

Barn Owl Action Plan

Introduction and Vision Statement

Barn owls (*Tyto alba*) are perhaps the one of the most cosmopolitan of all land birds and occur in suitable habitat over most of the world's land mass. In Britain they typically occur on farmland where they breed in quiet buildings or holes in hedgerow trees and hunt over open fields and around farmyards where they feed in areas of rough, often undergrazed grassland that hold good populations of small mammals. They are mainly found at altitudes of less than 200 m above sea level and tend not to be found in well-wooded areas. The UK population is believed to have dropped by up to 50% since the 1960s but since it is a very difficult species to census data are unreliable. Barn owl populations are known to fluctuate widely following the well-known cyclical population changes in small mammals. There is evidence that numbers appear to have stabilised, and are even starting to increase in some areas. There are only about 400 breeding pairs in Wales.

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Currently, the Carmarthenshire population is probably about 50+ pairs. Loss of nest sites through restoration of old farm buildings to dwellings and felling of old hedgerow trees are reasons for their decline. However, one of the main causes is the loss of semi-improved species-rich grassland in the county. In addition, reduction of small mammal 'prey' populations and mortality from secondary poisoning by eating prey subjected to control by rodenticides are another cause of decline. In Wales, the barn owls' preferred prey is the short-tailed vole which prospers in grassy roadside verges. Consequently the owl spends a lot of time hunting in this hazardous environment. Road deaths, according to the Barn Owl Trust, are responsible for more than half of all barn owl deaths.

Carmarthenshire is a priority conservation area for barn owls within Wales.

Within Carmarthenshire this plan aims to help the return of a viable barn owl population. Provision of nesting sites, adequate assessment of the potential impacts of development on barn owls and encouraging the retention/creation of suitable hunting habitat will all contribute towards this vision.

Action Plan Objectives

- BO1SP** To maintain and increase the population of barn owls in Carmarthenshire
- BO2DCM** To gather data on the distribution and status of barn owls in Carmarthenshire
- BO3RA** To provide guidance on habitat and nesting requirements of the barn owl
- BO4POL** To ensure that the barn owl is protected and enhanced through the planning and development control process

Actions

CODE	TEXT	START/END DATE	Lead Partner	Action goal	Key partners	Funding	Priority L, M, H	Report Jan–Dec 2010	Report Jan–Dec 2011	
BO1SP1	To erect barn owl boxes throughout the county at suitable sites	2010 –2015	CCC	At least 10 boxes/year	TAYO CBC	✓	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 Boxes made with CCW grant funding and made buy rangers and vols at Mynydd Mawr Woodland Park. Boxes have been distributed in the county: 812 444; 809 407; 707 256; 698 206; 643266; MoD Pembrey/Pendine and two in Teifi valley – GR tbc. • Ten barn owl boxes erected at eight sites in the Tywi valley as part of the TAYO project – 556 212, 692 262, 554 206, 6427 2667, 6431 2609, 5653 2350, 7162 2580, 7470 2282. 		
BO2DCM1	Continue to promote submission of records of barn owls via ‘post card’ scheme	2010 – ongoing	CCC	1 PR 1 item in newsletter Info on website	WTSWW	–	H	Action in 2011 – article in newsletter and PR.		
BO2DCM2	Revisit current postcard data and check with roost recorders if barn owls are still present	2010–2011	CCC	Revised GIS layer		–	H	Not started - Action in 2011		
BO3RA1	Provide BOT advice on barn owls and habitat management to landowners and land managers	2010 – ongoing	CCC	Link established on website and PR	WTSWW TAYO WAG (Tir Gofal)	–	H	Not started - Action in 2011		
BO3RA2	Contact the Barn Owl Trust about potential projects within the county over the next 5 years	2010	CCC	E-mail to BOT	–	–	M	Not started - Action in 2011		
BO4POL1	Ensure that potential impacts on barn owl populations are considered within any road building/highways improvement programmes, and that appropriate measures are put in place to limit these	2010 – ongoing	CCC	100% of relevant applications	TRA Highways departments	–	H	100% Ongoing Applications – W/23866, S/23781. Details of other sites available.		
BO4POL2	Use planning conditions (such as provision of access and nesting structures, creation of	2010 – ongoing	CCC	100% of relevant applications	Developers Applicants	–	H	Applications with surveys/ or where surveys have been requested: 115		

	replacement habitat or nesting sites) to ensure that nesting habitat is provided in barn conversions at appropriate sites							Resulted in 3 applications in 2010 requesting mitigation/compensation/enhancement for Barn owls.		
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