Floodplain Grassland

Shire Group
of IDBs

Floodplain grasslands are periodically inundated pastures or meadows in river floodplains, and they are usually dissected by ditches that maintain a high water level.

They provide valuable habitat for a number of wading birds such as Lapwing, Redshank, Snipe and Curlew, and farmland birds including Yellow Wagtail, Tree Sparrow, Song Thrush and Starling.

Floodplain grassland can also play a vital role in flood defence, water storage and improving water quality.

Managing Floodplain Grassland

Managing Water Levels

- Water control structures, such as sluices, may be necessary to control the inflow or outflow of water on the grassland to ensure that it does not dry out too soon in early dry weather, nor water levels stay too high during a wet spring

- **Do not alter the water table without seeking advice**. Consider any likely impacts on surrounding land from altering drainage and consult with the necessary statutory agency (e.g. Environment Agency/IDB)

- Aim for a mosaic of flooded and un-flooded areas

Grassland Management

- Floodplain grassland requires management through mowing and/or grazing to avoid succession to scrub or woodland

- Cutting should be delayed until grasses and flowers have set seed, in late summer

- Cutting for hay (or silage), followed by grazing of the aftermath, is the traditional management practice for wet grasslands as this creates a variety of grass heights and tussocky areas for nesting birds and invertebrates

Use of Chemicals

- Avoid the use of fertilisers, slurry or manure on floodplain grassland

- If using herbicides, use knapsack sprayers or weed-wipers to spot-treat undesirable species (e.g. Ragwort, Thistles). Herbicide use on or near water requires agreement from the Environment Agency.

- Where possible weeds should be physically controlled by topping, pulling or grazing

Funding Opportunities

- Opportunities for funding of wet grassland creation area available through Environmental Stewardship