

# Great Fen Project

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## Great Fen wins the lottery

We're delighted to announce that in March the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) granted just over £90,000 to the Great Fen Project to restore Darlow's Farm, the first land purchased by the project outside the nature reserves. The grant will cover restoration costs and enable us to employ a member of staff to oversee the work. In addition it will enable us to provide education activities for local schools and new facilities for visitors.

English Nature purchased Darlow's Farm in 2002 with support from HLF. To see how the restoration is proceeding, walk to the north end of Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserve and stand on the earth bank that overlooks the farm. Public access will be provided once the restoration is complete and the land safe to visit.

## Flagship scheme safeguards Holme Fen

Due to agricultural drainage Holme Fen, one of the two nature reserves in the project area, is drier than it should be and wetland habitats in the reserve have been reduced to tiny fragments. This problem was partly addressed when two drains were diverted away from Holme Fen. This was instigated by English Nature in partnership with the Holmewood and District Internal Drainage Board. To make the best of this scheme, the Wildlife Trust purchased 33 hectares of neighbouring low-lying farmland to encourage higher water levels on the reserve as well as create new habitats for people and wildlife.

The purchase and restoration would not be possible without the generous support of

Biffaward through their Flagship scheme, the Charles Hayward Charitable Trust, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, English Nature and the Tubney Charitable Trust. The Environment Agency is also supporting the long-term management of the land. The restoration will be carried out in partnership with a local farmer.

In addition to the restoration of the newly acquired land, the funding will allow us to develop new machinery to improve the efficiency of reserve management for the future. In the short term, it will also enable us to line part of Holme Fen with an underground polythene curtain to prevent water from draining out of the reserve.



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Restoration begins by improving ditch habitats

## The value of nature

During 2004 the Great Fen Project partners investigated the socio-economic impact of the project. Independent consultants PACEC were used to compare the current land use with how the area may look once the Great Fen was completed. Funded by Huntingdonshire District Council and the Wildlife Trust, the study shows that the project can provide more jobs for local people than are currently available. You can download the study and a summary from our web site at [www.greatfen.org.uk](http://www.greatfen.org.uk).



Local access and tourism will bring economical benefits

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## Artists for Nature

The landscape, people and wildlife of the Fens are the subject of a major art initiative at the Great Fen Project.

In a first for the UK, the Artists for Nature Foundation (ANF) is bringing many artists from around the world to the Great Fen to paint, carve and sculpt. The results will be presented in a book that will celebrate the Fens due to be published in Summer 2006.

The ANF is a Dutch-based charity that helps to raise the profile of environmental issues around the world through art. Previous visits include Peru, Alaska, India and Poland. The artists have visited once and their second trip is planned for Spring 2005.

Last year the artists camped at Ramsey Heights Countryside Classroom, a Wildlife Trust Education Centre that is close to Woodwalton Fen. Army staff from the RAF base at Honington provided catering and support for the artists.

We would especially like to thank Corporal Paddy Stuart of Two Squadron and his team for all of their help. We would also like to thank RAF Brampton for providing tents and Ramsey Leisure Centre for allowing us to use their showers. We hope to have the same support for this year's visit.



Local people admire artists' work

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Holme Fen by Juan Varela, Spain



Woodwalton Fen by Barry van Dusem, USA

## The Hon Dame Miriam Rothschild



We were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Dame Miriam Rothschild in January 2005. Dame Miriam was patron of the local Wildlife Trust and a keen supporter of the Great Fen

Project. Her family has a very direct link to the Project - her father, the Hon. Charles Rothschild, purchased Woodwalton Fen in 1910, creating one of the country's first nature reserves. The bungalow built by him in 1911 for weekend retreats still stands on the reserve.

Dame Miriam was born in Northamptonshire in 1908 and lived most of her life at Ashton Wold near Peterborough. A brilliant self-taught zoologist and

entomologist, she was best known as a parasitologist, and in particular for her work on fleas. She began her working life at the Marine Zoological Association in Plymouth, studying snails and their parasites; and worked at Bletchley Park during WWII, joining the team of biologists attempting to decode German communications. After the war, she conducted original research on bird parasites and butterfly chemical defences, publishing over 300 scientific papers and numerous books. In her later years, Dame Miriam concentrated more on animal husbandry and nature conservation, campaigning for the re-introduction of wild flowers and encouraging better treatment of animals on farms or in laboratories. Dame Miriam was awarded a CBE for services to taxonomy in 1982, and became a Dame in the News Year's Honours of 2000.

## Shaping the future

Support for the Great Fen Project is strong amongst local people, who have found out about the project through talks, walks, other events and press activity. Later this year the project will bring together a wide range of people representing local communities and organisations to find out more about local opinions. The day-long event will be run by an independent facilitator. Comments, views and suggestions will be used to guide project activity in the future. If you would like to find out more, contact the Great Fen Project Manager at the number below.



Local people will help decide the way ahead

## Achieving the Vision

Over £2.4 million has been raised for the Great Fen Project to date, and a campaign is now underway to raise the funds needed to progress the project in the immediate future. The Great Fen Foundation (see below) has been established and is in turn helping us to set up the Campaign Executive Group, which will be launched at a reception at the River Room at the House of Lords. This will be a network of individuals who will directly support the

Campaign and help to develop it. We are also in the process of approaching a Royal Patron, President and Patrons for the Campaign. If you would like to support the Great Fen Project or can help the Campaign in any way, please contact:

**Jane Cabutti on 01954 713553**  
or [jane.cabutti@wildlifebcnp.org](mailto:jane.cabutti@wildlifebcnp.org).

### The Great Fen Foundation:

Michael Allen Esq.  
Professor Tom Burke CBE  
The Rt Hon John Gummer PC MP  
Hugh van Cutsem Esq  
The Rt Hon Baroness Barbara Young of Old Scone

### Contact the Great Fen Project:

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### Thank you to following organisations for generously supporting the Great Fen Project:

Biffaward  
Charles Hayward Foundation  
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Esmée Fairbairn Foundation  
Fenside Waste

Garfield Weston Foundation  
Heritage Lottery Fund  
Huntingdonshire District Council  
Tubney Charitable Trust  
The Wildlife Trust  
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