

Reedbed

Current UK status and trends

There are about 5000ha of reedbeds in the UK, but of the 900 or so sites contributing to this total, only about 50 are greater than 20ha, and these constitute much of the total area. As much as 45% of the reedbed existing in 1945 may have since been lost. Some large new reedbeds are now being created following aggregate quarrying.

Estimated current Northamptonshire resource

33 hectares, with most in small blocks and reed fringes of less than 1ha

Progress towards BAP targets 2008–2015

10ha brought into management and 12ha restored, mainly through HLS. Volunteers have cleared encroaching scrub from a small reedbed at Stanwick. Negotiations are underway to create a large new reedbed in the Earls Barton West area, as part of a wider wetland mosaic, following proposed aggregate extraction.

Lead partner

RSPB

Target areas



Habitat description



Reedbed is wetland habitat dominated by stands of common reed *Phragmites australis*, classified as NVC community S4. It is among the most important bird habitat in the UK. Reedbeds in which the water level remains high (20cm above the surface) in the summer months are referred to as reed swamp; those where the water table is at or below the surface are referred to as reed fen. For the purposes of this action plan it is considered important to distinguish wet reedbed due to its association with bittern *Botaurus stellaris*.

In Northamptonshire reedbeds are very restricted in size and are mainly associated with the margins of open water bodies, particularly flooded gravel pits. Isolated pockets of reedbed exist at Stortons Gravel Pits, Billing Sewage Treatment Works, Higham Ferrers Gravel Pits and Stanwick Lakes. Current reedbed extent and priority areas for creation can be found in the maps below.

Main issues and threats

- Small size and fragmentation

- Neglect or inappropriate management leading to drying out and scrub encroachment
- Decreased water quality and increased pollution, both point source and diffuse
- Challenge of achieving high quality reedbed creation over sufficiently large areas (>20ha) on sand and gravel sites in the Nene Valley

General strategy

- Ensure existing reedbeds are not damaged by inappropriate development, and are brought into favourable management where necessary
- Identify opportunities to create new reedbeds, ideally of a size (>20ha) and quality to attract the full range of specialised species that rely on them
- Focus reedbed creation in the Earls Barton West area. Smaller-scale opportunities to develop fringing reedbeds around existing lakes may occur elsewhere in the county.

Targets

1. Maintain the current extent and quality of wet reedbeds by 2020
2. Achieve favourable condition for all significant stands of reedbed not under current conservation management
3. Establish 50ha of wet reedbed from land of low nature conservation interest by 2020

Actions

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| A. Identify the current extent of BAP-defined reedbed by 2020 | NBRC Wildlife Trust |
| B. Provide management advice to landowners of current reedbeds to maintain condition by 2020 | Wildlife Trust RSPB |
| C. Respond to all planning applications and other proposals subject to a consenting scheme where these have the potential to damage or destroy the features of interest of a reedbed designated as LWS or SSSI | Wildlife Trust Natural England RSPB |
| D. By 2020 establish favourable management to ensure good condition for all significant stands of reedbed currently not in conservation management | Wildlife Trust |
| E. Help mineral companies and landowners establish the right conditions to create wet reedbed suitable for high priority breeding birds, mammals and invertebrates in the Earls Barton area by 2020 | RSPB |
| F. Advise planning authorities, landowners and mineral companies on creating high quality reedbed as part of applications for mineral quarrying in the Earls Barton area, to contribute to an overall long-term target beyond 2020 of 100-130 hectares | RSPB Wildlife Trust Environment Agency |

Flagship species



- Bittern
- Common cuckoo
- Common starling
- Harvest mouse
- Reed bunting

Further information and management advice

- ▶ [Further habitat information from the Wildlife Trust](#)
- ▶ [Further habitat and management information from the RSPB](#)
- ▶ [Management information from the RSPB](#)
- ▶ [Further habitat information from Natural England](#)
- ▶ [Flora Locale's restoration library](#)
- ▶ [How to create and manage reedbeds](#) (from Sussex Wildlife Trust)
- ▶ [Management advice for invertebrates](#) (from Buglife)

Reedbed creation maps

Figure 1 Map A below shows the extent of the current reedbed resource (green) and areas identified with potential for reedbed creation (red), mainly following gravel extraction in the Earls Barton West area. Map B shows the existing reedbed resource in the Higham Ferrers and Stanwick areas.

