

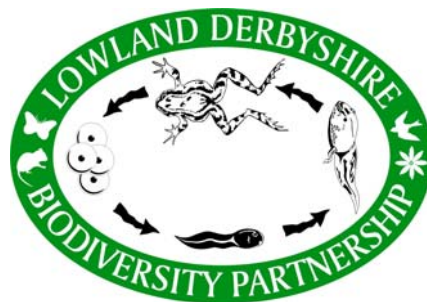
**LOWLAND DERBYSHIRE
LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

**FIELD MARGINS
HABITAT ACTION PLAN
2007 - 2010**



(Picture courtesy of Natural England)

Prepared by the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership



Finalised July 2007 following consultation

FIELD MARGINS HABITAT ACTION PLAN

TREND IN LOWLAND DERBYSHIRE: The general trend in farming in Lowland Derbyshire over the last fifty years has been away from a predominantly pastoral farming system to arable, including short-term grasslands (leys). This significant increase in the amount of arable, from perhaps 15 - 20% to over 30%, is not matched by a similar increase in the amount/area of field margins. This has been compounded by other factors, including the use of machinery which can plough close to the field edge, the use of fertilisers and pesticides and the spray drift, resulting in a decrease in the area of diverse wildlife-rich field margin and a consequent reduction in species. Since 1992 agri-environmental schemes have encouraged the creation and management of field margins.

NATIONAL BAP HABITATS: Arable Field Margins

ASSOCIATED NATIONAL BAP PRIORITY SPECIES:

Species which occur in Derbyshire: Sausage-beard moss, shepherd's needle, bats, brown hare, harvest mouse, bullfinch, grey partridge, corn bunting, lapwing, linnet, skylark, tree sparrow and turtle dove.

ASSOCIATED LOWLAND DERBYSHIRE BAP AUDITS: None

SPECIES FOR WHICH FIELD MARGINS IN LOWLAND DERBYSHIRE ARE A KEY HABITAT:

See Appendix 1 of the document 'Farmland habitats in Lowland Derbyshire'.

A vision for the future of field margins in Lowland Derbyshire

A landscape where field margins, such as cultivated margins, grass margins and conservation headlands, have been established in appropriate places on farms to enhance the populations of dependant farmland species such as birds and plants. This is especially important in the largely arable parts of Derbyshire including farms within the Southern Magnesian Limestone, Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands, and Trent Valley Rises Natural Areas. Landowners will not only actively manage these margins but will understand their importance in relation to dependent farmland species.

1. INTRODUCTION

Background information on field margins in lowland Derbyshire can be found in the document "Farmland habitats in Lowland Derbyshire".

2. FACTORS WHICH HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON FIELD MARGINS

An impact ✓ *A significant impact* ✓ ✓

	Historic	Current
Land Management		
Intensification and mechanisation of cereal production, including the use of herbicides to ensure a weed free monoculture, and summer use of insecticides and the ploughing/cultivation right up to the base of the field margin.	✓	✓✓
Increased trend towards autumn sown crops leading to the reduction of food in the form of winter stubbles for birds and invertebrates.	✓	✓✓
The reduction in rotation of cereal crops with other land covers (including grass leys and fallows).	✓	✓✓
The reduction in the undersown area associated with the shift to winter cropping. Undersown cereal crops are important for overwintering sawflies.	✓✓	✓
Inappropriate timing of the application of fertilizers.	✓	✓✓
Others		
Lack of understanding amongst general public and some land managers of the management of field margins with a concern over keeping them 'tidy'.	✓	✓✓
Lack of understand and appreciation as to the reliance of a number of farmland birds on field margins.		✓✓

3. CURRENT ACTION

3.1 Legislation

Under the Food and Environment Protection Act.1985 it is illegal to spray pesticides into hedge bases, unless there is a specific label recommendation or a specific off-label approval.

Under the current procedures for pesticide registration and review, some compounds have statutory label exemptions preventing their use on the outermost 6 metre wide strips of crops. These restrictions are designed to prevent overspraying of water courses and protect non-cropped habitats.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 affords protection to some plant and animal species including birds. It is an offence to damage or destroy wild birds, their nests or eggs. This is particularly relevant to field margins with regards to timing of cultivation, cutting or other management.

3.2 Designated Sites

There are currently no designated sites which include field margins but the guidelines for the selection of Local Wildlife Sites include rare flowering plants, some of which are arable plants.

3.3 Current Initiatives

- The Local Wildlife Site System has recently revised the selection guidelines and now includes guidelines for birds and rare arable plants.
- The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) provide management advice to landowners. FWAG have catchment based projects for targeted advice eg the River Poulter Project.
- Some of the major landowning LBAP partners, including Severn Trent Water, the National Trust and the Local Authorities have land containing field margins, some of which are within existing Countryside Stewardship Schemes.
- Many private landowners include field margins within their land management.

- The Environmental Stewardship Scheme, which replaces the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, has payments for managing existing field margins, and for restoring and creating new margins. The Entry Level Scheme will pay landowners a flat payment per year if they score the right number of points per hectare. The Higher Level Scheme will pay for capital works including hedgerow management, gapping up and planting. Farm Environment Plans which accompany Higher level Scheme applications will identify opportunities for the creation of new field margins.

Achievements to Date

- The National Forest Tender Scheme administered by the National Forest Company allows land owners to enter into long-term management agreements on their land. The goal is to create one third as woodland, but many other habitats are created and managed as well. During the first 10 years of the scheme 1994-2004, 17.17km of field margins have been established on 10 farms and 0.47km of buffer strip.
- The Countryside Stewardship scheme is an agri-environmental scheme administered by DEFRA. The scheme ran for 12 years between 1992 and 2004. Some agreements are set to run until 2014. It has a number of options available for farmers to both create and restore field margins. Figures from DEFRA RDS indicate that in 2002-2004 27,911km of field margin were created.
- Figures from Environmental Stewardship between 1/1/05 – 31/03/07 show progress towards the LBAP targets
 - (T1) Area of cultivated, low-input field margins created – 29.92ha
(ELS options EF9, EF10, EF11, HLS options HF14, HF16, HF17, and HF19)
 - (T2) Area of margins providing wild bird seed – 16.85ha
(ELS option EF2, EF3, EF4, EF5, OF2, OF3, OF4, OF5, OHF2, OHF3, OHF3, OHF4; OHF5 HLS options HF12, HF2)
 - (T3) Area of flower-rich field margins which provide a pollen and nectar source – 11.34ha
(ELS option EF4, OF4, OHF4, and HLS option HE10)
 - (T4) Area of buffer strips in arable fields created – 47.67ha
(ELS options EE1, EE2, EE3, OE1, OE2, OE3, OHE1, OHE2, OHE3 and HLS options HE1, HE2, HE3)
 - (T5) Area of permanent grass margins created – 51.93ha
(ELS options EF1, EF7, OF1, OF7 and OHF1)

4. ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

4.1 National Targets

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan HAP for arable field margins aims to:

- T1 Expand the area of cultivated, low-input field margins to 16,300ha by 2010.(10,000ha is target for England)
- T2 Expand the area of margins providing wild bird seed to 20,800ha by 2010. (18,000ha is target for England)
- T3 Expand the area of flower-rich field margins which provide a pollen and nectar source to 12,000ha by 2010.
- T4 Expand the area of permanent grass margins to 27,000ha by 2010.(target for England is 25,178ha)

4.2 Regional targets

Regional Planning Guidance for the East Midlands (RSS8) sets the following targets.

- In addition to any existing management agreements, manage 1,100km of existing cereal field margins by 2010
- Create 1,100km of new cereal field margin.

4.3 National Forest Targets

The National Forest LBAP, which includes the southern part of Derbyshire, has targets for 'field margins'.

- Establish 2-6m margins on 10% of farms (66) within the National Forest by 2010
- Establish 6m margins along 10% of the length of watercourses in the National Forest by 2010.

4.4 Lowland Derbyshire targets (all targets are for 2005-2010, in-line with UK targets)

1. **Expand the area of cultivated, low-input field margins by 65ha**
(Relates to ELS options EF9, EF10, EF11, HLS options HF14, HF16, HF17, and HF19)
2. **Expand the area of margins providing wild bird seed by 150ha**
(Relates to ELS option EF2, EF3, EF4, EF5, OF2, OF3, OF4, OF5, OHF2, OHF3, OHF3, OHF4; OHF5 HLS options HF12, HF2)
3. **Expand the area of flower-rich field margins which provide a pollen and nectar source by 90ha**
(Relates to ELS option EF4, OF4, OHF4, and HLS option HE10)
4. **Expand the area of buffer strips in arable fields by 400ha**
(Relates to ELS options EE1, EE2, EE3, OE1, OE2, OE3, OHE1, OHE2, OHE3 and HLS options HE1, HE2, HE3)
5. **Expand the area of permanent grass margins by 100ha**
(Relates to ELS options EF1, EF7, OF1, OF7 and OHF1)

4.5 Main factors likely to affect achievement of targets

Resources and Land management

- Most sites with field margins are on farmland and are in private ownership.
- Providing farm management advice to landowners is time consuming and current resource for such advice is limited.

Conflicts with other Conservation priorities

- Resolution of conflicts between other habitats of high value.

Practical difficulties and lack of knowledge

- Inadequate survey/base data for many areas of the LBAP areas

5. ACTIONS

LDFAG= Lowland Derbyshire Farmland Action group (all of below)

CLA = Country Land and Business Association, DWT = Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, FWAG = Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, LAs = Local Authorities, LRC = Local Record Centre, NE = Natural England, NF= National Forest, NT = National Trust, NFU = National Farmers Union, ST= Severn Trent, and WSP = Wildlife Sites Panel

	ACTIONS	TIME - SCALE	LEAD AGENCY (in bold) & Partners
	DATA COLLATION		
FM1	Collate all existing information on field margins for the LBAP area in one place and digitise information. Share data with LBAP partners.	By 2008	LRC, NE
FM2	Add field margins, or holdings with field margins on, identified through Farm Environment Plans (FEPs), to master dataset on field margins	Ongoing	LRC, NE
	SURVEY		
FM3	Survey existing field margins as part of Farm Environment Plans (FEPs)	Ongoing	FWAG , and other farm advisers
FM4	Survey potential field margin Local Wildlife Sites, assess them against the WS Selection guidelines and designate if appropriate.	Ongoing	DWT, WSP
FM5	Monitor condition of field margins through the Countryside Survey 2007	2007/8	Natural England
	CONSERVATION ACTION AND INCENTIVES		
FM6	Promote the Environmental Stewardship (Entry, Organic and Higher Levels) and National Forest Tender Scheme to landowners as a way of managing and creating field margins. Specifically identifying and targeting areas in Lowland Derbyshire where field margins are important to rare arable plants and farmland birds.	Ongoing	NE, FWAG, DWT, NF, CLA and NFU
FM7	On land owned and or managed by LBAP partners ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field margins are managed favourably for farmland species such as birds and arable plants • Appropriate opportunities are taken to link areas of field margins. 	Ongoing	NT, ST, LAs, and DWT
	MANAGEMENT AND CREATION ADVICE		
FM8	Produce a leaflet aimed at landowners, outlining the benefits of field margins for farmland birds and arable plants.	By 2009	LDFAG
	AWARENESS RAISING		
FM9	Hold a public event raising awareness of the importance of field margins and the restriction of usage of fertilisers and herbicides.	By 2010	LDFAG

6. RESOURCES

It is envisaged that the majority of actions proposed will be carried out by the relevant organisations using current resources. These include:

- continuing investment by landowners and managers managing their land sympathetically for wildlife
- continuing management of field margins in the ownership of conservation organisations or public bodies

The Environmental Stewardship is a two tier scheme comprising of the Entry level and Higher level scheme. The Entry Level Scheme (ELS) is designed to encourage a large number farmers and land owners into environmental management. A number of options under ELS will aim to encourage sympathetic management and creation of field margins. The Higher Level Scheme (HLS) will be highly targeted and discretionary. HLS will offer options to carry out capital works on field margins. In addition the Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS) is a whole farm scheme, similar to ELS but is open to all farmers who manage all or part of their land organically and who are not receiving aid under the Organic Aid Scheme or the Organic Farming Scheme.

Additional resources will be required to:

- Carry out surveys of field margins.
- Collate and digitise field margin information and distribute to LBAP partners.
- Increase the resources providing farmland management and agri-environmental grant advice to landowners.
- Enhance management of sites in the ownership of LBAP partners.