DORSET LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY HABITAT ASSEMBLAGES

Habitat assemblage:	Species of freshwater and brackish reedbeds
Broad Habitat type:	Wetlands
S41 and Priority Habitat type:	Reedbeds
Composite species assemblages:	Breeding birds of reedbeds Invertebrates of reedbeds

Habitat assemblage description:	Common reed is a widespread plant of wetlands and can occur is a wide variety of situations. Reedbeds as covered by this guidance are those dense stands of common reed where it is the overwhelming dominant and covering more than 0.25-hectares, there are approximately 280-hectatres in Dorset. These reedbeds can occur in freshwater wetlands or more extensively in Dorset in brackish situations around Christchurch Harbour, Poole Harbour and in the west of the Fleet. They support a small but distinctive assemblage of breeding birds with marsh harrier, water rail and bearded tit good examples. The invertebrate assemblages are less well studied in Dorset but includes several moths and the very rare spider *Hypsosinga heri* which is not currently known elsewhere in Britain.

Other related assemblages:	Species of saltmarsh and brackish-freshwater transitions Species of grazing marsh grasslands and associated ditch systems Species of rich fens, basic flushes and swamps

Pressures and Threats	
PA04	**Removal of small landscape features for agricultural land parcel consolidation (hedges, stone walls, rushes, open ditches, springs, solitary trees, etc.)**
	Reedbeds were historically managed for cutting the reeds for thatch when thatched roofs were much more common. Since the cessation of traditional management the reedbeds have become invaded by scrub and the reeds less vigorous and are often growing in a distorted way. Regular cutting or occasional burning reduces litter and re-invigorates the reeds producing tall straight growth. Managing water levels via a ditch system can maintains a high water table and reduces encroachment on scrub. At some sites such as nature reserves reedbeds are still managed by cutting and managing water levels to produce the optimum habitat for some of the reed specialist birds.

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PA07	**Intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock**
	Common Reed is palatable to grazing animals and if grazing persists its dominance is reduced and other plants will take its place. (Grazing by deer is dealt with below PI02).
PA13	**Application of natural or synthetic fertilisers on agricultural land**
	Applications of artificial fertilizers and / or slurry on farmland adjacent to reedbeds can lead to run-off that enriches the soil and favours robust competitive plants such as stinging nettle and hemlock water-dropwort. In small quantities the latter is a very important nectar plant for wetland invertebrates. Excess nutrients can also alter the growth of the reed leaving the resulting stems less robust and susceptible to rot when used as thatch, diminishing the commercial incentive to manage the reeds.
PI02	**Other invasive alien species**
	When found near water courses invasive non-native plants such as Himalayan balsam can be a problem and locally form dense stands. Around Poole Harbour sika deer are widespread and find a ‘safe haven’ in reedbeds the trampling causing erosion and heavy persistent grazing is, in places, causing a change from reedbed to species-poor saltmarsh.
PI03	**Problematic native species**
	Most invasive species are related to management issues such as enrichment where stinging nettle and hemlock water-dropwort can become abundant to the detriment of the reeds. Scrub such as willow and bramble establish as ground becomes drier and can spread shading out the reeds. Scrub at low levels (c. 5-10% cover) can be important for some birds such as Cetti’s warbler.
PJ03	**Changes in precipitation regimes due to climate change**
	Changing rainfall patterns may impact the habitat in different ways. Prolonged droughts may lower the water table which favours the encroachment of scrub and other non-wetland species. Increased flooding events could result in enriched water and silt entering the site leading to enrichment and an increase in plants such as stinging nettle.

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Micro-habitat assemblages: Breeding birds of reedbeds

Group	Species	Common Name	IUCN GB	IUCN Eng	IUCN other	Criteria	Threats / Pressures							
Birds	*Circus aeruginosus*	Eurasian Marsh Harrier	AMBER	n/a	n/a	**2**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Birds	*Emberiza schoeniclus*	Reed Bunting	AMBER	n/a	n/a	**2**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Birds	*Panurus biarmicus*	Bearded Tit		n/a	n/a	**5**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Birds	*Rallus aquaticus*	Water Rail		n/a	n/a	**5**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Micro-habitat assemblages: Invertebrates of reedbeds

Group	Species	Common Name	IUCN GB	IUCN Eng	IUCN other	Criteria	Threats / Pressures							
Spiders	*Clubiona juvenis*	a sac-spider	NT	n/a	n/a	**2**								
Spiders	*Hypsosinga heri*	an orb-weaver spider	VU	n/a	n/a	**1**	PA05	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

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