1	To stabilise the local wading bird population and ensure IDB activity does not impact on their numbers
2	To enhance the area for wading birds whilst maintaining water conveyance where appropriate

5.2.6.2 IDB Actions

Table 16:

Action Plan						
Objective ref.	**Action number**	**Action**	**Measurable / Indicators**	**Completion date**	**Action Lead**	**Partners**
1	1a	Work with landowners to ensure habitat is in place and IDB activity is compatible with providing it	Assess annual situation and report to board	On-going	IDB	Landowners
1	1b	Work with local birders to identify and protect nests from predation	Assess annual situation and report to board	On-going	IDB	Landowners
2	2a	Signpost landowners to grant schemes and funding to enhance and improve habitat for wading birds in the IDB. Work together to ensure water conveyance and storage for downstream flood protection is not compromised. Work with Curlew Country on species enhancement.	Assess annual situation and report to board	On-going	IDB	Landowners

5.2.7 Water Vole

5.2.7.1 IDB Objectives

Table 17: IDB Objectives

IDB Objectives	
1	Maintain existing population of water vole in IDB
2	Enhance population
3	Understand existing population better to aid protection / enhancement

5.2.7.2 IDB Actions

Table 17: Species action plan

Action Plan						
Objective ref.	**Action number**	**Action**	**Measurable / Indicators**	**Completion date**	**Action Lead**	**Partners**
1	**1a**	Ensure activity is not adversely affecting water vole population within IDB	Monitor activity each year and assess performance at end of season	On-going	IDB	
3	**3a**	Connect with NGOs recording water vole in the area. Keep IDB staff informed about best practice for protecting water voles	Monitor activity each year and assess performance at end of season	On-going	IDB	NGOs

5.2.8 Otter

5.2.8.1 IDB Objectives

Table 16: IDB Objectives

IDB Objectives	
1	Maintain existing population of otter in IDB
2	Enhance population
3	Understand existing population better to aid protection / enhancement

5.2.8.2 IDB Actions

Table 17: Species action plan

Action Plan						
Objective ref.	**Action number**	**Action**	**Measurable / Indicators**	**Completion date**	**Action Lead**	**Partners**
1 & 2	**1a**	Report otter sightings, so likely locations for holts etc can be identified and protected	Report to board annually on activity	On-going	IDB	
3	**3a**	Refresh IDB staff of habitat associated with otters and how to avoid disturbance	Report to board annually on activity	On-going	IDB	
3	**3b**	Encourage landowners to report sightings of otters and provide info of otter habitat as necessary	Monitor activity each year and assess performance at end of season	On-going	IDB	Landowners

6. Implementation

- The clerk will be responsible for rolling out the Biodiversity Action Plan
- The BAP will be discussed by the board as part of programming maintenance activity
- Rea IDB will provide signposting and support to any land owners within the IDB to support habitat and species enhancement activity with the drainage district

7. Monitoring

- The clerk will be responsible for monitoring progress and implementation of the BAP.
- The BAP will be discussed annually at a board meeting in order to monitor progress

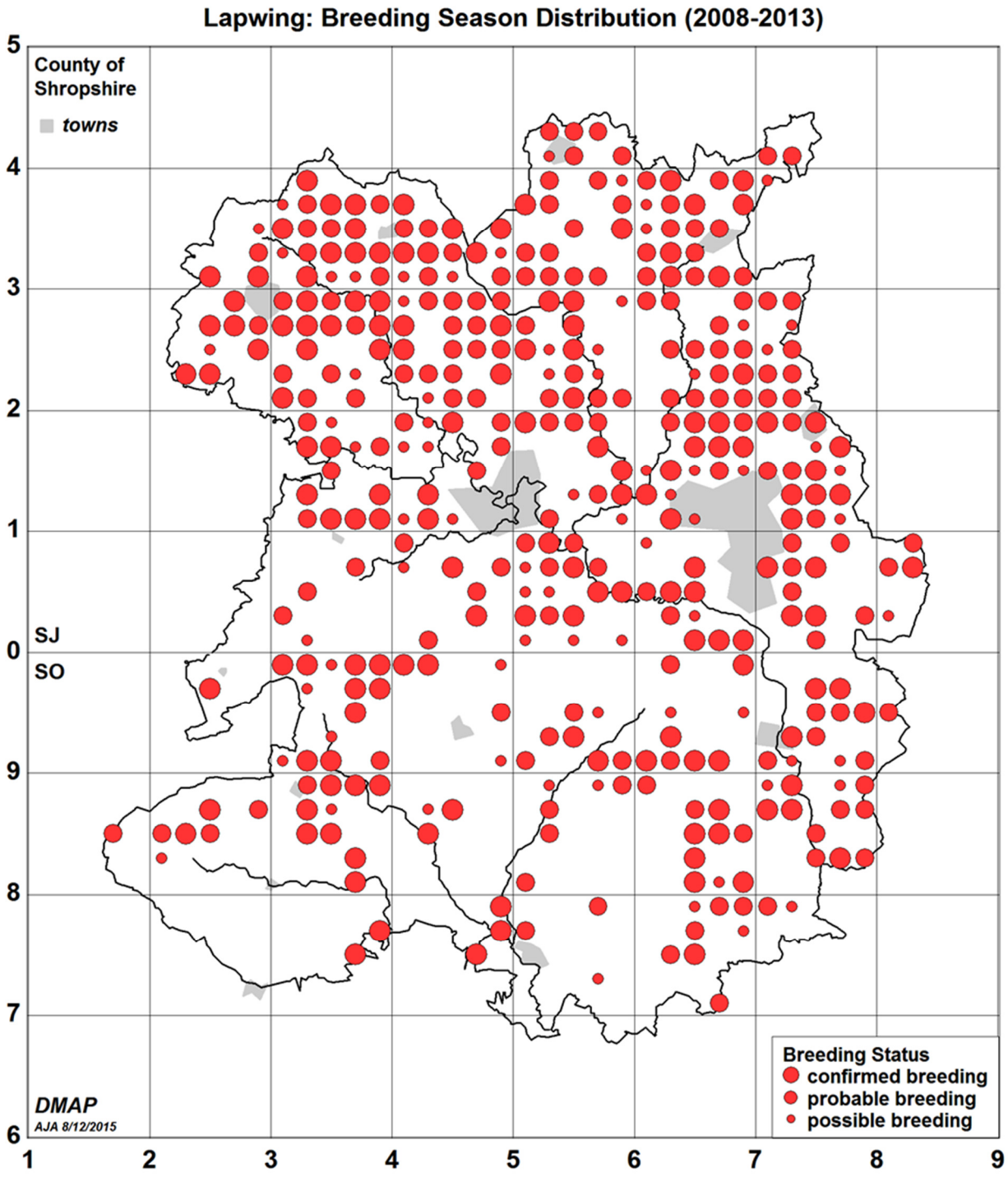
8. Reporting

- The BAP will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains accurate, relevant and up to date
- The BAP will be published on the IDB website -https://www.reaidb.org.uk

9. Appendices & links

Curlew release programme - https://curlewcountry.org/

Water vole release programme - https://www.severnriverstrust.com/projects/water-vole-reintroduction


Lapwing: Breeding Season Distribution (2008-2013)
County of Shropshire
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DMAP
AJA 8/12/2015
Breeding Status
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possible breeding
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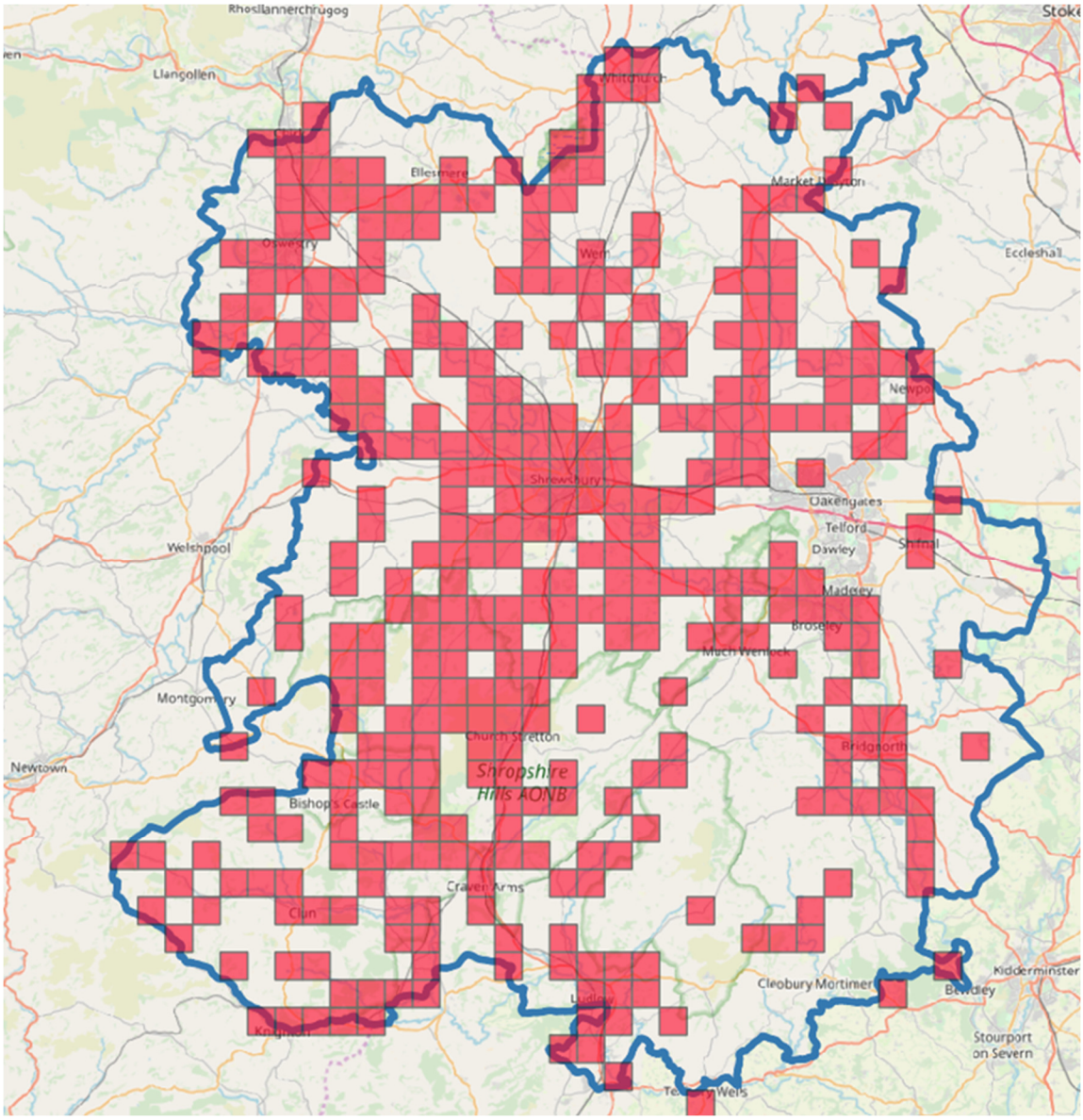
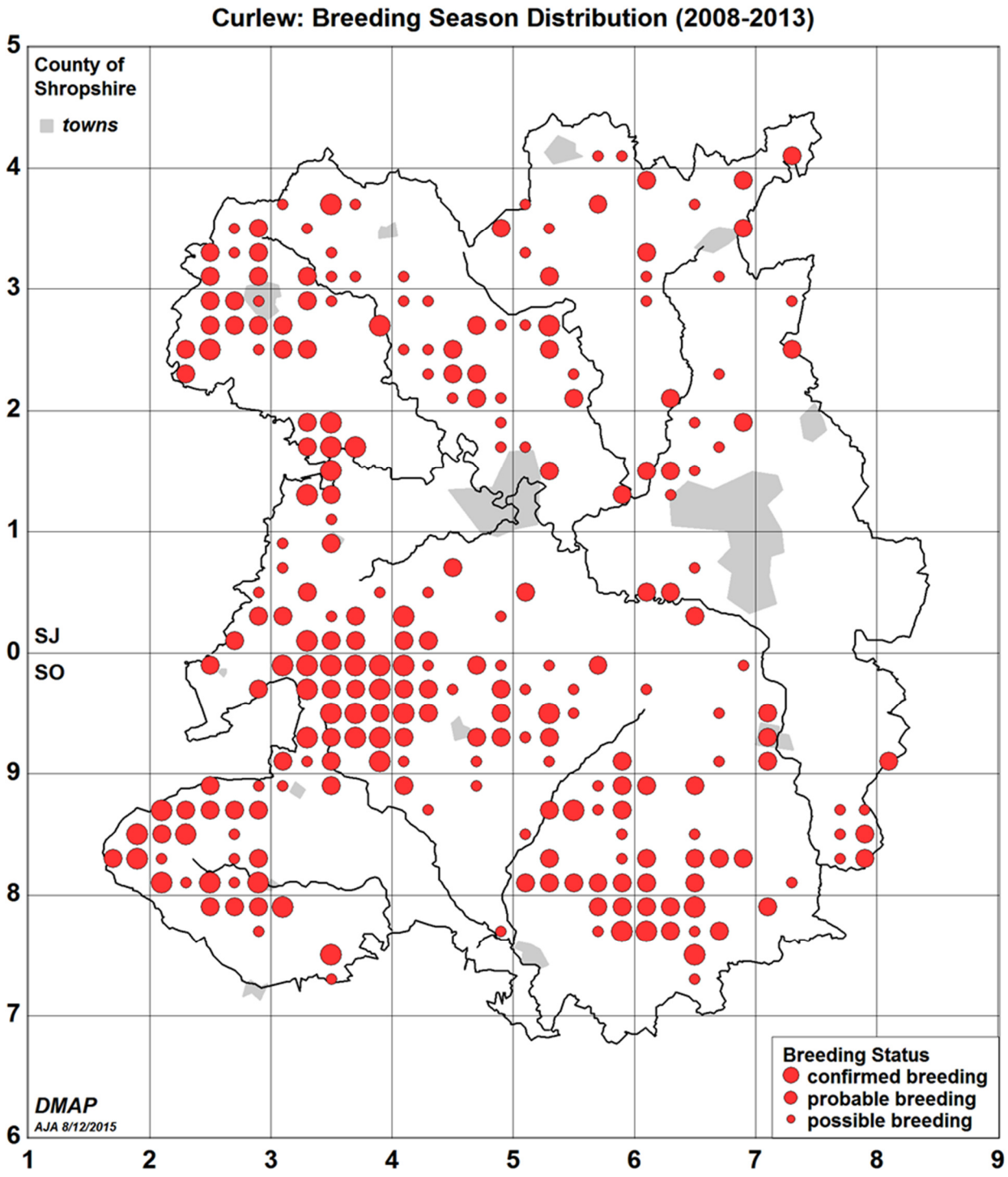


Water vole populations Shropshire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