

LAPWING *VANELLUS VANELLUS* SPECIES ACTION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

The lapwing has been identified in the UKBAP as a species of conservation concern, but not a priority species. However, there has been a significant decline in both over-wintering birds and breeding populations, and Caerphilly county borough now supports the largest breeding colony in the South Wales Valleys.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status	
priority species (P) or species of conservation concern (S)	S
EC Birds Directive 1979	-
Berne Convention 1982	-
Bonn Convention 1979	-
CITES 1975	-
WCA 1981	Part I Section 1
Birds of Conservation Concern List ³⁰	Red



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2. CURRENT STATUS

2.1 UK and Wales

Lapwings were once a common sight on agricultural land throughout the UK with large flocks of over-wintering birds and breeding birds a common sight.

However, since 1987 the Welsh breeding lapwing population has declined by over 70% to fewer than 1700 pairs.³¹ Fewer than 33 sites in Wales now have more than 10 pairs on them, and only 5 have >20 pairs. An intensive all-Wales lapwing survey carried out in 1996-98 by the RSPB revealed only 2 areas where there was a breeding population of >50 pairs.

Changes in agricultural practices appear to be the main cause of the population crash, causing the remnant populations to relocate to marginal areas. Much evidence suggests that changes producing a dense grass growth in spring have contributed greatly to the rapid decline of the lapwing as a breeding bird in the UK. Lapwings are a species of conservation value, but their status in conservation legislation does not accurately reflect the degree of the recent decline. It is now recognised by the RSPB as of red list status following the 1998 national survey, which revealed a 48% reduction since 1988; and the RSPB have produced a species action plan for this species.

2.2 Caerphilly County Borough

Lapwings are a common winter visitor and passing migrant in Caerphilly county borough. However, the breeding population on agricultural land is now limited to isolated pairs scattered throughout the county. The more favoured breeding sites now appear to be associated with colliery spoil tips or poorly reclaimed land, particularly those areas that have short or no vegetation, impeded drainage and access to nearby taller vegetation for cover and food. Despite a continuing decrease in breeding numbers, pairs have successfully raised young on poorly reclaimed colliery spoil at Fochriw^{17, 18}, with 15 young reported here in 1998.³² This site now supports the largest remaining colony of lapwings in the South Wales Valleys, and it is second only to the Dee Estuary

in Wales as a whole. Smaller breeding colonies occur on colliery spoil at Manmoel, Heol Ddu/Capel Gwladys, Caerphilly Common, Capel Brithdir and Waen Rhydd³⁵. (see **Map 2.8**). Although it is actually within Merthyr Tydfil county borough Isaac Morgan Cottages Pond in Cwmbargoed is used by lapwings arriving to breed at Fochriw³⁵.

Over-wintering lapwings are mainly seen along the coast (e.g. Rhymney Estuary), but there may be some movement during bad weather to inland reservoirs, and some are seen on passage in upland areas of common land in the county borough. Large post-breeding flocks can sometimes occur at Capel Gwladys/five house, Gelligaer, and at Mynydd y Capel, Bedlinog³⁵.

2.3 Links with Habitats

Lapwings are associated with a wide range of habitats, actions for these habitats should ensure that lapwing requirements are not compromised:

- **Species-rich Grasslands** (rhos pasture)
- *Common Land*
- **Post-Industrial Land** (revegetated colliery spoil, landscaped colliery spoil)
- Farmland (improved pasture, newly ploughed land)

3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- Changes in grassland management: grazing by cattle or horses is seen as the best way of managing vegetation for lapwings; sheep are too selective and mechanical cutting is disturbing and must be timed correctly; but dense, tall grass is unsuitable for lapwings at their breeding sites. Nest failures due to trampling can occur when the density of grazing animals is too high during the breeding season.
- Agriculture: on cultivated land breeding attempts are most successful when a germinating or established crop is present, necessitating no agricultural management during the breeding season. In Gwent this is an issue as most lapwings on cultivated land will be in maize, which involves cultivation during the nesting period. The change from spring-sown to autumn-sown cereals in arable areas has resulted in a tall spring vegetation which is unsuitable for breeding lapwings (arable issues are not really relevant to Caerphilly county borough except in the far south east of the area).
- Decreasing colony size: a reduction in the number of pairs on one site means that they become less successful at defending their nest sites against predators, most notably carrion crows (*Corvus corone*)²⁰.
- Human disturbance: prevents birds from returning to their nests and leads to the chilling of eggs and exposure to predation. Disturbance can be caused by walkers, dogs, motorbikes and off-road vehicles.
- Restoration: several lapwing sites in Caerphilly county borough are on old colliery sites in the process of being restored; the final restoration often results in a sward that is too dense and too tall to support lapwings, while tree and shrub planting provides cover for predators.
- Size of site: on sites smaller than 30ha, lapwings become more susceptible to outside influences, such as predation and disturbance. Breeding success and nesting density decline in proportion to the size of site, but large sites are very rare.

- Draining; small ponds and wet areas are important for success of the lapwing colony.
- Lack of information; RSPB hold extensive data on lapwings on farmland and moorland habitats, however, there is a lack of such data for colliery tips which are an important habitat in south Wales.

4. CURRENT ACTION

- 4.1 Sites known to have breeding lapwings at Fochriw and Manmoel are identified as SINCS⁸.
- 4.2 Discussions are underway between CCBC, RSPB, and Commoners to enhance the Fochriw site to provide a larger suitable area for breeding lapwing.
- 4.3 Sites adjoining farmland (nesting sites), with cattle or horse grazing may have the potential to gain support from the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme, for the agricultural management of farmland for the lapwing. Farmers may be able to offset the costs of appropriate management with this financial support.
- 4.4 Sympathetic stock management is also eligible for consideration for support under Tir Gofal.
- 4.5 All known breeding sites are monitored annually by BTO and RSPB.
- 4.6 The RSPB Lapwing Recovery Programme (Wales) identifies areas of importance, for example Fochriw.
- 4.7 The RSPB, in partnership with other ornithological organisations are working towards identifying the optimum distance between swards of rush vegetation and open areas; and the optimum density of the swards. They are also looking into the breeding success of lapwing colonies by counting the number of juveniles in a post-breeding flock, rather than the number of chicks. This is because of the high mortality rate of chicks before achieving juvenile age.
- 4.8 A breeding bird survey was carried out and a report prepared for the area of Penallta Tip (Penallta Community Park), with particular reference to the lapwing, and makes management recommendations³⁵.

5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

5.1 UK Objectives and Targets

Not applicable to this species.

5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

- 5.2.1 Halt the decline in the breeding population in Caerphilly county borough. (Target: 2005)
- 5.2.2 Enhance breeding success on farmland and colliery spoil. (Target: ongoing)

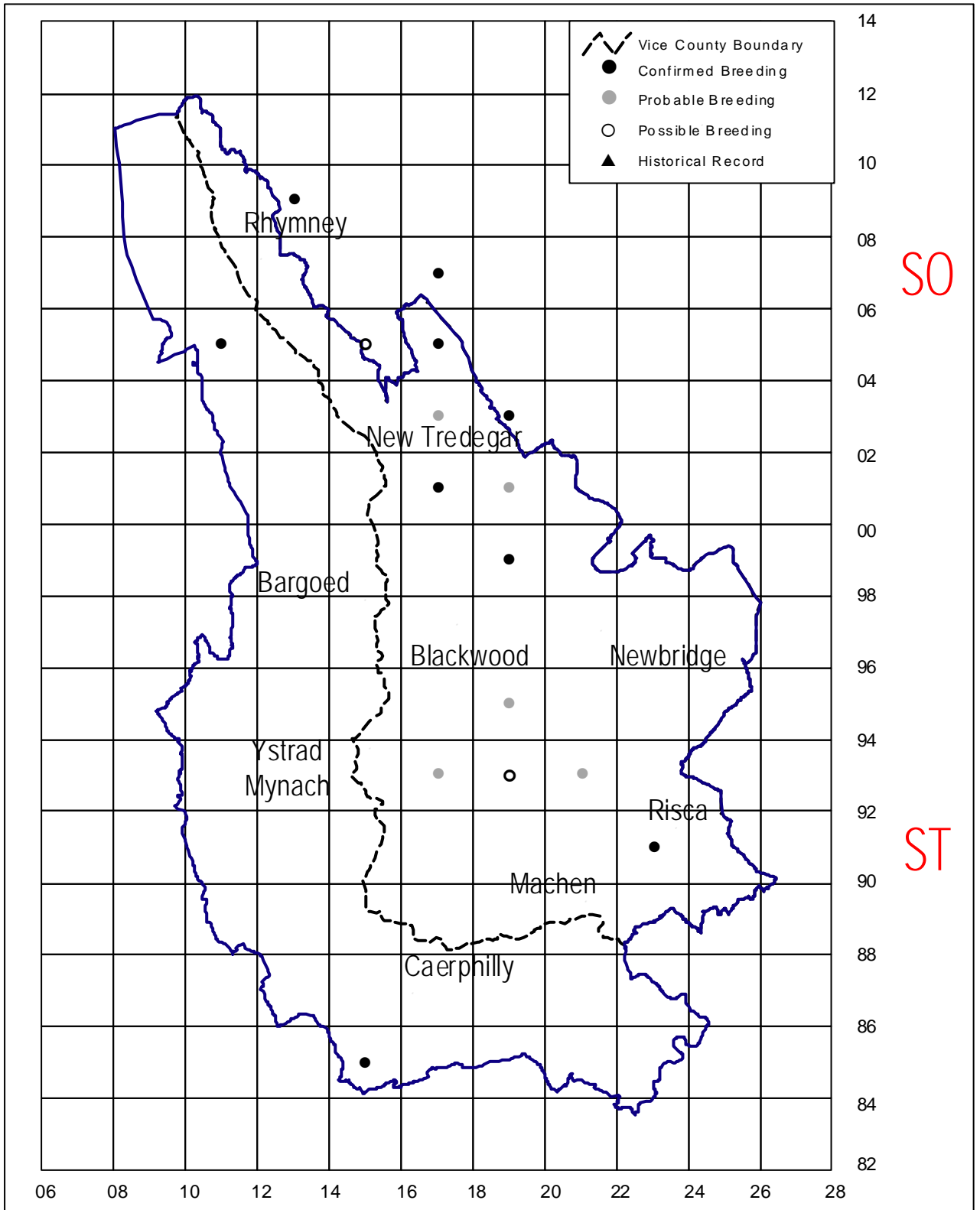
6. ACTION AND KEY PARTNERS

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.1 Policy and Legislation											
6.1.1 Ensure Policies and Strategies do not adversely affect existing breeding populations.	CCBC	WDA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.1.2 Consider the requirements of the lapwing when reviewing agri-environment schemes.	CCW	NAWAD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.1.3 Have regard for the significance of sites supporting breeding lapwing when considering any proposal developments and where appropriate, encourage the after-use of suitable colliery tips/spoil to favour lapwings through planning conditions.	CCBC	WDA NAWAD CCW	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management											
6.2.1 Ensure that important breeding sites are designated as SINCs and/or Local or National Nature Reserves.	CCBC	GLWT GWT RSPB									✓
6.2.2 Facilitate restoration of land reclamation sites through collaborative projects and appropriate management strategies, to maintain required habitat conditions for lapwing.	WDA	CCBC RSPB Gwk landowners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.2.3 Seek to secure appropriate management for this species on grasslands, common land and post-industrial land (colliery tips).	CCBC	landowners/ occupiers RSPB		✓		✓		✓		✓	
6.2.4 Investigate ways of reducing disturbance from footpaths, motorbikes and off-road vehicles on vulnerable sites.	Gwent Police	CCBC	✓		✓						
6.2.5 Seek to enhance areas of Parc Penallta and Fochriw for breeding lapwings, through appropriate management and restoration of vegetation and bare ground.	CCBC	Gwk RSPB commoners	✓	✓	✓						✓
6.3 Species Management and Protection											
6.3.1 Determine current food supply on key sites and manage accordingly.	CCBC	BTO GBC GOS RSPB landowners	✓								
6.3.2 Continue to implement wildlife legislation.	Gwent Police	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.4 Advisory											
6.4.1 Raise awareness of landowners and managers of lapwing requirements in order to promote appropriate management for this species.	CBP	RSPB NAWAD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.5 Future Research and Monitoring											
6.5.1 Monitor lapwing populations in the county borough annually to improve baseline data and monitor trends.	GBC GOS	CCBC BTO RSPB GWT GLWT (volunteers)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.5.2 Survey all possible sites, especially colliery tips, in the county borough for undiscovered lapwing colonies.	GBC GOS	BTO CCBC	✘								
6.5.3 Encourage farmers and members of the public to report breeding lapwing to local recorders, a list of contacts is held at CCBC.	FUW	NFU NAWAD BTO CCBC RSPB	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
6.5.4 Secure a database for information by supporting the setting up of a local record centre.	CBP	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.6 Communications and Publicity											
6.6.1 Use this species to promote the importance of post-industrial land (e.g. old colliery tips) and common land (especially in the uplands), and their conservation requirements.	CBP	RSPB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

✘ Survey year to be determined.

MAP 2.8 - LAPWING



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Atgynhychwyd o fapiad yr Arolwg Ordnans gyda chaniatad rheolwr Llyfifa ei Mawhydi hawffraint y Goron. Mae atgynhychu heb awdurdod yn torri hawffraint y Goron. Gall hyn arwain at erlyniad neu achos sifil. Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili, LA09004L, 2001.