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## **An Evaluation Report for the Heritage Lottery Fund July 2017**

By

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Editor James Williams



**Bedfordshire  
Cambridgeshire  
Northamptonshire**



**We are indebted to the Heritage Lottery Fund and all the players of the National Lottery for making this project possible.**



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

*Dedication*

**This report, and our work to create wetlands for people and wildlife, are dedicated with love to our friend and colleague**

**Jon Smith**

**10<sup>th</sup> May 1980 – 9<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

**Great Fen Restoration Officer 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 – 9<sup>th</sup> November 2013**







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## Section 1

### Executive Summary

*“Think the unthinkable. It can be possible if you dream it”*

**Great Fen Steering Committee Evaluation Workshop March 2017**



Cranes, Vadim Gorbatov, 2005

## **Introduction and methodology [section 2]**

Over the past eight years (2008 – 2017), the Great Fen has been on an astonishing and inspiring journey to create a vast new landscape for wildlife and people. Funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for our project *The Purchase and Restoration of the Holmewood Estate* has enabled us to go further and achieve more than we could have possibly imagined at the outset. This report and the accompanying film tell our story and presents evidence to evaluate our achievements. Within this report we are attempting to answer a series of questions. We have used narrative, images, maps, graphics and statistics, and cite case studies, which document our activities and which also give answers to those questions. During the lifetime of the project we have used formative, ongoing and summative evaluation. This has provided a mix of qualitative and quantitative data to show both what we have achieved on the ground and the impacts it has had. The methodologies we have used to gather our evidence include: fixed- point photography, drone footage and stills, biotic and abiotic monitoring, peer review, statistical analysis, mapping, interviews, Developing Audience Project (DAP) monitoring data analysis, on-line questionnaire, face-to-face questionnaire, events and activities (such as evaluation workshops), focus groups, financial analysis and Google analytics. We have acted lawfully and ethically throughout, ensuring correct consents have been sought for use of all photographs and images and landowner permissions have been sought for all data collection.

## **Introduction to the Great Fen and the HLF project [section 3]**

The Great Fen is a landscape-scale vision designed to safeguard important wildlife habitats and species by restoring 3,700 hectares of wetland around Holme Fen and Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserves in Huntingdonshire. It will also create major access and tourism opportunities that will stimulate diversification in the economy, benefiting the communities in and around the project area. The Great Fen is overseen by the Great Fen Project Partnership, comprising the Environment Agency, Huntingdonshire District Council, The Middle Level Commissioners, Natural England and the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. The Project Partnership is a cornerstone of the success of the project, providing a huge range of skills, perspectives and interests. On 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008 the Wildlife Trust supported by the Great Fen Project Partners secured a grant of £7,204,000 for the Purchase and Restoration of the Holmewood Estate to enable the restoration of 747 hectares of wildlife habitat by December 2013 and enable the undertaking of a rich variety of community engagement, access and interpretation activities. This was HLF's biggest grant ever given for the natural environment in England. In 2014 the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded a second tranche of funding of £1.89m for the restoration of Engine Farm.

The Project falls into three distinct funding and activity periods:

1. 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013: Purchase and restoration of the Holmewood Estate (purchase was completed in September 2008)
2. 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016: The restoration of Engine Farm (an additional 182ha of habitats)
3. 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2017: Project extension period for completion of hydrological works at Corney's and New Decoy farms

#### **What we wanted to happen [section 4]**

The history (from 1997) of the concept of landscape-scale conservation and habitat restoration in central England and Cambridgeshire, and that of the origins of the Great Fen Project, the Great Fen Project Partnership and the Great Fen Steering Committee are set out. The report notes that the Great Fen Project Partnership articulated its vision for the Great Fen in the *Great Fen Masterplan 2010*, an illustrative spatial plan, which sets out the four strategic aims of the Great Fen covering the natural and historic environment, social aims, economic aims, and aims around Climate Change adaptation and mitigation.

The overall HLF project aims and objectives were expressed as the project outline in the 2008 Implementation Strategy:

- Purchase and restoration of land;
- Provision of public access and interpretation;
- Delivery of community and education activities
- Widening the audiences engaged with the natural heritage of the Great Fen

For each of the three funding and activity periods, a set of aims and objectives was identified for restoration work and another for education and community involvement.

The report notes that HLF did not set out specific Approved Purposes for the 2008 grant; a list of tasks was however agreed. For this evaluation, it was agreed with HLF officers that we should submit a proposal stating what we would report against. To that end an Evaluation Report Content Plan was submitted. The Evaluation Report Content Plan provides the framework for this Evaluation Report which references the HLF 2013-2018 strategic outcomes within its text.

#### **Restoration [section 5]**

This section examines developing the new landscape, establishing management, ongoing management, hydrology and soils, developing monitoring techniques, colonization of wildlife, and eco system services. It concludes that whichever way you measure it – landscape change, available habitats or species using the land - the restoration work funded by HLF has had a profound and fundamental impact on the local area. The wildlife and the unique environment created have changed hearts and minds, and engendered a new sense of passion among local people. In spite of many challenges including technical matters and securing permissions, we have achieved what we set out to do, and much more besides. We have taken flat, dry, empty land, secured the soils, created topography, retained water and set the stage for wildlife to colonise.



### **Education and Community [section 6]**

This section examines how the Education and Community team reconnected landscape and people. It discusses the building blocks for action, creating new audiences, developing the tools for the job, access and inclusivity, changing hearts and minds by engaging people through heritage, and unexpected (sometimes weird and wonderful) areas of activity. It concludes that we have shown evidence that we have indeed reconnected people with the landscape and history of the fens, in ways that have built wider audiences and reached isolated older people, young people, and people with sensory impairments. We have also given huge enjoyment, fostered local pride and changed attitudes. We have empowered local people to take action themselves. We have learned that difficult and challenging audiences can be connected to us through themselves connecting with their local history and the stories hidden in the landscape.

### **Socio-economic outcomes [section 7]**

This section looks at a quiet revolution that has come about as a direct result of this project, which is bringing communities together to take action towards economic development and future sustainability. The Great Fen has created new opportunities, is changing negative attitudes, transforming the prospects for new livelihoods and bringing people back onto the land. The Great Fen has always deemed socio-economic development to be an intrinsic and vital outcome of its work, embodied in both the HLF-funded project and the Project Partners' wider vision for the Great Fen as set out in the *Masterplan 2010*. This section examines what has happened to date, socio-economic strategic planning, the development of sustainable tourism, and brand development. It concludes that the Great Fen's socio-economic development has changed attitudes, and is challenging and changing deep-seated societal trends in rural employment. The Great Fen is working with local communities to achieve a common aim of sustainable economic development and wellbeing. People and businesses have benefited, lives and opportunities have in some circumstances been transformed. A key driver of further development will be the growth of sustainable tourism for socio-economic development and financial sustainability and much has been achieved in the creation of tourist infrastructure and relationships.

### **Reaching out [section 8]**

This section looks at the many and varied ways in which the project has reached out to supporters, stakeholders, individuals and communities. It examines public consultation, partnerships, volunteers, skills training, dissemination, communications and branding. It also looks at awards the Great Fen has received during the course of the project, further evidence that our reaching out has been deemed successful by others. The case studies of new partnerships in this section, and many more examples throughout the report, demonstrate incredible outcomes, opening up new ways of thinking and doing, with far-reaching consequences including lasting contributions to professional and technical knowledge in many sectors. The reach and impact of the Great Fen extends globally, influencing thinking, action and policy on climate change, conservation, land restoration and environmental and heritage education. Our partnerships, volunteer programmes and skills training have ensured the dissemination of learning and good practise throughout the conservation sector and beyond.

### **What happened behind the scenes [section 9]**

This is a descriptive section looking at the “nuts and bolts” of the project, at what went on behind the scenes to service and facilitate the activity areas. This section covers staffing, land purchase and tenancies, assets, permissions and consents, and how we acknowledged the Heritage Lottery Fund’s support.

### **Finance [section 10]**

Financial management is another core component of the eight years of project funding. This section examines the project costs (how money was spent), the quarterly cash flow (when the money was spent), changes over the course of the project that affected the budget, match funding in all its aspects, funding and time extension (Engine Farm) 2012, the use of the project contingency in 2017, evaluating financial performance, achieving value for money, and funding and future financial sustainability.

### **Risks and Factors that impacted on delivery [section 11]**

This section describes and evaluates how we assessed and managed risk and how we dealt with the unexpected. Starting with the risks and their management envisaged at the start of the project in 2008, we go on to examine factors that impacted on restoration and monitoring delivery, factors that affected education and community delivery, and factors that affected socio-economic delivery, during the course of the project. We also evaluate macro impacts and unforeseen impacts. We give examples of flexibility in dealing with unforeseen issues. On the basis of this evidence we assert that the creation of a highly skilled and well integrated cross-disciplinary team of staff enabled us to respond quickly to changing circumstances and to cope well with large or novel pieces of work. We conclude by saying that throughout the project we have successfully identified and managed risk across all areas of delivery. In mitigating we have often turned challenges into opportunities, such as the creation of a weekend volunteer Ranger group to mitigate lack of staffing at weekends. We have also dealt with the unexpected using our skills and flexibility of approach to meet any circumstance. This is a powerful legacy for the future.

### **Impacts and Outcomes: Don’t just take our word for it.... [Section 12]**

Evaluating quantitative outputs is fairly straightforward, but capturing outcomes - lives altered by experiences, for example, or reinstated ecological processes – is more challenging. Here, we aim to demonstrate the transformational nature of the project, in respect not only of the landscape and wildlife, but also of people, communities and organizations; transformation that has made a real difference to lives. We set out some inspiring examples of how people and organizations feel about the project and about change. We examine and evaluate the difference brought about by the project for restoration, conservation and monitoring, for people, and for communities. We then go on to consider the reputational impact upon the Project Partners. Throughout, we use the words of others; often these are moving and inspirational. This section has demonstrated with great passion and considerable depth the transformational change the project has achieved for habitats and landscape, lives, communities, and partnerships. The feelings and emotions the contributors to this section have expressed are truly uplifting. A shining testament of the impact and outcomes the project has achieved. The reputational impact of the project extends worldwide, and closer to home, has achieved that rarest of things, transformation of mindsets.

### Conclusions and lessons learned [section 13]

Throughout this report we have been concerned to demonstrate *transformation*, how the project has *changed* lives and landscapes, and the *difference* the project has made to local communities and local people, to their understanding of and engagement with heritage and nature, to their lives, skills, careers, businesses, and opportunities to enjoy the new landscape created in eight years from carrot fields. On this journey we have learned some valuable lessons around these key themes: vision, partnerships, volunteers, ways of working, communication, project management and planning, and resources for success. We conclude by saying that we know we can deliver against aims and objectives and to budget. We know we can deliver more than we set out to do. We have ideas for the future. We are ambitious for the Great Fen and Living Landscapes. We know we can do more.

### Legacy and future direction [section 14]

This section examines the enduring benefits that will result from our HLF-funded activities and which continue after the project has been delivered, into the future. We discuss the legacy and plans for the future of restoration and monitoring, including blue sky thinking for future research needs; the legacy and plans for the future of our education and community function, including the post 2017 interpretative themes; and legacy and plans for socio-economic delivery, including infrastructure and business development. We examine the future economic, ecological and cultural sustainability of the Great Fen and our exploration of Biosphere Reserve Status for the Cambridgeshire Fens.

At the start of this project we could have had no inkling of the scale of our achievements nor of the tremendously positive impact have we made on lives, communities and organizations. Our legacy, what we have created to shape the future, is equally inspiring. Our restoration and monitoring legacy will shape this landscape and the wildlife that is rapidly populating it for decades, possibly even centuries to come. Our education and community legacy will continue to shape imagination, and enjoyment and that unique sense of fulfilment that successful partnerships and volunteering bring, not only in the Great Fen but in the wider Wildlife Trust and beyond. Our economic legacy has given us the sure and secure base from which to launch into future sustainability. All we have learned and our successes have empowered us to think of sustainability in the wider context: the nascent plans for a Cambridgeshire Fens Biosphere Reserve are a truly thrilling prospect for what will undoubtedly be a bright future.

We finish the report and our evaluation submission with appendices (one of which contains digital material created during the project) [section 15], a bibliography [section 16], a summary sheet of infographics used throughout the text [section 17] and acknowledgments [section 18]



Short eared owls above Kester's Docking, January 2015, Henry Stanier

## Section 2

### Introduction to report and report methodology

This document and the accompanying film are more than a report on our activity; they are an opportunity to tell the project story in an exciting and imaginative way. We will use them to learn from our experiences, inspire us in our next steps and engage with ever more participants, supporters and future funders.

Within this report we are attempting to answer these questions to evaluate our success:

#### Natural and Historic Environment

- **How much of an impact have we had on the Great Fen's landscape?**
- How far has the Great Fen been able to take land on the restoration journey?
- How is the Great Fen better managed for wildlife?

#### Social, Education and Community

- **Have we changed people's understanding and appreciation of the Great Fen – both the natural environment and heritage?**
- Has the Great Fen successfully engaged a wider audience (including isolated older people, young people, families and people with sensory impairments?)
- Whom has the Great Fen engaged? Whom has the Great Fen not engaged? What have we as a conservation organization learned about engaging difficult/challenging audiences?
- **Has the Great Fen inspired people to take action?** [for the natural environment and heritage]
- How, and to what extent, are people better equipped to take action?



## Economic

- Is the Great Fen a better place to live, work and visit?
- To what extent have we changed how people use the Great Fen?
- How have these opportunities benefited people?
- **Have we realised our aims and approved purposes?**
- What impact has the project had on the Wildlife Trust and other partners? [Great Fen Project Partners and others]
- Is the Wildlife Trust more financially sustainable?
- Has the project given the Wildlife Trust financial gearing?
- Has it opened new partnerships? [financial and otherwise]
- Has it enhanced the Project Partners' reputations?
- **What is the reach/wider impact of the Great Fen?**
- How can we spread the learning further?

This report uses narrative, images, maps, graphics and statistics, and cites case studies, which document our activities and which also give answers to our questions.

During the lifetime of the project, we have used formative evaluation (e.g. Masterplan public consultation exercise - see section 8 ), ongoing evaluation (e.g. the Developing Audiences Project –see below) and summative evaluation (e.g. Great Fen Steering Committee and Joint Technical Advisory Committee evaluation workshops). This has provided a mix of qualitative and quantitative data to show both what we have achieved on the ground and the impacts it has had.

We have used the following methods to gather our evidence:

- |                                                               |                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Fixed-point photography                                     | • Online questionnaire                                              |
| • Photography                                                 | • Face-to-face questionnaire                                        |
| • Drone footage and stills                                    | • Events/activities (such as Project Partners' evaluation workshop) |
| • Biotic and Abiotic monitoring                               | • Focus groups                                                      |
| • Peer review                                                 | • Financial analysis                                                |
| • Statistical analysis                                        | • Google analytics                                                  |
| • Mapping                                                     | • Case studies                                                      |
| • Interviews                                                  |                                                                     |
| • Developing Audiences Project (DAP) monitoring data analysis |                                                                     |



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## **Education and Community Monitoring evaluation and review methods**

The nature of education and community engagement work is such that outcomes can be difficult to measure, especially in the short term. Key performance indicators include:

- Responses received in qualitative evaluations of programmes
- Number of independent visitors
- Number of participants in education and community programme events and activities
- Number of repeat visitors/participants over time
- Number and retention of volunteers
- Development of local partnerships

## **Developing Audiences Project (DAP)**

The Wildlife Trust uses a standardised system for evaluation and monitoring: The Developing Audiences Project, developed by the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts and used by the Wildlife Trust since 2006.

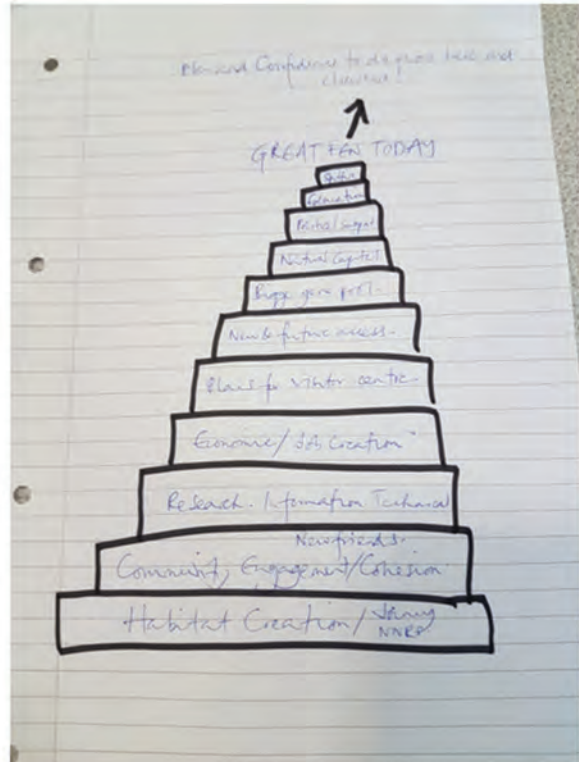
Evaluation forms (see Appendix 2.0 for an example) enable us to evaluate achievement of our learning objectives among our target audiences. Additional important information such as feelings of being comfortable and safe, is of key importance for our work with our new target audiences, especially isolated older people, for whom lack of confidence is a potential barrier.

Full results of the DAP monitoring are available on an enclosed disc.

## **Additional methods of monitoring and evaluation**

Ongoing consultation work has been a vital part of the development of education and community programmes. Questionnaires provide a valuable means of gathering data and have been conducted on line, face to face and through informal conversations.

In this way new ideas are identified from the audiences themselves, using a collaborative approach to deliver excellence.



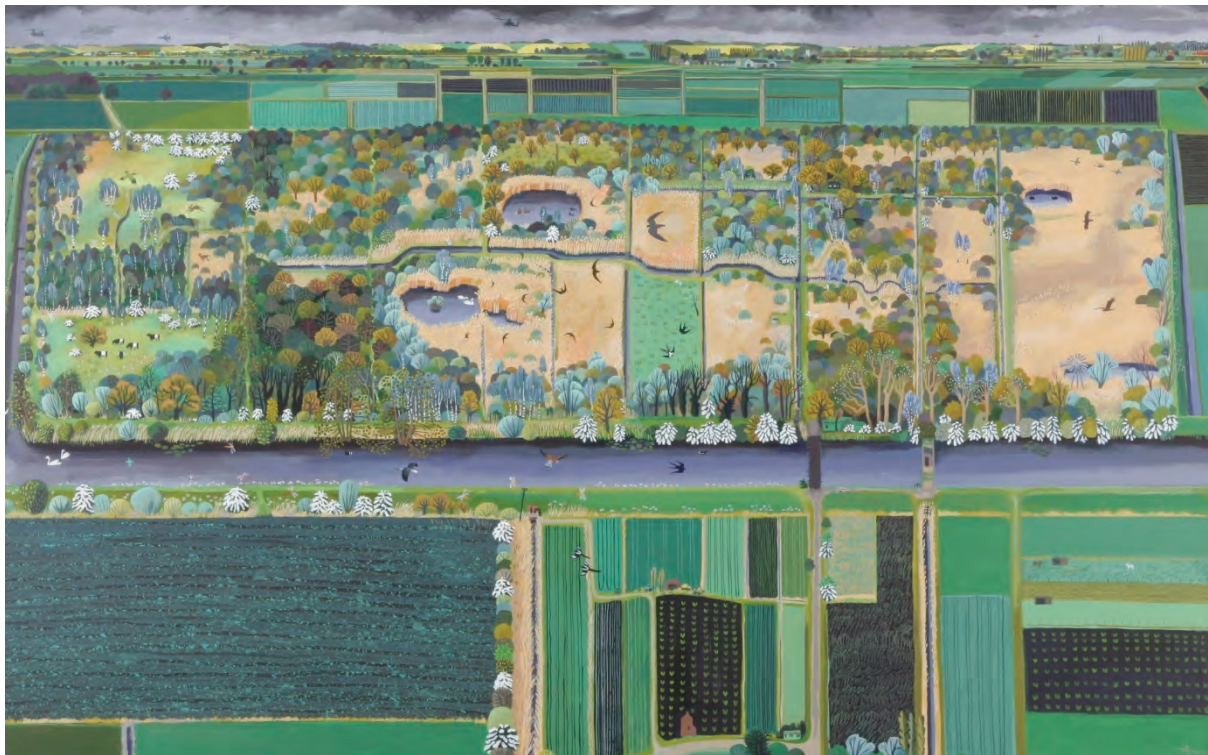
## Section 3

### Introduction to the Great Fen and the HLF project

*“A restored fenland landscape providing a rich variety of habitats for people and wildlife, now and in the future.”*

The Great Fen is a landscape-scale vision designed to safeguard important wildlife habitats and species by restoring 3,700 hectares of wetland around Holme Fen and Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserves in Huntingdonshire. It will also create major access and tourism opportunities that will stimulate diversification in the economy, benefiting the communities in and around the project area.

Woodwalton Fen is a Ramsar site and a Special Area for Conservation. It is one of the only three places in the Fens where the ancient Fens landscape can be seen. Holme Fen is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Geological Conservation Review Site.



© Carry Akroyd

The Great Fen is overseen by the Great Fen Project Partnership, bound together by a Collaboration Agreement. The Project Partners are: Environment Agency, Huntingdonshire District Council, The Middle Level Commissioners, Natural England and the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. Oversight is via a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from all of the partners as voting members, and non-voting members from other interested parties such as Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council.

The Project Partnership is a cornerstone of the success of the project, providing a huge range of skills, perspectives and interests. It was a new way of working for the Wildlife Trust that has given the project depth, breadth and gravitas.



*“Our confidence in working together ... means we can now be bolder and engage more people more productively.”*

*“Partnerships are amazing! We can achieve so much together”*

**Steering Group Evaluation workshop, May 2017**

## **HLF project**

On 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008 the Great Fen Project Partners secured a grant of £7,204,000 for the Purchase and Restoration of the Holmewood Estate. This would enable the restoration of 747 hectares of wildlife habitat by December 2013 and enable a rich variety of community engagement, access and interpretation activities to be undertaken. In giving the biggest grant it had ever given for the natural environment in England, HLF had ensured the Great Fen would become the country’s leading landscape-scale natural heritage initiative, preparing the ground for many other projects to follow. Today it remains at the conservation cutting-edge both in ecological research and community engagement. It provided an inspiration for the Lawton commission’s report, *Making Space for Nature: A review of England’s Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network* (2010), which in turn provided vital evidence for the Natural Environment white paper (*The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature*, 2011). In 2012, the opportunity to acquire control of Engine Farm from the tenant arose. HLF agreed to fund £1,897,790 of the £3,500,990 for the purchase of the tenancy and restoration of the land.

The Project falls into three distinct funding and activity periods:

4. 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013: Purchase and restoration of the Holmewood Estate (purchase was completed in September 2008)
5. 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016: The acquisition of the residue of the lease, and the restoration of Engine Farm (an additional 182ha of habitats)
6. 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2017: Project extension period for completion of hydrological works at Corney’s and New Decoy farms

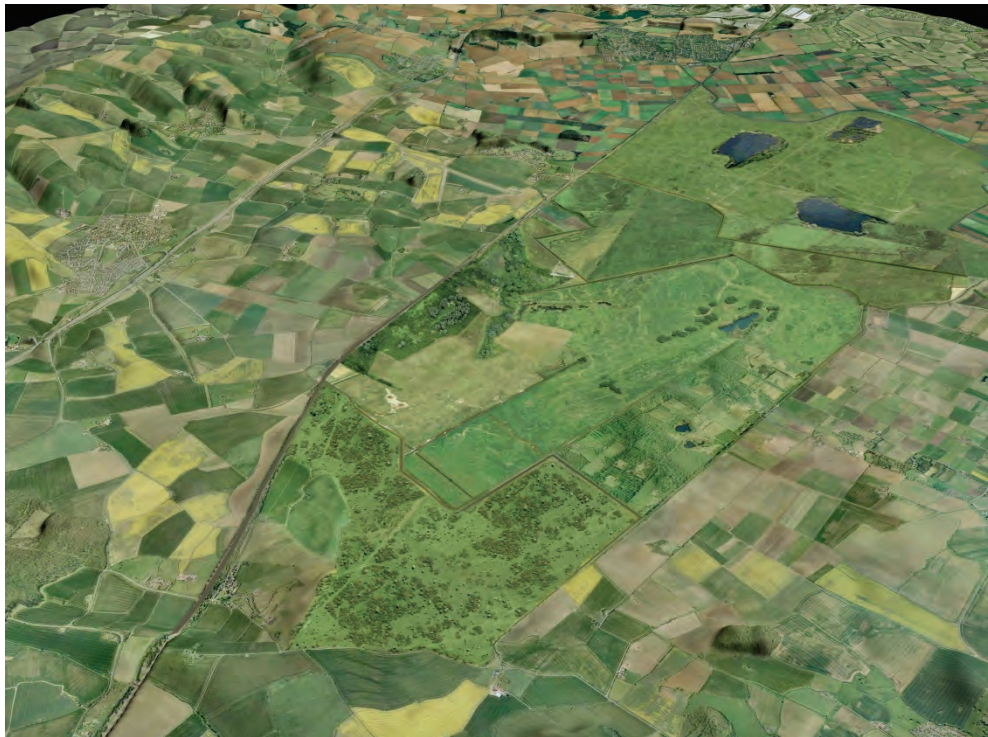


Designer’s render of the restoration of Rymes Reedbed

## Section 4

### What we wanted to happen

- 4.1 Strategic vision and aims
- 4.2 HLF project aims and objectives
- 4.3 Approved purposes



Aerial View of the Great Fen project area



## 4.1 Strategic Vision and Aims

The concept of landscape-scale conservation and habitat restoration in central England was first articulated by the Wildlife Trust's then conservation director, Adrian Colston, in a paper in the journal of the British Association of Nature Conservationists, *Ecos*, in 1997. The paper was entitled *Conserving wildlife in a black hole*, and the 'black hole' in question was the six English counties with less than half the national average of land protected for wildlife (Sites of Special Scientific Interest), namely Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Rutland, Warwickshire, and the West Midlands.

Colston concluded that the status quo was inadequate for the future of wildlife in these counties, and that, instead of conserving only the surviving fragments of wildlife habitat, conservation must turn to the large-scale restoration of habitats.

Initial feasibility studies within the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire suggested that wetlands were the most tractable habitats for restoration, inspired by the Dutch example of Oostvaardersplassen. The Fen Basin appeared the most promising area for such landscape-scale restoration. Supported by a grant from the Worldwide Fund for Nature secured in 1998, feasibility studies confirmed this, and narrowed the search to the areas surrounding the National Nature Reserves of Woodwalton Fen and Holme Fen. For the previous 20 years, Natural England's predecessor bodies had had an ambition to expand Woodwalton Fen NNR and to form some kind of linkage with Holme Fen NNR. The Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Environment Agency and Middle Level Commissioners met in December 2000 as the Woodwalton Fen Expansion Group, to discuss their respective plans for the area, and noted considerable common ground, and the desire to form a partnership. Shortly after, the more appealing title 'Great Fen' was adopted, derived from an early 19<sup>th</sup> century map of the area, on display in Rothschild's Bungalow at Woodwalton Fen, where the working group met.

The Great Fen Project gained considerable momentum in 2001 with the appointment of its first Project Manager, Chris Gerrard, with funding from the Garfield Weston Foundation. In subsequent years, the local authority Huntingdonshire District Council joined the group, which soon became the Great Fen Steering Committee. A wider vision for the Great Fen, encompassing social and economic aims as well as wildlife and climate change adaptation and mitigation, was developed, and was formally articulated and published as the *Great Fen Masterplan*. This was published by the Great Fen Project Partners in March 2010, and envisages:

*"A restored fenland landscape providing a rich variety of habitats for people and wildlife now and in the future"*

The *Masterplan* is a long-term illustration of how the Project Partners aim to deliver the Great Fen over the envisaged 50 – 100 years duration of its creation. The *Masterplan* describes a vibrant **Living Landscape** where birds, plants and animals can flourish in safety within and between the two National Nature Reserves of Holme Fen and Woodwalton Fen; where people can enjoy natural beauty, new opportunities for leisure, learning, and for making a living; and where nature and man alike can benefit from the management of the natural environment in such ways as adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. Within the context of important strategic drivers, the *Masterplan* expresses the four **strategic aims** of the Great Fen as an illustrative spatial plan, that is, it sets out where new physical features could be created and where existing ones could be retained.



The headline strategic aims are:

#### **Aim 1: Natural and Historic Environment**

To create a new resilient fenland landscape which delivers major wildlife and heritage benefits and achieves high standards of sustainability in all respects.

#### **Aim 2: Social**

To create an accessible, inspiring and tranquil environment for recreation, education, health and wellbeing.

#### **Aim 3: Economic**

To contribute to diversification and development of the local economy, consistent with environmental and social objectives.

#### **Aim 4: Climate Change Adaption and Mitigation**

To plan, design and manage the Great Fen to benefit climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Below these headline strategic aims are a series of sub aims. As part of a “fit for purpose” strategic review in 2015 – 2016, the strategic aims were revised. The headline aims remained the same, but the sub aims were updated to reflect the development of the Great Fen since 2010 and changes in wider society. See Appendix 4.0

## 4.2 HLF project aims and objectives

The project **aims** were expressed as the project outline in the 2008 Implementation Strategy:

- Purchase and restoration of land;
- Provision of public access and interpretation;
- Delivery of community and education activities

Mike Harding suggested the addition of:

- Widening the audiences engaged with the natural heritage of the Great Fen

The project falls into three distinct funding and activity periods:-

7. 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013: Purchase and restoration of the Holmewood Estate (purchase was completed in September 2008)
8. 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016: The acquisition of the lease and restoration of Engine Farm
9. 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2017: Project extension period for completion of hydrological works at Corney's and New Decoy farms

For each period, a set of **aims and objectives** was identified for restoration work, and another for education and community involvement.

### 4.2.1 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013

#### Purchase and restoration of the Holmewood Estate

The *Implementation Strategy 2008* sets out in detail the Restoration Objectives and the Aims and Objectives of the Education and Community Involvement strategy. These are discussed in sections 5 and 6.

#### Restoration Objectives

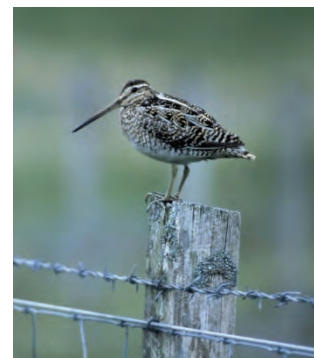
The table below shows the land to be restored over the course of the project and the main habitats that were expected to develop over the long term (based on modelling work by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology as explained in the restoration plan). The areas and dates were subject to change, depending on negotiations with landowners and legal and contractual constraints.



Original farm name	Area (hectares)	Restoration date	Main target habitats
Corney's Farm	75.74	2008	Fen meadow
Old Decoy Farm	85.10	2008	Wet grassland and lowland hay meadow
Stokes Farm	29.68	2009	Fen meadow and wet grassland
New Decoy Farm	66.14	2009	Reed bed and fen
Holme Lode Farm	319.92	2010	Reed bed and open water
Tower & Froghall Farms	118.72	2010	Reed bed and wet grassland
Park & Home Farms	20.56	2011	Lowland hay meadow
Top Farm	31.76	2011	Wet grassland and fen meadow
TOTAL	747.62		

The *Restoration Management Plan 2008* goes on to state the following aims:

1. the improvement of the hydrological regime in Holme Fen NNR, contributing to the aims and objectives of its management plan;
2. the restoration of a variety of habitats on the 1317 hectares being purchased (748 hectares during the HLF project), with an emphasis on fenland priority habitats such as reedbed, fen, wet grassland, wet woodland and open water;
3. the conservation of important species throughout the area.



© Snipe, anon



© Woodwalton Fen, Guy Pilkington



### Aims and objectives for the Education and Community Involvement Strategy

Within the overarching aims of the project, the Education and Community Involvement Strategy aims to:

- Enhance people's enjoyment of the natural environment, particularly the Great Fen;
- Provide opportunities for learning about fenland heritage;
- Help people develop the awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills and participation that will support conservation of local heritage; and
- Develop community involvement in the project and ability to take action for the natural environment through volunteering opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.



© Volunteer, The Wildlife Trust BCN

In support of these aims, the Wildlife Trust and Great Fen Project partners aimed to achieve a variety of detailed learning objectives which can be found in appendix 4.1

In addition, a range of access improvements detailed in the *Access Plan* were planned to achieve the following objectives:

1. Reduce physical and sensory barriers to accessing the Great Fen.
2. Reduce organisational barriers to the Great Fen.
3. Reduce social and cultural barriers to accessing the Great Fen.
4. Reduce financial barriers to accessing the Great Fen.

There was also a detailed training programme to develop the skills of staff and volunteers and aims to enable the project area to act as a springboard for wider socio-economic development in the area, helping address deprivation issues in local communities such as Ramsey and Peterborough.



© Visiting the Fen, The Wildlife Trust BCN



#### 4.2.2 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 – December 31<sup>st</sup> 2016

##### The Restoration of Engine Farm



© The Wildlife Trust BCN

The freehold of Engine Farm formed part of the 2008 purchase of the Holmewood Estate; however, Engine Farm was in arable production and was tenanted under an Agricultural Holdings Act Tenancy (passing down through three generations). In 2008 it was not known how or when Engine Farm might be available for restoration. By early 2012, the tenant indicated a desire to sell the residue of the tenancy. Discussions with HLF were started and additional funding of £1.89m (against a total project cost of £3,500,990) and a three-year extension to the project (1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 – December 31<sup>st</sup> 2016) were granted, the aims of this project extension being to:

- Increase the area of land under conservation management by 24%;
- Benefit other land already restored by consolidating the land holding;
- Significantly enhance physical access, especially from the north;
- Offer a wealth of new engagement opportunities, building on the successful programme already delivered to thousands in the local community; and
- Protect valuable peat soils from further deterioration.

The aims and objectives of this phase of the project are summarized in the document *The Purchase and Restoration of the Holmewood Estate*

*The Restoration of Engine Farm: An application for a three-year project extension to the Heritage Lottery Fund by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Northamptonshire, on behalf of the Great Fen Project Partnership 2012* see Appendix 4.2

##### Restoration Aims and Objectives

- The purchase of the vacant possession of Engine Farm
- An additional 182 hectares of land in conservation management with restoration to a mix of wet grassland, dry grassland and open water
- The creation of phase two of Rymes Reedbed, north-west of Engine Farm
- The physical connection of land under conservation management, buffering existing restoration land from damaging external impacts and facilitating species movement



© Aerial Drone Image, Josh Hellon

### **Education and Community Aims and Objectives**

- The creation of new physical access around the Great Fen including to Holme Fen National Nature Reserve, the Great Fen Information Point and the proposed location of the Great Fen visitor centre.
- Delivery of an enhanced menu of community engagement activities.



©Daisies, Guy Pilkington



#### 4.2.3 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2017

##### Project extension period for completion of hydrological works at Corney's and New Decoy farms

In May 2016, the project was extended for seven months with no further change to the funding, unforeseen circumstances having delayed delivery of these final elements at Corney's and Decoy Farm and at Engine Farm. Both of these areas had been subject to technical and organization challenges, the resolution of which required protracted discussion with the drainage consenting authority, the Holmewood and District Internal Drainage Board (the IDB) and with the planning authority (Huntingdonshire District Council).

The aims and objectives of this phase are summarized in the document *Restoring our Fenland Heritage - the purchase and restoration of the Holmewood Estate - HG-06-01367/2* see Appendix 4.3

##### Restoration Aims and Objectives

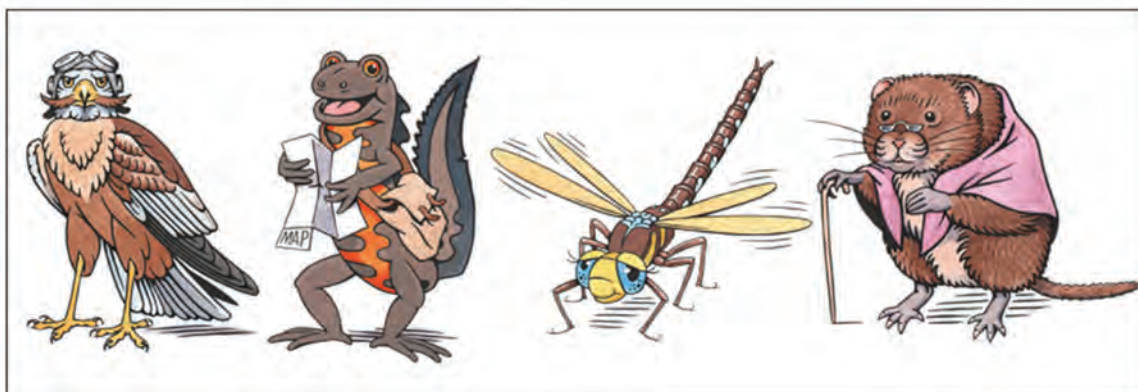


© Ditch works at New Decoy, The Wildlife Trust BCN

- To complete the final phase engineering works to enable the creation of wetland habitat at Corney's Farm and New Decoy Farm and at Engine Farm.

##### Education and Community Aims and Objectives

- Delivery of volunteer programmes relating to Corney's and Decoy Farm and Engine Farm
- Strategic planning for the future to ensure sustainability of education, community and volunteer programmes beyond the period of HLF funding
- Production of a similar plan for interpretation
- Interpretation update for Corney's and New Decoy Farm (Digital and 2D)
- Development of Digital Memories Map
- Site specific activities and experiences based on the four Fen Friend characters



© Fen Friends, Richard Allen

### 4.3 Approved purposes

The definition of Heritage Lottery Fund Approved Purposes is stated in the HLF's Contract dated 14<sup>th</sup> August 2008: see Appendix 4.4

*"The purposes for which you have applied for the grant and how you plan to carry out these purposes as set out in your Application (taking into account any changes we and you have agreed in writing up to the date of our decision to award you the Grant and any changes that we tell you about in our letter Awarding you the grant). Approved purposes include receiving and using partnership funding as set out in your application".*

HLF did not set out specific Approved Purposes for the 2008 grant: a list of tasks is included in Claims 1 – 11 (see table below) but this is not a definitive list. Following Claim 11, tasks were stated and reported against via the Attainment Report which accompanied all subsequent claims (Claims 12 – 38 inclusive).

Purchase of the Holmewood Estate
Employment of Project Staff
Installation of temporary office at Ramsey Heights
Restoration of Corney's and Old Decoy farms
Restoration of New Decoy and Park and Holme Farm
Improvements to Halfway Farm
Summer Standing
Holmelode and Tower and Froghall
Management Plan
Access improvements around Ramsey Heights Countryside Classroom and Woodwalton Fen NNR
Interpretation
School and Community Outreach
Site visits for School and Community groups
Education projects
Watch and Green Watch
Public events and activities program
Volunteering opportunities
Marketing and promotion
Young People from Local Area aged 11-25
Isolated older people from local area
People with sensory impairments
Access Information and Interpretation about the Great Fen
Access to the Great Fen project area
Access within the Great Fen project area

Discussion via e-mail with Mark Dykes, Casework Manager, Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> June 2017, has confirmed that at the time of the 2008 grant, there was no requirement under HLF's strategic plan to set out Approved Purposes; this was also the case for the following HLF strategic plan. Mark Dykes went on to confirm that the Approved Purposes are defined by the documentation submitted by the Wildlife Trust as the second round bid (this being the application to HLF in 2012 for a three-year project extension for the Restoration of Engine Farm) i.e. the HLF's strategic framework outcomes for 2013-2018.

These are summarized in the 2012 documentation as:

### **HLF's Strategic Outcomes**

#### **Heritage outcomes**

- Better managed
- Better condition
- Better interpreted and explained
- Identified and recorded

#### **Outcomes for Individuals**

- People have learnt about heritage
- People have developed skills
- People have changed their attitudes and behaviour
- People have enjoyed their experience
- People have volunteered

#### **Outcomes for Communities/society**

- Reduced environmental impacts
- A wider range of people engaged with heritage
- More resilient organisations
- Local economies boosted
- A better place to live, work or visit

For this evaluation, Mark Dykes, supported by Mike Harding (HLF Monitor) via e-mail on 13.6.2017, agreed that we should submit him a proposal stating what we would report against. To that end the Evaluation Report Content Plan (see Appendix 4.5) was submitted to Mark Dykes on 12.6.2017 and endorsed by him on 13.6.2017. This content plan had previously been sent to Mike Harding on 2.2.2017. The Evaluation Report Content Plan provides the framework for this Evaluation Report which references the HLF 2013-2018 strategic outcomes within its text.



## Section 5

### Restoration

#### Changing the Landscape: first steps from farm to wetland



© Restoration at Great Fen, The Wildlife Trust BCN



- 5.0 Introduction**
- 5.1 Restoration over time: developing a new landscape**
- 5.2 Establishment management: ready for the journey**
- 5.3 Ongoing management: the start of the adventure**
- 5.4 Hydrology and soils: not quite as simple as 'just add water'**
- 5.5 Developing monitoring techniques: charting the course**
- 5.6 Colonisation of wildlife: build it and they will come**
- 5.7 Ecosystem Services**
- 5.8 Summary**

## **5.0 Introduction**

Over the eight years of restoration work in the three phases of this project, the land secured by the HLF funding has changed beyond all recognition.

The original aims of improving the hydrological regime in Holme Fen NNR, the restoration of a variety of habitats on all land with vacant possession during the HLF project, and the conservation of important species throughout the area, have all been successfully achieved or exceeded.

Vast swathes of land, whole vistas, are now beginning their journey towards being the wetlands of the future, and the wildlife spectacles of glimpsed rarities and abundant countryside stalwarts make it an ever changing, unique and inspirational place to be.

*"The Great Fen is a transformational project, has been a catalyst for other landscape-scale projects and is essential to the survival of the NNRs."*

**Alan Bowley, Senior Site Manager, Natural England (retired) June 2017**



© Alan Bowley, The Wildlife Trust BCN

## 5.1 Restoration over time: developing a new landscape

At the time we started the Great Fen restoration, no conservation organisation in the UK was working on degraded lowland peat soils at this scale. Over the life of the project we have developed and refined a simple and cost-effective model for the initial phases of restoration, gathered and assimilated an enormous body of data on soils and hydrology, and applied this new understanding to design and engineer the ground and conditions so that extensive tracts of habitats can establish.



Intensively managed arable farms growing potatoes, onions and wheat have been transformed into a varied and wildlife-friendly environment where conditions are right for the natural development of new wetland

and grassland habitats. Our understanding of how to recreate a naturally functioning landscape for the future of the fens is now well established and can be applied on land within the Great Fen, and shared with similar projects across lowland England and Europe. (A summary table of the restored land can be found in Appendix 5.0)



## 5.2 Establishment management: ready for the journey



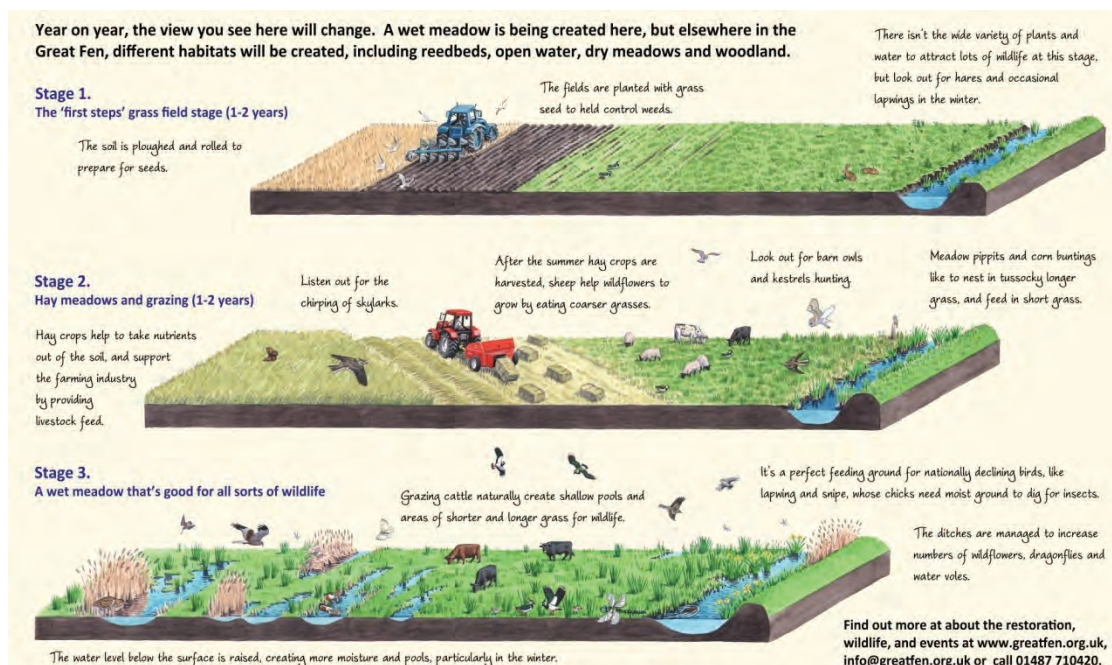
The initial phase of restoration takes land returned by a tenant following the last harvest and carries out basic processes of cultivation and reseeding, generally with a simple grass mix, to stabilise soils and reduce weed burden. Hay cutting and grazing is established within the first year to begin the process of stripping nutrients from the soil and reduce weed colonisation.



Intensive sheep grazing for the first few seasons encourages grass to tiller (put out horizontal shoots) and form good ground cover. Once grass is growing densely, cattle grazing is introduced as it improves the structure of the grassland for invertebrates and herbs.

The initial phase has provided the basis for a lot of new economic activity in the farming and contracting sector. Outgoing tenants

were employed to cultivate the land for conservation, easing the economic impact of the end of their tenancies, and new and existing businesses have adapted to respond to the new grazing and hay opportunities. This economic engagement has grown from a single business at the beginning of the project to a suite of ten or more businesses engaged annually in hay, grazing and agricultural activity on restored land now that the whole area under our management is restored to grassland.



Top: Rymes Reedbed in 2010 when the tenancy ended, strewn with waste onions; Middle: Direct drilling of grass seed into the stubble of the last wheat crop; Above: Interpretation board showing the three stages of restoration



### 5.3 Ongoing management: the start of the adventure

Once grass cover is established, we are able to return two key elements of a rich and varied landscape which have been lost from this area: water and topography. In the North of the Great Fen at Engine Farm, Old Decoy Farm and New Decoy/Corneys Farm, we have created new wet grassland habitats. Rymes Reedbed and Kester's Docking, which were designed by ecohydrologists and engineered for us by a local company, Fen Group, will develop into reedbed and fen.



The wetlands were created by breaking existing field drains, installing water controls such as sluices and penstocks, engineering water features such as scrapes, pools and reservoirs and retaining water on each field wherever possible. We are able to top up the wetlands when needed from these pools and from the river and ditch system throughout the year (within the terms of our abstraction licence).



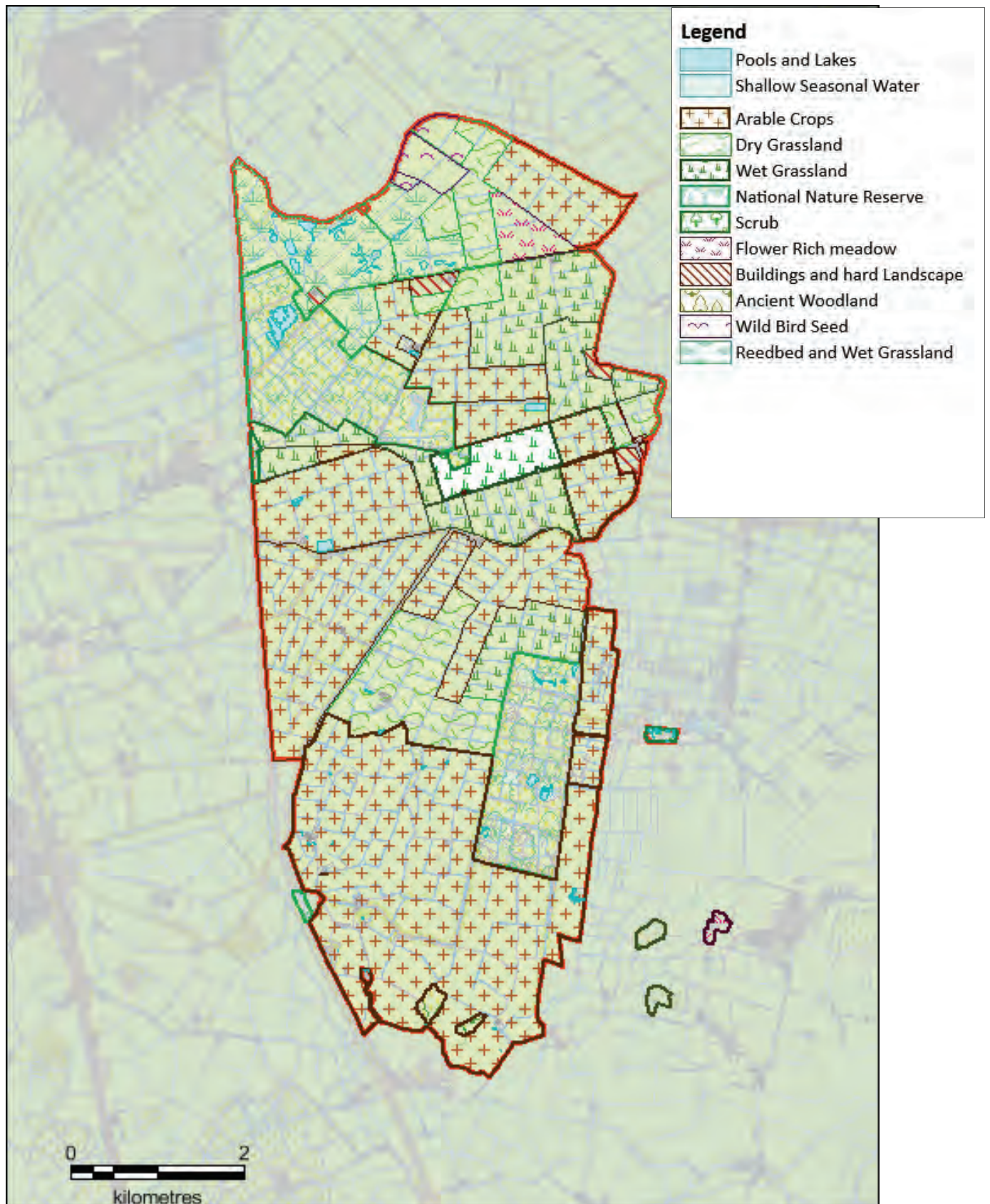
*"It's been one of the most rewarding projects I've ever worked on"*

**Kirsty Spencer, OHES Environmental, Ecohydrology Consultants, 2017**

Top: Making the farm ditches more wildlife friendly

Above: Making scrapes which will fill with water for wintering waders

Right: Rymes Reedbed scrapes begin to hold water 2014



A map showing our broad habitat aspirations



## Great Fen and The Fen Group



“It has been a privilege to be part of several schemes taking place under the Great Fen restoration project working alongside the Internal Drainage Board.

The Fen Group has been able to use our experience in water and land management to make a real impact on the local environment, turning our existing drainage skills to the creation and enhancement of wildlife habitats areas.

The Fen  
Without  
work  
and the

**Paul**

Above: Fen  
Right: Paul



Group are proud to work on, improving the Fens. work from the Great Fen project, the team’s schedule of would have been very different over the last few years, team may not have been as big as it is today.”

**Harvey, Director - Fen Group**

Group machinery spreading spoil from newly created pools  
Harvey



Above right: New water inlet from the river at Old Decoy Farm; top left: rising water levels at Kester’s Docking; above left: New control sluice at Kester’s Docking





Clockwise from top: New Wildflower Meadows flourishing at Engine Farm 2016; Ariel view of new water bodies at Rymes Reedbed, with Kester's Docking in the distance; newly created mere at Engine Farm; Ditch and culvert to move Internal Drainage Board function away from wetland creation areas

## 5.4 Hydrology and soils: not quite as simple as ‘just add water’

We were not able to access the land before tenancies came to an end, and our understanding of the soil and hydrology of the area was based largely on landscape scale theoretical modelling using remote sensing data. As tenancies have reverted to our control each farm has been surveyed for soil depths and types, the available water resources have been assessed, constraints identified and potential for habitat development defined.



Fixed point photography showing changing landscapes as seen from the Trundle Mere Lookout

The technical information and understanding (see bibliography) has meant that wherever we have engineered new structures, they have worked, as designed, first time. The farm-by-farm approach means we can deliver high-quality habitat restoration in the medium term, despite not having control of complete hydrological units due to the remaining long-term Agricultural Holdings Act tenancies.



**Gareth Bradbury, Senior Consultant, WWT Consulting**

“This was a great opportunity to contribute to a project to restore 170ha of land from arable farming, which has relatively low value for wildlife, to a swathe of important wildlife habitats from fen swamp to seasonally wet grassland. When we visited the site in March this year we were very impressed at how the new wetland features were holding the winter water



level and wetland plant communities were already beginning to colonise the former arable land. We could hear and see ‘farmland’ and wetland birds. The Great Fen Project is a true legacy.

The former arable land was eroding away quickly with the peat being blown and washed away irrecoverably. In contrast, the developing wetland and woodland areas stabilise the peat, protecting the land whilst also locking in carbon dioxide, an important contributor to global warming, and of course providing a wonderful home for nature.”



Top: Google Earth image showing Kester's Docking holding water as per the WWT designed scheme

Above: Gareth and colleagues visiting Kester's Docking

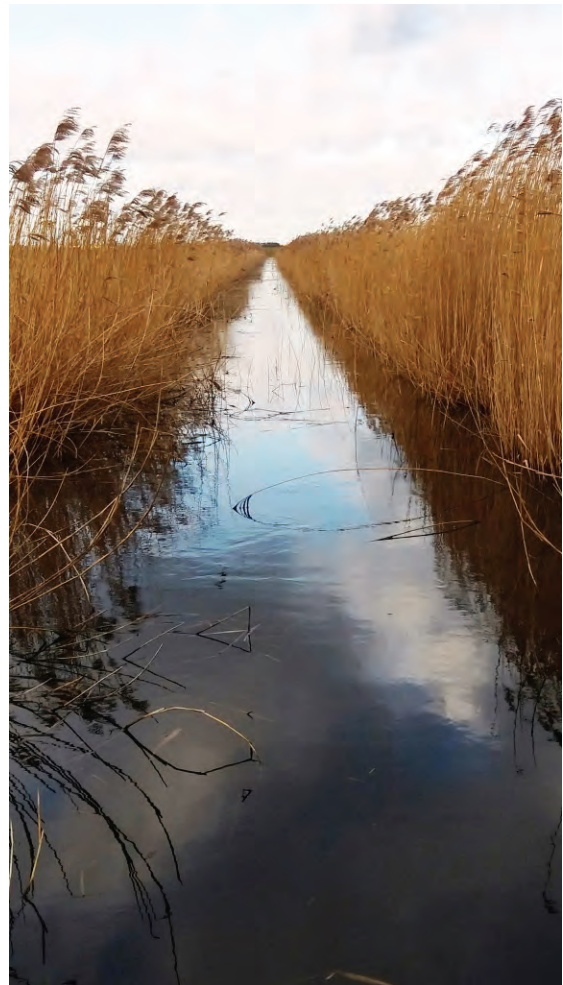
The availability of water and the ability to get it to where it needs to be have both been significant constraints on the development of the restoration effort. One extremely significant challenge to the success of the project has been the requirement for consents from the local Internal Drainage Boards. This is an area where we have transformed the attitudes of local people with enormous impacts on the success of the restoration.

Early in the life of the project there was a poor understanding of our objectives among members of the drainage board, a high level of suspicion and mistrust and a degree of animosity to the restoration aims. Our staff have worked very hard to engage the board members (all local farmers and land owners) and have developed a level of respect and cooperation which would not have been possible previously. This challenging relationship has caused numerous delays and complications in delivering our aims, but in all cases these have been overcome and works have been completed.

We received two abstraction licences as part of the purchase of the Holmewood Estate and it took many years working with the Environment Agency to get these combined and converted into a conservation licence which can be used across the restored land to store water for maintaining the water table in dry summers: a great success and an essential piece of the jigsaw.

Consents and permissions have acted as a brake on, rather than an obstacle to restoration. We quickly learnt that lead-in times for projects would be greater than originally anticipated and have made allowances. We now have a number of planning consents in hand ready for future works to take place and a complement of feasibility information available in advance so we are extremely well prepared for the coming years of land management and development.

More than 4km of ditches have been surrendered from IDB control and are now retaining water for wetlands rather than draining/irrigating farmland. Fen blow (where dried peat topsoil is picked up and displaced by the wind) has been so reduced by the changes brought about by land restoration that the IDB has seen significant reductions in its ditch maintenance bills and is beginning to appreciate direct benefits of conservation work.



Above: A ditch with developing fringes of vegetation

We have installed a series of dipwells across the Great Fen which enable us to develop our understanding of the ground water levels; gauge boards allow us to record ditch levels. We also record rainfall and water chemistry data, giving a comprehensive picture of the hydrology across the Holmewood Estate. Dipwells and other monitoring points are also used to collect botanical and other species data so we can relate water levels to habitat development.



Volunteer officers collecting ground water data from a dipwell

### **Soils and the future**

We have had an expert and dedicated volunteer working to assimilate soils data - historical and current - to estimate the peat resource we are now protecting. This study will be used to help develop a carbon credit scheme which will provide sustainable funding for ongoing habitat management and development for many decades to come. We are also working in partnership with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology to host a Carbon Flux monitoring station (for more information see section 14.5.2)

## **5.5 Developing monitoring techniques: charting the course**

From the very beginning of the project's genesis we recognised how important it would be to chart and understand the developing habitats, colonisation of wildlife and impacts of management. Restoration of this type had never previously been attempted on ex-arable lowland fen on this scale. Our commitment to monitoring only deepened as more land came back in hand and in 2011 a dedicated monitoring and recording officer was employed.

Baseline information is extremely important for assessing changes and measuring how far we have come. Survey and monitoring have covered many different aspects of the environment and its wildlife.





This is a restoration project without specific quantitative targets (we are not aiming for 20 pairs of lapwings for example) because we are aiming to restore processes and create extensive areas which develop as naturally as possible. This being the case, we needed an innovative alternative to targets. We worked with the expert volunteers who form our Joint Technical Advisory Committee to draft a

series of topic papers which set out our ethos for various aspects of our management from grassland establishment and water management to species introductions. These topic papers were a new way of working for the Wildlife Trust and helped us to make the transition from a nature reserve-scale, to a landscape-scale mentality. The topic papers give us a solid grounding for our management choices, ensure consistency of approach on such a long-term project, and have led to the development of a detailed management plan.

The management plan which is now live on a database system and reported against weekly, cements the relationship between monitoring and management, ensuring we make consistent, informed and rigorous management choices that deliver benefits cost-effectively. We are able to apply the learning from this collaborative approach to management planning across the organisation. The management plan holds detailed rationales and methodologies for our work, records and plans work and helps prioritise and diarise. The current plan will run until 2027 with regular reviews.

### Monitoring and management working hand in hand



There are more than 70km of ditches in the Great Fen and the opportunity for benefiting the associated wildlife is considerable, but we have to understand our network and target management effort for best use of available resources. Monitoring of the plants associated with ditches has varied benefits (intrinsic, i.e. aquatic plants of conservation value), and collateral (ditch and vegetation structure), both in terms of targeting management, and informing that management.

By identifying biodiversity hotspots and understanding the requirements of the plants which inhabit them and the effect of the shading caused by reeds, we were able to buy the right equipment to cut the right banks, in the right place to help wildlife spread out and recolonise the whole area.



Spread of notable plants on restored land



Volunteers identifying aquatic plants



## 5.6 Colonisation of wildlife: build it and they will come

Even intensively managed land can be a stronghold for wildlife, particularly in the ditches. It was therefore important to record the existing wildlife and take account of its requirements when carrying out restoration work. Early survey work showed that water voles were common place across the project (~50% of ditches which held water, had signs of water vole activity) and several stretches of ditch had good aquatic flora and invertebrate species. There were also farmland birds, badgers and hares using the area.



As soon as arable activity ceased and the land was sown to grass wildlife began to colonise and we have been able to chart a massive change to the landscape and the wildlife which uses it.



Early winners are small mammals

and a range of raptors which feed on them, farmland weeds (the most notable of which was Bullwort, (not recorded in the county in the previous 50 years), dragonflies and farmland birds.



The Great Fen has very quickly become an established stop-off point for birds on spring and autumn migrations, and lots of rare bare-ground-loving invertebrates have been recorded on the newly engineered pools and scrapes. Wintering birds from Short-eared owls to green sandpiper have quickly located and made the most of the opportunities the restored land has to offer, and breeding populations of many species are beginning to establish.



Clockwise from top left: Distances travelled by birds ringed on the Great Fen; hare; bearded tit; toad; water vole

The grass sward in early years was very dense and the grass very tall, but already over the eight years of restoration we are seeing a transition to a shorter more open sward (as nitrogen levels in the soil decline). The habitat is becoming more suitable for ground-nesting birds such as skylark and meadow pipit and the cacophony of their song can be deafening in the summer!

As we have been able to raise water tables, the soil has recharged with moisture and we now have pools, scrapes, surface water and brim-full ditches which have become hotspots of activity.

In landscape-scale conservation, there are a number of issues in gathering data, not least the scale and complexity of the environment being restored. Not only can wildlife be spread out across a large area, making it difficult to locate, but also, as the mosaic of habitats develops, obstacles to access - both in terms of physical barriers (dense vegetation/complex water features) and of minimising disturbance - have an increasing impact. Targeting entrance and exit points to the project area, migration routes, drop-in points and other 'honey-pots', is essential in identifying opportunities to rationalise survey effort.

### **Developing methodologies – Trail Cameras (Case Study)**

Discrete water bodies with little public access are extremely valuable as a focus of gathering data on the success of such conservation work. One such feature is the pond at Rymes Reedbed, created in 2013.



The 'banana pond' at Rymes Reedbed – a wildlife hotspot

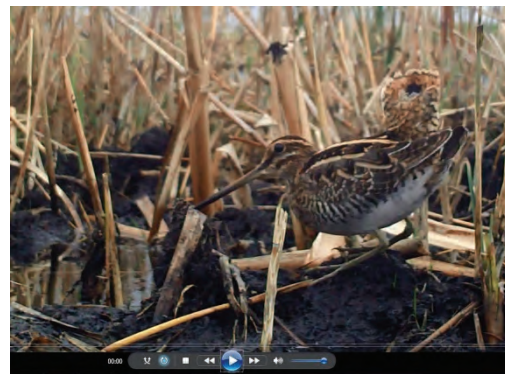


Using trail cameras with close-focusing lenses, a relatively new technological development, sampling can be carried out over a number of weeks, with little disturbance (just the set-up and retrieval visit at the start and end of the period). Wildlife can arrive and settle in undisturbed, and various types of behaviour can be recorded by multiple photographs or video clips, day and/or night.

The results are useful in detecting the presence of species, numbers of individuals, and their behaviour. In addition, the footage is incredibly effective for demonstrating the success of the restoration work to the public. Species recorded in this way include those migrating through the Fen (such as greenshank), easily overlooked creatures (water shrew), and animals difficult to survey except through relatively invasive methods (jack snipe). A variety of birds and mammals have been recorded using the pond and associated habitats as a 'watering hole' - a permanent source of food and water. Behaviour such as little egret feeding on dragonflies and snipe displaying has been recorded, giving valuable data on what the wildlife is using the Fen for.

Baseline data from initial surveys feeds into an ongoing survey programme, which is an exemplar for monitoring across the Wildlife Trust and is already being disseminated to other conservation projects.

Our botanical monitoring, and research in partnership with Anglian Ruskin University, is beginning to demonstrate how higher water levels are shifting plant populations from our basic grass mix, towards a more diverse suite of wetland species. We are also seeing many areas where reed is spreading out from existing stands and beginning the first steps towards reedbed formation.



As we come to the close of the restoration funded through this HLF grant we are seeing exciting indicators of the next stage of wildlife colonisation, with the appearance of prospecting common crane, black-tailed godwit and black-winged stilt on site.

Top: The trail cam; Above: a snipe captured on film

## 5.7 Ecosystem Services

Climate change mitigation and flood attenuation have been key aims of the Great Fen project for many years, but they have gained in importance as public understanding of the issues has increased.

As part of our work with consultants to understand the hydrology of habitat restoration (as outlined above) we have also gathered detailed information on where and how we could store flood water. On the Holmewood Estate land this has taken a two-fold approach. Work with Atkins identified the area most suitable for a large flood-storage reservoir (in the North East of the Great Fen) and follow-up work looked at farm-scale storage solutions across the restoration land. With cost estimates and feasibility work in hand we are now well positioned to deliver flood storage when funding becomes available to implement the designs. In the meantime we have already begun to contribute to flood



mitigation on restored land: ceasing to drain the land has reduced pumping requirements and outflow into the river system during high rainfall events, and rewetted land has also been able to accept excess water in times of need.



Climate change mitigation comes mostly in the form of protecting the carbon locked into the peat soils of the fen farmland. It is estimated by the Open University that farmed peat soil in the area can lose up to 2cm of soil a year through oxidation and erosion (see bibliography). By sowing grass on the land as it comes into restoration, we have reduced fen blow (loss of soil through wind erosion) significantly across the whole landscape.

Typical fen blow on cultivated arable land – Corney's Farm before restoration

*“Our ditch maintenance costs have really reduced now that there is less fen blow”*

#### **Yaxley and Holmewood Internal Drainage Board Member**

Rewetting peat also slows oxidation rates, locking in the carbon of the remaining peat in perpetuity. In the closing months of the HLF-funded restoration we have entered into partnership with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH), who have installed a carbon flux tower on an area of land under restoration. This monitoring station collects data on carbon flux, phenology and a number of meteorological attributes and will describe the carbon story as the land is rewetted and develops into wet grassland. This will verify our contribution to climate change mitigation.

Instrument		Description
Sonic Anemometer		Measures three-dimensional wind speed and direction at 20Hz.
Infra-Red Gas analyser		Measures CO <sub>2</sub> and H <sub>2</sub> O concentration also at 20Hz
4-component Net Radiometer		Measures incoming and outgoing short- and longwave radiation.
2 x Soil Heat Flux Plates		Measure the flux of heat energy into and out of the soil
Pressure Transducer		Measures groundwater level
4x TDT		Measure Soil moisture and precise soil temperature at 5, 10, 15 and 25cm depths.
Tipping bucket Raingauge		Measures rainfall at 0.2mm resolution
Temperature and Relative Humidity Probe		Measures temperature and Relative Humidity inside radiation screen
Phenocam		Records near-360° colour images which can be useful in tracking vegetation changes, ground cover e.g. snow. These can help to explain unusual results and sometimes in remote troubleshooting

Carbon flux tower and its instrumentation

## 5.8 Summary

Whichever way you measure it – landscape change, available habitats or species using the land - the restoration work funded by HLF has had a profound and fundamental impact on the local area. The wildlife and the unique environment we have created for it have changed hearts and minds, and engendered a new sense of passion among local people.

*“...the changes in the biodiversity have been absolutely amazing...”*

**Kevan Woolstencroft, long-term monitoring volunteer**

*“Wildlife on a vast scale.... Grandeur, wilderness and hope for the future”*

**Volunteer’s feedback at a Monitoring and Recording conference**

In spite of many challenges including technical matters and securing permissions, we have achieved what we set out to do, and much more besides. Restored land is already very far removed from the bare, dry peat soils we took over, and the contrast with adjacent arable land is stark.

A picture paints a thousand words – never more true that this in progress image from a google earth update which shows



‘before and after’

We have taken flat, dry, empty land; secured the soils, created topography, retained water and set the stage for wildlife to colonise.

The management and monitoring programme together have shown that early pioneers quickly colonise our restored areas, common species thrive in enormous numbers and rarities are regularly recorded. By the end of the funded period, we have grown

- technical understanding of hydrology, protecting peat soils and landscape forming
- strong working relationships and mutual respect with key stakeholders such as the IDB
- technical competence and capacity in ecological consultancies and engineering firms
- a responsive and evolving monitoring programme which feeds directly into management
- an actively used management plan and supporting ethos

We have created

- buffers of land managed for wildlife around the NNRS
- 933ha of a range of developing habitats, aquatic and terrestrial, supporting large populations of common species and a huge suite of rarities.

*“A wonderful, ground breaking, farsighted and imaginative initiative which provides the very best example of what a terrestrial living landscape might be”*

**Steve Whitbread, Northamptonshire Biological Record Centre Manager**

The land is better managed for conservation now than at any time in the past, and we are ready to build on our inspirational successes. We have far exceeded our original aspirations for the formative years and delivered more than we thought possible. We are at the end of the beginning of the restoration journey, with a good map, a clear plan and a sense of adventure.

## Section 6

### Education and Community

### Reconnecting landscape and People: A journey through place and time

#### 6.0 Introduction

##### 6.1 A brave new start: towards new horizons

##### 6.2 Forging bonds: new audiences and new friends

##### 6.3 The right tools for the job: a toolkit for delivery

##### 6.4 All welcome

##### 6.5 History helps

##### 6.6 Unexpected connections

##### 6.7 Summary

#### 6.0 Introduction

Over the eight years of the project we have taken a forgotten landscape – the Fens – and reconnected people with the natural and cultural heritage.



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The original aims of enhancing enjoyment and awareness, developing learning and community involvement and helping people to re-engage with history and environment have all been achieved and exceeded in many exciting and different ways.

A population who were unaware or uninterested in their locale, suspicious of change and concerned about the land being flooded and had forgotten their history, are now informed and actively engaged in the transformation of the landscape. There has been a shift in the hearts and minds of people touched by the restoration work, brought about but a myriad of opportunities to become part of something mind-blowing and life-affirming.

*“I had no idea that such a wonderful place existed on the very edge of Ramsey until recently. I visited today and came away feeling energised and full of life. It completely lifted my spirits.”*

**Jill Stringfellow, Ramsey**

*“I’ve actually had a most wonderful time at the Great Fen. It was life-changing for me”*

**Tish Lavellin, Community and Education team volunteer**



## 6.1 A Brave new start – towards new horizons

Early work on consultation, prior to the submission of the stage 2 HLF bid, showed that there were a number of concerns among local people about the potential impacts of creating the Great Fen.

There was also a low level of knowledge in the general populus about the Wildlife Trust, landscape conservation, fenland ecology and heritage.

Based on proven techniques the Wildlife Trust was using elsewhere we outlined some basic requirements for deep engagement with local people. These included:

- Detailed education and community involvement plan (see appendix 6.0)
- Establishing physical visitor infrastructure
- Creating intellectual access e.g. website and apps
- Creating a volunteer network
- Forging new partnerships

By getting the building blocks in place at an early stage we have brought about real and meaningful change in the values, attitudes and opportunities for people on the Great Fen. The added value of strong partnerships, creative thinking and responsive evolution of delivery has meant that we have leapt from this foundation of traditional techniques and embraced a suite of innovative ideas, delivering award-winning work that has tapped into new ways of reaching people, which have been shared widely and adopted across the organisation.

## 6.2 Forging bonds – new audiences and new friends

We have sought to provide for all visitors (physical and virtual) to the Great Fen and including a diverse array of interest groups. Indeed, none of the Great Fen would be possible without the people. We also focused some of our efforts on specific audiences who would gain significant benefits from targeted work and provision:

- young people aged 11 to 25
- isolated older people
- people with sensory impairments
- pre-school aged children and their families



© Abbey College Students, The Wildlife Trust BCN

## Young People aged 11 to 25



We have excelled in providing opportunities for young people from all walks of life to visit and experience the Fen. We have looked far beyond the range of activities traditionally offered in visitor centres, for example film and animation projects

([www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUh88hIJ1ao](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUh88hIJ1ao)),

willow weaving, wood carving, den building and making damper bread. In this way we have been able to help young people gain key skills, confidence, motivation and self-esteem. We have

reached out to young people in their schools and colleges, at events and through volunteering opportunities, providing a depth and breadth of experiences which far exceeds our original aspirations.

Above: Greenwatch – Making of the animation film

*“Great Fen has always gained support from local communities and have networks and skills in engaging new hard to reach audiences. They are always community-wildlife centred and are able to access all sectors of the communities.”*

**Stuart Hall, Project Manager Fens Museum Partnership**

### Prince's Trust

In 2012 a group from the Prince's Trust worked with the Great Fen team and constructed an outdoor woodcraft area at the Countryside Centre.

They undertook fund-raising projects to buy the wood and contribute to purchasing some of the tools. During the two weeks, they were taught traditional woodwork construction skills and traditional woodcraft skills such as willow weaving and spoon carving.

The area is now used for school groups and woodcraft workshops.

Prince's Trust project – building the outdoor green woodcraft area.



### Isolated Older People

Connecting with isolated older people, whether that isolation is due to geographical, social or cognitive barriers, was a challenge we had to solve, and we did so in ways that reached people who might not otherwise have been involved in our project. Section 6.5 reveals our secret weapon for gaining their trust and confidence.

### People with Sensory Impairments

Early consultation with disability groups suggested the Great Fen's quietness and variety of tactile opportunities would make it a wonderful place for disabled users. This challenged us to look at opportunities to engage with people who face barriers and has given rise to some novel approaches described further in section 6.4.

### Pre-school Children: Little Bugs

The outdoor environment is a rich, dynamic and natural space for learning and development in children of all ages. Its value as an essential learning resource has been recognised by many pieces of research and more recently within the Early Years Foundation Stage. We have maximised the use of our outside space by launching a successful little bugs club in 2015 hosted at the countryside centre.



*"Sam loves his Little Bugs Club, said he learnt that owls have feathers and hedgehogs eat sheds (I think he meant lives under sheds!)"* **Sam's dad**



Little Bugs discovering the outside world



## Bringing school children to the Fen and the Fen to the schools

*“The Great Fen has left a huge and positive impact on myself as a head teacher and the other teachers here and I think it will change forever the way which we teach heritage and history to our children”*

**Tamara Allen , Headteacher Holme CE Primary School**



As with our broader education and community work in and around the Great Fen, outreach was important as a first step to making contact with local school children and getting them enthused about our work. 70 assemblies and 24 classroom sessions have been delivered during the project, as well as setting up wildlife gardens and making bird feeders for the Great Fen community bird monitoring project. Themes of wildlife, heritage and latterly the Fen Friends have allowed us to engage schools and maintain good relationships with them that have developed into strong links over time



Left: assemblies in local schools; Above: revamping the school wildlife garden at Holme C of E Primary School

Giving children profound experiences of the outdoor environment is a key part of the educational offer at the Great Fen. The Great Fen team provided new opportunities for Early Years, Key Stages 1 and 2, GCSE, A-Level and other educational project work. Travel to site was a significant obstacle to schools' initial engagement and the HLF funding has enabled travel subsidies so that schools can come and experience the unique and exciting programmes first hand.

By forming strong relationships with local schools we have been able to tailor programmes to meet curriculum requirements in interesting and inspired ways. School visits incorporate activities such as pond-dipping, sweep netting, mini-beast hunts, den building and sensory activities. Programmes such as Captain Fantastic, Wildlife Investigators, From Little Seeds Big Trees Grow and the award-winning Fen Time Travellers heritage programme have been memorable and rewarding. See section 8.7.2

Promotional material detailing the school activities delivered as part of the Great Fen can be found in Appendix section 6.1/6.2



From Little Seeds, Big Trees Grow - Early Years programmes



What did you like best? *“Running outside, playing in the trees; We didn’t like the rain but we loved all of the day; We loved the oak puppet tree; I made a magic pathway.”* **Holywell Primary School**



Fen Time Travellers Heritage Programme key stage 2

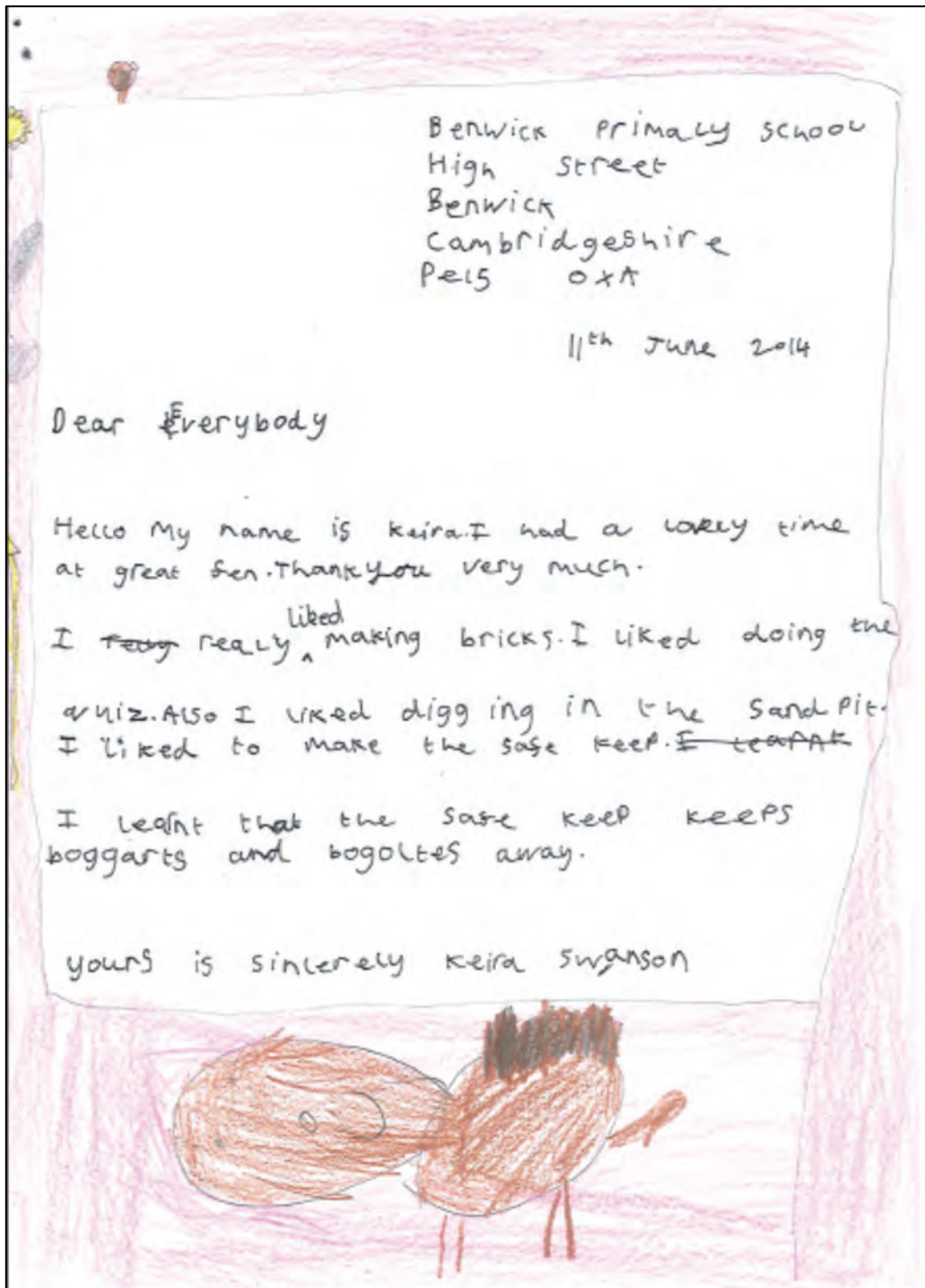


*“The effort and attention to detail were superb, with the staff providing a super insight into the life of everyday in the fens. Children felt very encouraged, challenged and confident to take on board the activities created, thoroughly enjoying themselves and learning many new things.”*

**Ashbeach School, summer 2010**

*“The day really captured the interest of some less academically achieving pupils who are avid learners but struggle with reading and writing sometimes. Also rejuvenated and enthused tired staff. Brilliant day thanks”*

**Bury Primary School**





# 22,000

school children have  
connected with nature  
through activities with the  
Great Fen team



We connected people of all ages with nature and with the great outdoors in many ways: through guided walks and health walks, through den building days for children and families and through our Green Woodcraft workshops which connects people to the heritage of the Fens.

For older children, secondary programmes use field studies, scientific investigation techniques and interactive examples to demonstrate concepts in biology, and geography.



*"Harry and Jack had a wonderful morning, thank you for your patience and providing such a calm environment for them to learn so many new skills."*

*"I wanted to take the opportunity to say a huge thank you for the green woodworking event. Pre-teen girls can be a tough audience but ours were enthralled. Sarah (10) said on the way back to the car "that was awesome" and*

*Lucy (12) cannot wait until she can do it again; they were plotting the next visit all the way home."*

### Case study - Art Projects for secondary schools

Artistic interpretation of the natural world is an intrinsic part of human expression which the Great Fen team explored through an educational programme for after school art students from Sawtry College. This programme was designed to inspire and enrich their learning experience through direct engagement with the Great Fen. Over the last 4 years two group murals have been produced and the student's individual artwork has been on display in Trundle Mere Lookout.



Schools visits have proven to be a very successful way of engaging children with the work of the Wildlife Trust on the Great Fen and hopefully inspiring the naturalists and conservationists of the future. They are also be a way of reaching the wider local community, through staff and parents of the pupils – many visitors to family events are brought along by children who have visited with school.

## 6.3 The right tools for the job: a toolkit for delivery

The novel and large-scale approach to land management at the Great Fen has demanded a creative and diverse toolkit to enable to people to hear of us, explore, and engage with a rich cultural and ecological resource which could easily be underestimated.

Even something as simple as welcome boards designed to help navigate the site delivers messages on the past, present and future of the Fen.



Information panels found at key satellite sites around the Great Fen







And the information boards are complemented by a series of self-guided trails available as paper leaflets or to download from the website. Our digital offer has developed over the eight years as technology has advanced, and all trails are supported online by an interactive map and by downloadable app. <http://www.greatfen.org.uk/great-fen-app>

## Last of the Meres Trail

Explore the northern part of the Great Fen and discover a variety of wildlife, habitats and heritage. Download the Great Fen App and immerse yourself in an interactive exploratory experience.



To find out more about the Great Fen and places to visit get in touch with the Great Fen team on 01487 716420, email [info@greatfen.org.uk](mailto:info@greatfen.org.uk) or visit our website [www.greatfen.org.uk](http://www.greatfen.org.uk)

**Visitor Information**

Distance: Approx. 7km (4 miles)

Time: Approx. 3 hours

**Access and Information**

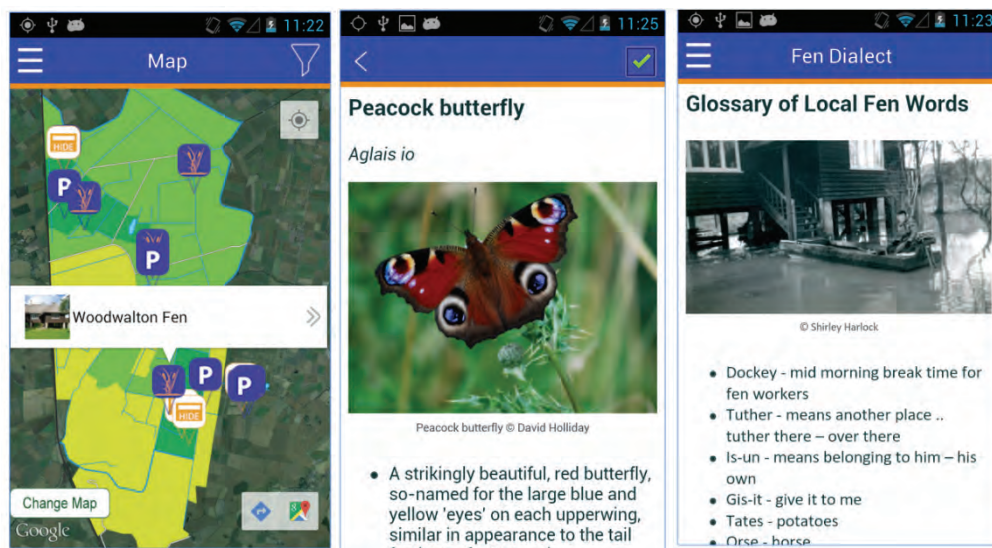
- Please keep to waymarked paths and respect our neighbouring farms and residents.
- Paths are grassy and uneven at times.
- Please be aware of deep water next to paths.
- Assistance dogs and dogs are welcome but must be on leads and under close control at all times due to livestock grazing throughout the year.
- Look out for vehicles / farm traffic.
- Engine Farm has an automated locking gate that will be open dawn to dusk.



**Newton's Trail**







Images of the Great Fen App

### Creative interpretation for the child in all of us

Over the past forty years, children have become increasingly separated from nature. We know that connecting young people to nature has positive impacts on their education, physical health, emotional wellbeing and personal and social skills, and helps them to become responsible citizens. The team researched innovative ways to engage with children and saw the successes of animated/illustrated characters such as Beatrix Potter characters, Brambly Hedge, Percy the Park Keeper and many more that have successfully engaged and inspired children for many years.

This inspired the birth of the Great Fen Friends, personifications of species found on the fen: brown hawker dragonfly, marsh harrier, great crested newt and water vole. Competitions were held during summer holiday events for the children to name the characters.



Each of these characters has stories to tell relating to the project. They have been made into woolly felted characters who visit schools, have had short stories published in the local newspaper and have been incorporated into family events. They even have their own blog <http://www.fenfriends.org/>. The Fen Friends have opened up a whole new arena of engagement never explored by the Wildlife Trust before.



© Fen Friends at Great Fen, The Wildlife Trust BCN





Great Fen Quest

The educational app is a natural extension of success of the Fen Friends. **Great Fen Quest** was launched in October 2016; it is free to download and available on all platforms. It has been designed to motivate and inspire children to discover nature through digital play.

<http://www.greatfen.org.uk/great-fen-quest-educational-app>



### Great Fen films, capturing the past as a legacy for the future

Film making was a new venture for the Wildlife Trust and would not have been possible without a range of partners contributing their expertise. As well as learning the techniques of film making the potential of the film-making process to touch reach out to people on a very personal level has been realised.

#### Case study - The Memories of the Fen

This film was produced as part of an intergenerational project with students aged 14-16 from the local Abbey College in Ramsey and elderly local residents. The students re-enacted some of their stories from working the land and wartime activities. They were also involved in the editing and production of the final cut. The film had a launch event and has been distributed to local groups with over 300 copies sold or donated to local people. It is a fantastic interpretive tool produced by two of the project's target audiences and continues to be shown to local community organisations. Because of this project two of the students involved were so inspired that they went on to study further education in the film and media industry.



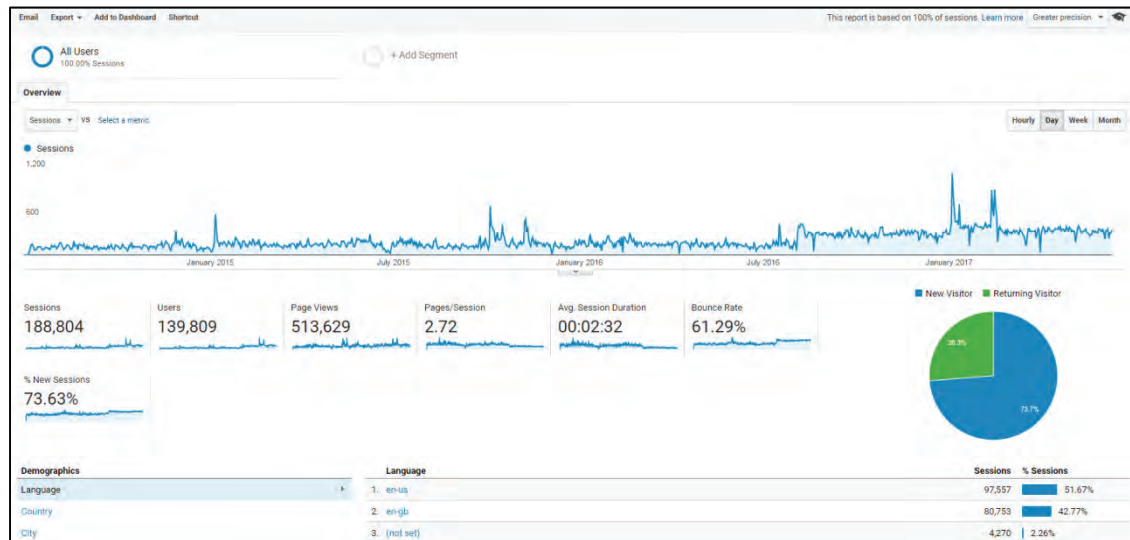
Abbey College students who were involved in the production of the film.



## Keeping in touch

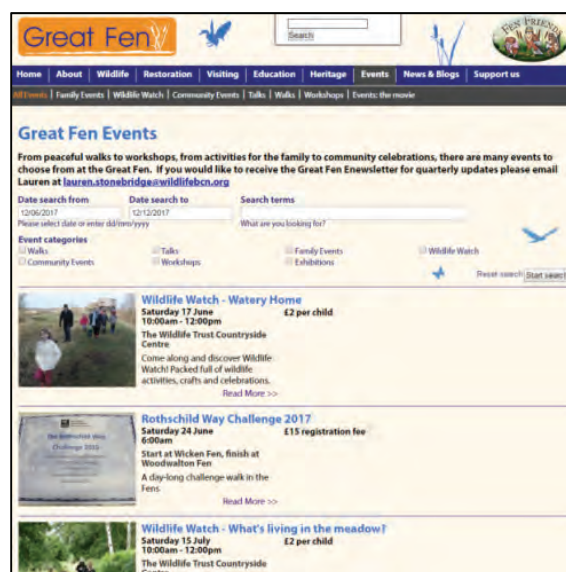
The Great Fen website, [www.greatfen.org](http://www.greatfen.org), was developed and launched in March 2012 and is a fantastic resource ranging from wildlife information, restoration news, and visitor information to an in-depth heritage section. Currently the website receives approximately 8,731 hits per month, with about 88% of these being new visitors; as such it is an excellent first point of contact as well as a repository of technical information for practitioners and wildlife, heritage or geology enthusiasts.

## Google analytics

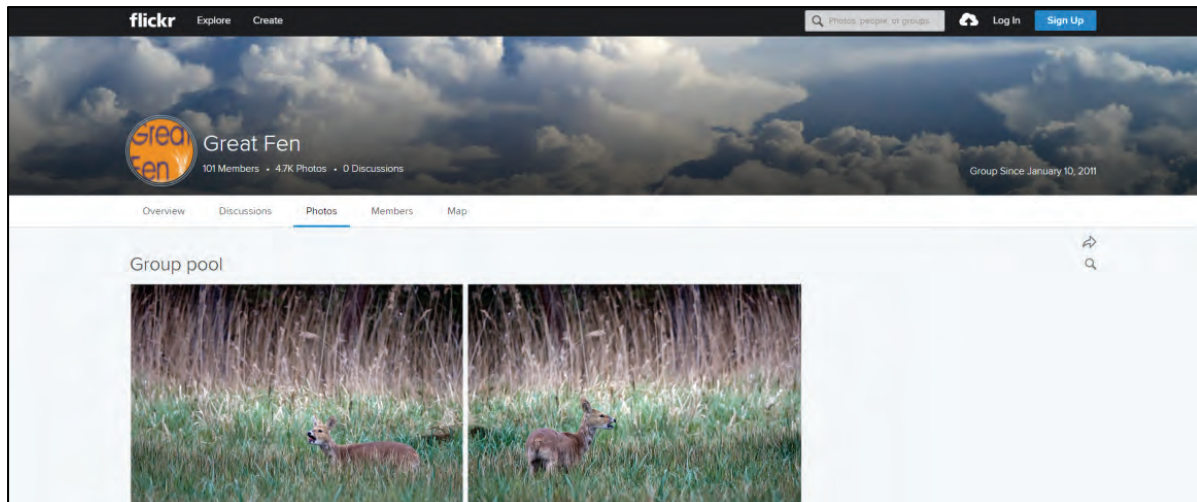


Data from July 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 (when we started Google analytics) to June 12<sup>th</sup> 2017.

188,804 sessions, with 139,809 users.



It is important to stay abreast of a changing social media environment, and this aspect of our communication has developed a great deal over the eight years, supported by staff and expert volunteers. A presence on a number of social media channels has been established. Our Facebook, Twitter and You Tube following is growing weekly and the Great Fen Flickr has over 4.7 k photos being shared by 101 individuals.



We also recognise that digital is not the only means of engagement. 5000 visitor information and events leaflets are distributed locally every six months. Posters and fliers for each event and other regular activities have been distributed through schools, community centres and libraries.

### **Amazing events: making new memories and bringing history to life**

Over the last eight years we have raised awareness of the aims and objectives of the project and the benefits it is bringing to the local community. We have informed and inspired people about the habitats we are creating, and the wildlife and the heritage of the area, through an extensive collection of events, providing unique experiences which connect deeply with participants.

In total approximately 200 outreach sessions have been delivered as part of the Great Fen project, including illustrated talks, nature and heritage activity sessions, reminiscence sessions and attending community events such as local fetes, fairs and festivals.

We have integrated into local events such as Peterborough Wildlife Festival, Holme 1940's, Ramsey Carnival and Yaxley Festival to become truly part of the local community. We have reached out to local groups on a scale never before attempted by the Wildlife Trust: Rotary Clubs, Women's Institutes, Probus Clubs, U3A's, British Legion, local care homes and sheltered housing and various disability groups such as Peterborough Blind Association and the Ramsey Stroke Association to name but a few.



Above: Promoting 30 Days Wild at the Peterborough Wildlife Festival



Left: Willow weaving at the John Clare Festival

We have also created a series of unique and imaginative events for families e.g. 'Dens in the Fens' and 'Bogarts and Bogels'. We have delivered 63 family events at the Countryside Centre. They have been well attended by parents, grandparents and carers with children aged from pre-school to 11 years, encompassing a whole range of innovative wildlife and heritage themes and have included activities such as family nature trails, pond dipping, sweep netting, crafts and more.

*"Brilliant place to bring young ones, gets them outdoors and helps them learn about nature"*

**Parent, on Hogweeds Family event**

*"It is such a great place to bring our grandchildren and we learnt lots as well"*

**Grandparents, on Dens in the Fens event**



Other unique events have included heritage days, local memories events, discovery days, Wildlife Trust centenary celebration and a Bioblitz. Over 5000 people attended and these have been a showcase for our work and our partnerships.



### Case study - Cambridgeshire Fens Bioblitz

In July 2012 the Great Fen held a Bioblitz event in partnership with National Trust's Wicken Fen. The aim was to record 2012 species within a 48 hour period between the two sites.

It was a fantastic opportunity to bring people of all ages and from all walks of life together, enabling them to discover and experience the huge variety that nature has to offer. Wildlife enthusiasts and experts offered a variety of guided walks and talks on subjects such as Spiders, Lichens, Plant Galls, wildlife photography tips, the home life of otters etc. Also expert surveyors spent their day on Woodwalton Fen noting all the species that they could find. These were then being publicly recorded by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre. In addition there were activities for the whole family, including pond dipping, bird ringing, owl pellet dissections, bird and bug box making and microscopes set up for people to have a closer look at what species had been found. There were informative displays from the Hawk and Owl Trust as well as the Environment Agency.



Approximately 250 people enjoyed the day. Some of the highlights of species found included a bitten, a spined loach (found in the Great Ravely Drain), *Rinodina sophodes* which is a lichen and a new record for this area, a marbled white butterfly (seen for first time in 4 years on Woodwalton fen) and a *Synageles venator* (an ant mimic jumping spider which is a national scarcity). Final count was 1077 species found on Woodwalton Fen and Wicken Fen counted 950.

A feedback survey showed that people got an enormous sense of satisfaction from being part of something big which was conserving their local environment.



Bioblitz 2012



*"A vibrant and varied day to celebrate the Trusts' centenary. All the staff and volunteers I talked to made me very welcome and please could you pass on my thanks to everyone."*

**Anne Mason, HLF, Centenary event May 2012**

Three events had such large audiences that off-site venues had to be found. Two have been held at Holmewood Hall which was a conference centre in Holme village formerly owned by British Sugar, and one at Hinchbrook Country Park which is managed by Great Fen partner Huntingdonshire District Council.



Heritage and history have become as integral to events as they have to our educational offer. We have worked closely with local organisations, artists and local museums to deliver eight events on local memories and fen heritage. These days gracefully interlink the natural and social heritage of the fen, bringing local history to life, and have included heritage displays, heritage re-enactments, themed guided walks, traditional crafts and children's heritage activities.





© Heritage Events at Great Fen, The Wildlife Trust BCN

*“The effort and attention to detail were superb, with the staff providing a super insight into the life of everyday in the fens. Children felt very encouraged, challenged and confident to take on board the activities created, thoroughly enjoying themselves and learning many new things.”*

**Ashbeach Primary School.**

We continue to develop and adapt our events and experiences to meet new needs and new audiences. One area which has grown in importance in recent years is guided walks and health walks. Themes have included the Tea with the Rothschilds (history of Woodwalton Fen), Dawn Chorus walks, Holme Fen walks, and World Wetland Day walks.



Bi-monthly health walks are run by our partners Huntingdon District Council as part of the national initiative ‘Walking for Health’. The walks take place at Woodwalton Fen and New Decoy Information Point and the health benefits are something we will be developing further in the future.

## **6.4 All welcome**

Everyone is welcome at the Great Fen. Over the course of the project we have connected audiences with sensory, physical, intellectual and cognitive impairments to the landscape and to history. These are just some of the ways in which we have done so.

We have made parking and moving around easier at the Countryside Centre and reserve at Ramsey Heights through designating parking spaces for people with disabilities, installing level non-slip walking or wheeling surfaces, and providing places to rest and places to get close to nature. We have also invested in an all-terrain electric wheelchair which can be pre-booked free of charge, and portable hearing loops. Our signs and interpretation conform to BT Countryside for All Accessibility Standards.





*"I shall certainly be making a return visit to go farther afield in your fantastic mobile scooter (quite the best I have ever seen let alone driven)"*

**Visitor from Ramsey Stroke Association**

We have held seven access days at the Great Fen inviting guests from local and regional disability groups



*"Everyone came back with much praise and enthusiasm for the day they had, very well done, it sounds as though you have created a very accessible environment"*

**Hampton Resource Centre**

Above: Visitors from FACET Centre in March attending Access Celebration days; Below: Nature's Therapy Session at the Countryside Centre with Peterborough Blind Association



the seasonal changes in elements. For those who have been unable to come to the Great Fen, we

We have welcomed people with sensory impairments to access activities and days at the Great Fen to enjoy the sensory advantages the Great Fen offers: the relative quietness, lack of ambient noise from traffic, interesting sounds such as those of birds and rustling reeds, the variety of smells, interesting tactile opportunities such as the spongy feel of peat underfoot or feel of reeds and

have taken the Great Fen out to them through “Nature’s Therapy” outreach sessions.

*“We had an amazing day. For many of the members it was the first time in a long time that they were able to get out into the countryside and experience it first-hand”*

**Nina Lutterer, Peterborough Association for the Blind**

Our Great Fen Heritage volunteers have created memory boxes which we take into care homes to connect older residents and those with dementia with their own memories of past times and with local heritage through our popular reminiscence sessions. We also deliver memory events at the Countryside centre.

*“Very enjoyable visits. Our residents really enjoyed the interaction with the items which were brought. Presented very well & clearly explained. All residents were included and made to feel part of the visit.”*

**Askham House, Doddington**



Above left: War time memory box; right: reminiscence session in a local care home.

## 6.5 History helps

At the beginning of the project, opinions on the Great Fen were varied: some local people were supportive but some were openly hostile and concerned about perceived impacts from changes in land use and flooding. Others were disinclined to engage with us because they weren't interested in wildlife. We needed a way to reach them, to breach those self-imposed barriers. Our secret weapon was local heritage: we found that even those suspicious of what we were doing could be engaged through exploring together local history and people's stories, and attitudes transformed.

These are some of the ways in which we did it.

We set up a local history group of volunteers (later joined by archaeology volunteers) who became the Great Fen Heritage Group, an excellent example of how the Great Fen was able to mobilize local people to take action within their own communities for heritage. [See case study]. One of their early tasks was to learn the skills necessary to go out into the community to meet and record older residents talking about their lives, capturing precious stories of traditional fenland life for future generations to enjoy. The group also produced two heritage booklets, staged local history days, and undertook research projects to inform Great Fen interpretation.





We connected older residents and young people in intergenerational projects based around the older residents' memories and experiences. One outcome was *The Memories of the Fen* film, described under 6.3 above. Another project brought together local residents with children from Holme Church of England Primary School, to learn about the Holme Fen Spitfire and life on the Home Front, and to enjoy a VE day tea party. Run Rabbit Run and dancing the Boogy Woogy Piggie dance was part of the fun.

*"Thank you for taking part in the small grants scheme and the Home Front programme and for helping to make the end of WW2 commemorations more memorable for our residents and communities"*

**Nutan Patel, Community and Business Support Officer, Cambridgeshire County Council.**



The excavation of the Holme Fen Spitfire in October 2015 (see section 8 on partnerships for a Great Fen case study on the Spitfire excavation) was a wonderfully effective means of connecting with otherwise reluctant audiences through revealing and sharing community heritage. The local community was involved in the excavation: we worked closely with older local people who as children in 1940 witnessed the crash and its aftermath to research the crash and identify the crash site; hundreds of local people visited the site during the excavation; and local people helped tell the story in our film, *The Great Fen Spitfire Excavation*. The whole experience of the relationships formed during period leading up to the excavation, the excavation itself, the partnerships, the local connections, the involvement of all sectors of the community, young and old, professional specialist and volunteers, was so emotional, so satisfying and so life affirming that it was indubitably transformational in changing local attitudes to the Great Fen.



*"When it first said that the Great Fen was going to go back to what it was originally, I thought, "Oh God, we've got some bright ones coming here now then. And it didn't bother me at all. And then, when it did take place, I've changed my mind. They did a good job. Yeah. And if they didn't make anybody else in the village happy, they did me. Yes it's true. I felt very proud. Yeah I did"*



**Maxey Stacey. Local resident, who as a 10 year old in 1940 witnessed the Spitfire crash.  
Verbatim comment from the Spitfire film.**



That emotional connection to the community was cemented further the following year in 2016 with an act of community remembrance when we created a permanent memorial on site to the young Spitfire Pilot Harold Penketh. A dedication ceremony was held in September led by the Right Reverend Dr David Thomson Bishop of Huntingdon and attended by Harold's surviving family, everyone concerned with the excavation, members of the community and children from Holme Primary School.

*"Thank you so much for everything you have done to make the day so memorable"* **Valetta Cranmer (Cousin to Harold Penketh)**



*Your dedication service was the perfect conclusion to an amazing project, done with such skill and sensitivity"* **Alma (local resident)**



## 6.6 Unexpected connections

During our journey of reconnecting people with the landscape and heritage of the fens, we have gone places, had experiences and created opportunities for learning and enjoyment we couldn't possibly have imagined at the start, some of them weird and wonderful.

At the start of the project we never imagined we would create a physical connection with another wetland site 39 miles away! We work with the National Trust at Wicken Fen on several levels (such as joint botanical monitoring), but that was not enough for one of our volunteers, Adrian Kempster, who was inspired to connect people further afield in south Cambridgeshire via a new way-marked walking route, The Rothschild Way, linking Woodwalton Fen and Wicken Fen, the two nature reserves purchased by Charles Rothschild at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

<http://www.greatfen.org.uk/visit/Rothschild-Way>

An event to walk the route is now in its third year, and has brought people from both communities and from further afield to a new appreciation of our wetland sites.

*"All was quiet at that time in the morning except for the occasional bird call and chewing sounds of the cattle we passed by. At this point we could have been anywhere and in any era; Sir Charles Rothschild could have even been with us!"*









1600 people visited the model and took part in workshops to build birds and beasts for it. This innovative event involved volunteers and staff from all of the Great Fen Project Partners and connected us to the new, urban audience of Huntingdon. It was huge success, and great fun to be able to build the Great Fen landscape where and how we wanted in a week!

*"Kids LOVED the Lego and Mum learnt not only about the Fens but about another great place to take the kids in summer!"*



## 6.7. Summary

Referring back to the questions at the start of this section, we have shown evidence that we have reconnected people with the landscape and history of the fens, in ways that have built wider audiences, reached isolated older people, young people, and people with sensory impairments. We have also given huge enjoyment, fostered local pride and changed attitudes. We have empowered local people to take action themselves.

We have learned that difficult and challenging audiences can be connected to us through themselves connecting with their local history and the stories hidden in the landscape, and this is a lesson that is useful to the natural environment sector as a whole. Stories change hearts and minds.

It's been an exhilarating ride for all of us, and hugely rewarding that together we have seized the opportunities the project has given us to transform people's experiences of this forgotten part of the fens in vibrant and life affirming ways.

Additional materials can be viewed on DVD's and leaflets enclosed with this report.







## Section 7

### Socio-Economic Outcomes

#### What actually happened?

- *Is the Great Fen a better place to live, work and visit?*
- *To what extent have we changed how people use the Great Fen?*
- *How have these opportunities benefited people?*

*The **evidence** we used in this section included: Mapping; interviews; face to face questionnaires; online questionnaires.*

#### 7.0 Introduction

#### 7.1 What has happened to date?

#### 7.2 Socio-economic strategic planning

#### 7.3 Development of sustainable tourism

#### 7.4 Brand development

#### 7.5 Summary

## 7.0 Introduction

A quiet revolution is under way: a revolution that has come about as a direct result of this project, and that is bringing communities together to take action towards economic development and future sustainability. The Cambridgeshire Fens have not been immune to the wider decline in land-based and agricultural jobs, and the Great Fen's use of land for conservation was regarded with hostility and suspicion in the early years of the project. As the project has progressed, however, the Great Fen has created new opportunities, changing negative attitudes, transforming the prospects for new livelihoods and bringing people back onto the land. Revolutions can shatter myths, and the myth that the conservation sector is often faced with is that economic development and conservation are mutually exclusive aims. This myth has never been true of the Great Fen: we have always deemed socio-economic development to be an intrinsic and vital outcome of our work, embodied in both the HLF-funded project and the Project Partners' wider vision for the Great Fen as set out in the *Masterplan 2010*. Indeed, it is one of the four stated aims of the *Masterplan*:

*Aim 3. Economic: To contribute to diversification and development of the local economy, consistent with environmental and social objectives*

[for full statement of the *Masterplan 2010* Aims and the 2015 Revisions see Appendix 4.0]

For example, conservation grazing - part of the land restoration process - has created economic opportunities for graziers, and conversely, graziers working with the Great Fen can deliver conservation outputs. Part of the Education and Community programme entails creating physical access routes, which are part of the growing infrastructure that will aid the development of sustainable tourism.

This section considers outputs and outcomes to date, including strategic planning for the future, the creation of physical and organizational infrastructure to support economic change and tourism development, the monetization of eco-system services and brand development. It also includes evidence of turning local views - perhaps even cynicism and opposition - around, resulting in a whole section of the community sharing a vision and beginning to work together towards a common sustainable aim. It's been an incredible and inspirational journey over the eight years of the project.

## 7.1 What has happened to date?

Delivering economic sustainability for the Great Fen (discussed in section 14.0) and delivering economic benefit to the local community are challenging areas for the Project Partners, as primary effort and capital investment has been focused on land acquisition and restoration and on education and community engagement. Delivery of economic sustainability and local benefit over the lifetime of the Great Fen will depend not only on internal resources but also upon a wide range of socio-economic conditions and mechanisms.

More immediately, during the HLF funding period, the Great Fen been able to deliver outputs and outcomes and contribute to the diversification and development of the local economy in the following ways.

### 7.1.1 Procurement and contractors



Since 2008, 195 contracts have been let, of which 103 (53%) were local. The contract spend was £2,560,709, of which £1,850,502 (72%) was local. This direct impact on the local economy has provided not only employment and training opportunities, but also the chance for local businesses to grow or develop in new directions. The Fen Group (known as Fen Ditching in the early years of the project), which has won successive contracts for construction/landscaping and the fabrication and installation of water control structures, is just one example of a company that has been able to develop expertise and grow through working with the Great Fen (see section 5). On a smaller scale, Great Fen contracts have helped the current generation of one fen family which has been employed to work on Woodwalton Fen for three generations to develop Mason Landscaping as a small-scale, independent company.



### 7.1.2. Employment and training

#### Employment

Through land-based and community-rooted development, the Great Fen has made a small but positive impact on direct employment, and a larger impact on indirect employment through contract labour [source: *Socio-economic Study of the Great Fen* report prepared for Huntingdonshire District Council by Cumulus Consultants Ltd., November 2012]. Although early days, this in itself is hugely exciting and important as it begins to move against the wider societal trend of the reduction of agricultural sector jobs in East Anglia. Positive outcomes in skills training leading to the enhancement of job opportunities and career prospects have been achieved during the project through the Great Fen's wide-reaching volunteer programmes.



## Training

Through the funding period 2008-2017, the Great Fen has been able to offer a wide range of often career- or even life-changing opportunities for volunteers, discussed further in **section 8**. Volunteers come to the Great Fen from a variety of backgrounds, with a variety of experience and for a variety of reasons, many of them employment-related. Some want to gain new skills and experience to enhance employment options (particularly young people starting out in the competitive conservation sector who may have academic qualifications but no practical skills), or because they wish to return to work after a break, or because they wish to change careers. Volunteer opportunities range from casual conservation work parties to formal Volunteer Officer placements lasting up to two years, and can have a huge impact on personal and career development, as shown by the case studies below.

### Helen Bailey Great Fen Conservation Officer

*"The Great Fen has had a huge impact on my life. I'd been raising children for 13 years while studying for my OU degree, and had decided it was the right time to get back into work. Everything happened to fall in place and come through at the right time. Not having spent time in the workplace with adults for so long, my confidence had gone; I really didn't know what I was capable of doing. I think actually being able to do voluntary work first has helped me immensely; it gave me confidence that I could do a job properly. I contacted the Wildlife Trust to find out whether there was anything I could do that would be useful for them and for me, and that's when I found out about the Great Fen - I think it gets under your skin! I have gained skills in chainsaw and brush cutter, in computer use and IT, and my species identification skills have improved immensely.*



*I started off just volunteering for the Friday work party every week, and then got involved in doing a little bit extra midweek until an opportunity arose to apply to be a Great Fen Volunteer Officer. I was successful and did that for two years, and then was fortunate enough to end up with a paid job, so really I just naturally progressed from one thing to the next.*

*The initial placement was the foundation, the timing was right, and I worked on and improved my knowledge. I feel part of something really big and really special."*

### Lauren Stonebridge, Great Fen Interpretation and Community Officer

*"I grew up living just down the road, it was my local patch and I used to come down with my Grandad for walks so I grew up seeing how the landscape was changing. I remember coming down here one day when we were invited to help dig out a pond and I thought, yeah, this is the sort of thing I want to get involved in, it's so close to my heart."*

*I started off fresh from university not really quite sure what sort of area of nature conservation to go into; I did a six-month placement as a Volunteer Officer in the Education and Community team covering everything from schools, to the website, to outreach activities such as fetes and community fairs and that sort of thing. I got to dabble in all sorts of different things and to meet a whole range of people; it gave me a taster of what I could do, and I really homed in on interpretation and working with community groups. I never realized how much I enjoyed the interpretation side until I got the opportunity to be able to have a go at it, and that has changed my career."*



Volunteer Officers and Conservation Volunteers receiving skills training and work experience on the Great Fen.



The Great Fen has a good track record of Volunteer Officers going on to employment within the sector.

<b>Date at Great Fen</b>	<b>Education and Community Volunteer Officers</b>	<b>Employment/training following volunteering for the Great Fen</b>
2010	Lisa Myers - Volunteer Officer	Employment with Groundwork
2010	Anne French - Volunteer Officer	Employed by National Trust
2011	Marissa Ryland - Volunteer Officer	Employed successively by Wildlife Trust BCN, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
2011	Jo Stonehouse - Volunteer Officer	Internship at RSPB
2012	Lauren Stonebridge – Volunteer Officer	Employed by Wildlife Trust BCN Great Fen Interpretation and Community Officer
2013	Debbie Bell – Volunteer Officer	Employed by Wildlife Trust BCN Membership Team
2014	Vicki Bush – Volunteer Officer	Employed by Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Senior Education Officer
2016	Fay Tuffnell – Volunteer Officer	MSc Environmental Management

<b>Date at Great Fen</b>	<b>Restoration and Monitoring Volunteer Officers</b>	<b>Employment/training following volunteering for the Great Fen</b>
2012-2013	Alex Rowell	Employed by Natural England
2013 & 2014	Helen Bailey	Became a Great Fen Restoration Officer
2013-14	Michael Boyle	PhD Researcher at Imperial College London and National University of Singapore
2014-2015	Filip Wieckowski	Birdlife Malta as Conservation and Bird Care Assistant, Ramsar Officer at Alderney WT, Research Intern (IEEP), Field Officer at RSPB
2015-2016	Greg Ambarchian	Parks Trust Ranger, Willen Lakes, Milton Keynes
2015-2016	John Keaveny	Intern at Leicester and Rutland Wildlife Trust



### 7.1.3 Opportunities for farm businesses and small and medium enterprises

The changes in land management detailed in section 5 have created positive outcomes and new opportunities for existing farming tenants and for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) developing rural enterprises in the Great Fen.

A good example of the former is at Middle Farm, farmed by the Papworth family for four generations. The current generation took the decision to sell the freehold of Middle Farm to the Wildlife Trust in 2006 and to work with the Great Fen under a Farm Business Tenancy. Formerly under arable production, Middle Farm is now developing as wet grassland. The farm business currently benefits from income from agri-environment schemes (Higher Level Stewardship), takes a hay crop and lets grazing and, through supplying contract services to the Great Fen (for example for drilling, topping, ditching, track construction and maintenance), Johnathan Papworth has been able to invest in and develop a growing contracting business. The family are now looking to develop holiday accommodation at Middle Farm to serve visitors to the Great Fen.



Above: Hay crop being harvested at Middle Farm

The conservation management of the new grasslands created within the Holmewood Estate has created opportunities for non-resident local farmers and graziers to develop businesses, grazing their livestock and/or harvesting a hay crop. 13 farmers and graziers, including joint ventures and partnerships, are currently developing and managing land-based enterprises in the Great Fen. Through the opportunity to develop and expand provided by the Great Fen, they are able to create jobs and apprenticeships.

Amongst these graziers are young people who wish to get into farming but do not have the benefit of family farms, and others whose land holdings elsewhere cannot support hopes for expansion. The Great Fen's tender system of seasonal licences for winter and summer grazing and for taking hay crops has helped both groups realize their ambitions. A common theme that arose from discussions with the graziers is that they have been able to expand their businesses, because of the way the tender process works, as the farmers can offer a price which both suits them and in turn provides income for the Great Fen.



© Cattle at Great Fen, The Wildlife Trust BCN

Grazier Simon Stickles has been able to expand in three ways: increasing the number of cattle; taking a hay crop for his own stock; and buying bales from another farmer who harvests hay from the Great Fen, then profiting from it by breaking the hay into smaller portions and selling it on. As well as this, his four daughters are all entering the farming industry because of all of the opportunities the Great Fen has provided.

*“The Great Fen has provided a great opportunity for my girls to continue in the farming business: it means another generation can carry on farming, something they may have probably struggled to do were it not for the Great Fen. It’s been brilliant!”*



© Cattle at Great Fen, The Wildlife Trust BCN

### **Simon Stickles, Great Fen grazier**

Luke Phipps, a sheep farmer, mentioned how the Great Fen has enabled him to expand a fledgling business in a very competitive industry. He is hoping that he can continue with the Great Fen for many years to come. Winter grazing, in particular, has proved instrumental in getting his business going. He believes his method of cell grazing seems to suit the conservation needs by creating a mixed sward height and micro habitats within the grazing block as a whole, so the positive benefits run both ways: ecological and economic.

#### **7.1.4 Building relationships with local business**

Developing relationships with local businesses is vital for future economic planning and delivery. Some of the many successful ways in which the project has forged such relationships are detailed below.

##### **Hosting work parties from Wildlife Trust corporate partners**

The Great Fen has engaged with a variety of corporate groups and organisations over the last eight years, leading a range of groups of people in conservation activities that are in most cases vastly removed from the run of their normal working days.

BGL Group in Peterborough were the first corporate group to bring a team of employees out for a ‘Wild Work day’ in 2009, helping to remove scrub and demolish an old bird hide in preparation for the erection of the new Great Fen office. Since then, the company has been involved in a wide range of activities including:

- **2010:** four separate work days to create many of the activity areas at Ramsey Heights for school and community events.
- **Feb 2011:** 16 people took part in willow planting at Ramsey Heights
- **July 2012:** 25 people at Corney’s Farm - installing cattle pens
- **Nov 2012:** 10 people at Corney’s Farm - installing cattle pens
- **Sept 2013:** 12 people tree burning at Great Fen
- **Oct 2014:** 14 people help to create an outdoor play area in Railway Covert at New Decoy.
- **Feb 2015:** willow cutting and planting along the Dragonfly trail





Left: The building of Sybil's Hut, Ramsey Heights



Above and right: Creating a wild play area



Other corporate groups taking part in Wild Work days have included:



- HSBC, who provided 14 people in March 2012 to plant willow cuttings and cut reed for roof thatching
- Cambridge University Press, whose staff helped on two occasions with the construction of Jon's Hide, built out of straw bales
- the Environment Agency, which provides annual Green Leave days for its office-bound employees, and whose staff visited in 2015 and 2016 to work on pond and other improvements at Ramsey Heights.

Above: Willow



coppicing and tree planting

Above: Clearing the Ramsey Heights pond



Above: Tidying up the willow tunnel

Corporate days provide not only much needed 'man hours' for the Great Fen team, but also a rewarding and positive experience for participants, as the following sample of feedback shows:

*"It was good to get out of the office and help out with such as worthwhile cause in the Great Fen Project"*

*"I got a real sense of tangible satisfaction from the experience – thanks!"*

*"I met a lot of new people and built a few new relationships"*

*"Everyone really enjoyed themselves, so a good result all round".*

### **Sponsorship**

In addition to their participation in corporate work parties, BGL has contributed to the annual running costs of Countryside Centre at Ramsey Heights since 2009, a sum totalling £194,000.

## Fundraising

Anglia Co-operative ran an in-store fundraising campaign in 2012. The point-of-sale donation options and in-store graphics raised over £5,000 for the Great Fen; other positive outcomes resulted including a deepening of the relationship, the purchase of corporate membership (thus cementing a longer term relationship) and support for the Wildlife Trusts' Watch groups.

*"The Great Fen is an exciting project - re-creating features that were once common across the fens for the benefit of wildlife and people and, at the same time, providing something really meaningful for future generations to savour."*

**Andy Simpson, Anglia Co-operative Chief Operating Executive (2013)**

**The Great Fen**

This store is helping to raise £1 million to support one of Europe's largest wildlife restoration projects between Peterborough and Huntingdon.

The Great Fen will restore 14 square miles of land to its fenland origins, creating a haven for wildlife and a fantastic place for people to enjoy.

**Help us...**

- Make a donation at the checkout
- Donate online at: [www.wildlifebcn.org/appeals](http://www.wildlifebcn.org/appeals)
- Donate £10 by text: **TRUST FEN £10** to 70707

Text costs £1.00 per text message. The Wildlife Trusts for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire restores 100% of your donation. Checks not require permission. Funded at code 30443 4 12000. Charity Number 1000412

**Anglia Co-operative**  
together we make the difference  
[www.angliacooperative.co.uk](http://www.angliacooperative.co.uk)

**Bedfordshire  
Cambridgeshire  
Northamptonshire**  
Registered charity number: 1000412

An artists impression of the historical extent of the East Anglian fens, now largely disappeared. The Great Fen lies within the area inside the red rectangle, where with your help the Wildlife Trusts can protect and restore fen habitats for wildlife and people to enjoy. Illustration by Richard Allen.

Anglia Co-operative in-store fundraising panel using graphics supplied by the Great Fen

## 7.2 Socio-economic strategic planning

In 2012, conscious of the challenges in delivering economic benefit, and aware that such delivery would be a slower and more organic process than the more rapid progress in other project areas (land restoration, education and community engagement), the Project Partners embarked upon strategic planning to achieve step change, establishing an Economic Working Group for this purpose. The working group initiated a tender process to appoint consultants to undertake a study to demonstrate the wider socio-economic value of the Great Fen and to provide a route forward for its on-going development, building on a previous study commissioned by the Project Partners in 2004. Cumulus Countryside and Rural Consultants were appointed in April 2012, and take up the story:

### Paul Silcock, Managing Director, Cumulus Consultants Ltd

"Cumulus Consultants has been involved with Great Fen and its socio-economic development since 2012. Our initial task was to undertake a Socio-Economic Study of the Great Fen. This explored the current impacts of the Great Fen on the local economy, assessed the value of its ecosystem services, identified potential socio-economic opportunities, and provided an initial **route map** for its ongoing development. The study set out the socio-economic case for the Great Fen (how it could more than offset the losses arising from the conversion of agricultural land) and helped engage and win over local stakeholders.



In 2014, we were commissioned to develop a Great Fen Socio-Economic and Funding Strategy; this provided a strategic framework for the socio-economic development of the Great Fen in the long term. The strategy set out the vision, principles and goals, before considering the business opportunities, building blocks (infrastructure), resourcing, opportunities and constraints. The strategy was developed in consultation with project partners and stakeholders, including via the first Great Fen Business Forum attended by over 40 business owners and representatives. This helped develop relations with the business community and other organisations. Other benefits of the work included identifying and scoping potential sources of funding and providing a monitoring framework. We are now helping to progress the strategy and drive forward priorities.

We are delighted to be involved with the Great Fen, helping the project partners, local businesses and communities realise its economic and socio-economic potential. Focusing on this will ensure the Great Fen's long term sustainability and provide an exemplar for other landscape-scale habitat restoration projects."





Above: Steering Committee Members participating in socio-economic strategic planning workshop, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2013



Above: First Great Fen Business Forum, Holmewood Hall, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2014

With this level of strategic planning in place, work has taken place throughout 2015, 2016 and 2017 to progress the various areas of economic development defined by the Routemap in Cumulus' 2012 socio-economic study [See Appendix 7.0] These include the development of Great Fen Visitor Gateway relationships (see 7.3 below); discussions with third parties on proposals to develop businesses within the Great Fen as and when they arise (these include land-based businesses, subject to ongoing discussions); the development of tourist infrastructure – particularly site development planning for the Great Fen Visitor centre (see 7.3), and branding and licensing (7.4).

However, since 2014, the wider economic environment has been subject to many external challenges, not least reductions in local government resource, reduction of external funding sources, austerity, and most recently Brexit, which have impacted on the Project Partners' ability to pursue the Routemap as fully as they would wish within the timescales as originally envisaged. The Routemap remains useful in that it defines areas of action, but timescales are subject to constant review, the most recent being 2017. It is the intention of the Project Partners to establish a high level Economic Advisory Panel of leaders from several relevant sectors to help the Great Fen negotiate these changing times, and a workshop is planned to bring together potential members of this panel, review the Routemap and determine next steps.

### **7.3 Development of sustainable tourism**

Over the eight years of the project, the Great Fen has worked to identify and realize the potential of sustainable tourism as a means of stimulating and delivering socio-economic development and financial stability. The Project Partners see the creation and development of a Great Fen tourist economy - people visiting wild places to enjoy nature - based on ecologically sensitive sustainable tourism as a primary means of delivering and sustaining economic benefit over the longer term. Studies [e.g. *Great Fen Socio-economic Study*, PACEC, 2004 and *Socio-Economic study of the Great Fen, Final Report for Huntingdonshire District Council, Cumulus Consultants Ltd., November, 2012*] have shown that tourism is, to date, relatively undeveloped in the Great Fen project area (and closely neighbouring areas). We are actively building the infrastructure and relationships for delivering sustainable tourism and energizing communities to take action.

From the outset it was recognized that the Great Fen was starting from a zero base and needed to build infrastructure to support its developing range of visitor services and access opportunities. To balance conservation and access, *The Masterplan* detailed a zoning plan for the project area, including a central hub in the form of a future visitor centre, and satellite sites - the established NNRs, the Countryside Centre at Ramsey Heights, and the newly restored areas which were coming on stream - offering a variety of visitor experience. New farm signs carrying Great Fen branding and interpretation helped establish site identities for these satellites.

A phased approach to the creation of infrastructure was adopted in recognition of the incremental availability of funding for capital build as well as the need to gradually build up visitor numbers over time. Infrastructure achieved to date includes the first Great Fen Information Point at Halfway Farm Barn (completed in December 2012) and the adjacent “*Making the Fens*” wetland habitats landscape at New Decoy Farm which, together, offer an introduction to the Great Fen and an insight into what is planned for the future. They feature an accessible parking area, picnic area, dragonfly ponds, way-marked walks, interpretation and information panels, and a straw-bale bird hide created with the help of volunteers. The Information Point is the main stepping off point for the seven-mile circular Last of the Meres Trail, a major element of tourist infrastructure opened in 2015, which includes engineered infrastructure for equestrian access, for future development of permissive bridleways.



Above: Interpretation Panels at the Information Point at Half Way Farm

Left: design drawing Great Fen Information Point





New infrastructure to serve visitor access to restored land at Rymes Reedbed includes a way-marked trail from the nearby Holme Posts, the new Trundle Mere raised hide looking out over the new meres and back into the canopy of Holme Fen NNR, and interpretation on species, landscape and the science behind the Great Fen. Provision for parking for visitors with disabilities has been made at Rymes Reedbed and also at Engine Farm adjacent to the wildflower sensory area. Way-

marked walks and trails have been developed throughout the Great Fen (see section 6), and further afield the 39-mile long-distance walking route, The Rothschild's Way

([www.greatfen.org.uk/visit/Rothschild-Way](http://www.greatfen.org.uk/visit/Rothschild-Way)) links the Great Fen's Woodwalton Fen with Wicken Fen, a good example of partnership working to create a tourist attraction for the Great Fen and others. A new digital mapping exercise has been completed to map the hard infrastructure for interpretative and other use.

*"We liked the trail so much we did it 4 times!"*

### **Family using the Discovery Trail at Ramsey Heights Countryside Centre**



Top: Trundle Mere Hide in use.

Above: volunteers working on the straw bale bird hide.

Right: opening of pedestrian/horse bridge on the Last of the Meres Trail 2016

The baseline infrastructure already established will be added to, principally through the development of a visitor centre probably on a 27ha site on New Decoy Farm at the heart of the Great Fen. Selected following comprehensive site option appraisals, this site has some existing infrastructure and is durable enough to sustain human activity with little impact on the developing landscape and wildlife.



Above: RIBA Competition architect site visits to visitor centre site New Decoy Farm in November 2012

The Visitor Centre design was selected through a Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Open Ideas design competition, open to any design team in the UK and Europe (see [www.ribacompetitions.com/greatfenvisitorcentre](http://www.ribacompetitions.com/greatfenvisitorcentre)), which had the challenging brief (see Appendix 7.1) of designing a building for a landscape that did not yet exist. The winning entry, of over 200 received, was designed by a team led by Shiro Studio working in partnership with Mesh Landscape Design, with a cost plan by Equals Consulting (see [www.greatfen.org.uk/about/future/visitor-centre](http://www.greatfen.org.uk/about/future/visitor-centre)), and envisages a variety of accessible visitor facilities set within flexible multifunctional spaces which can be configured according to need, visitor numbers and requirements for income generation (for example, through room hire). The design is capable of constructional phasing in order to be able to respond to capital availability and growing visitor numbers.



Top right: RIBA Competition architect site visits to visitor centre site New Decoy Farm in November 2012. Architect's render of Shiro Studio design for Great Fen Visitor Centre: external view (above); internal view (below)



*"It was a great honour chairing the Judging Panel for this ambitious design competition. The anonymous first stage attracted a phenomenal number of submissions and it was a challenging task arriving at the final shortlist. The standard of the Stage 2 submissions was very high but a winner was selected by consensus following a very comprehensive judging process. In the end it was felt that the design proposals by Shiro Studio and their team best reflected the spirit of the Great Fen project and that their design proposals demonstrated great intelligence, flair, flexibility and sensitivity."*

**Cindy Walters (Walters & Cohen Architects)**

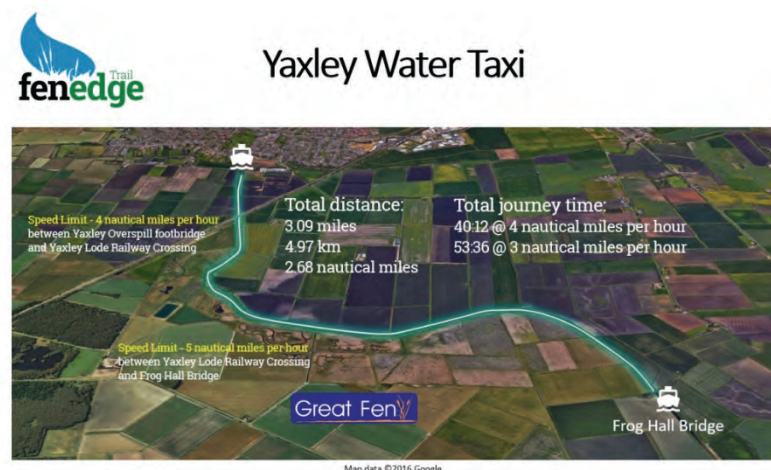


Additional design work has been completed for a replacement building for New Decoy Bungalow (also within the Visitor Centre curtilage) with the capacity to serve several different functions over the lifetime of the site's development, from office accommodation in the initial phases to volunteer/holiday accommodation in the future. When developed and operational, the visitor centre site will form a critical element in delivering and sustaining economic benefit. It will have a twofold effect: a direct source of income and means of supporter engagement for the Wildlife Trust, thereby supporting the overall sustainability of the Great Fen; and, as a tourist attraction, stimulation of the local economy through visitor spend on site and in the locality (e.g. accommodation, pubs and restaurants, holiday activities) and through the creation of direct and indirect employment opportunities.

Funding the Visitor Centre development will be a future project. More immediately, the Great Fen will continue to build up visitor infrastructure, the next element being a second Great Fen Information Point, parking area and bird hide serving Kester's Docking.

The Great Fen has been active in catalysing communities to develop and deliver tourist infrastructure through working in partnerships. The *Masterplan* envisages access to the Great Fen via "gateways" from surrounding local communities, benefitting both the Great Fen by channelling visitors through established and managed access points, and the gateway communities through increased tourist footfall and spend. We have been working with two communities, Yaxley and Ramsey, to develop the gateway concept.

In Yaxley, the Great Fen is working with the Yaxley Partnership and the Fenland Trust ([www.fen.land](http://www.fen.land)), which works to deliver community heritage projects, community infrastructure and economic development. Projects include a wildlife garden for a proposed community hub, the Fenland Trust heritage trail and, most recently, discussions on the



development of a water taxi from Yaxley to Froghall Bridge, on the northern boundary of the Great Fen. Froghall Bridge is the Great Fen's preferred access point into the northern part of the Great Fen; it links with the Last of the Meres Trail and thence to the southern part of the Great Fen.

In Ramsey, we have been working with the Promoting Ramsey Project which is facilitated by Cambridgeshire ACRE and funded by the Lottery-funded Ramsey Million Partnership. This has



resulted in reciprocal engagement opportunities and website links (see e.g. [www.discoverramsey.co.uk/days-out/back-to-nature](http://www.discoverramsey.co.uk/days-out/back-to-nature)), and joint projects such as the Fen Edge trail.

### Ann Cuthbert and the Ramsey Gateway

“My name is Ann Cuthbert, I am the Promotions Officer for Promoting Ramsey and I work for Cambridgeshire Acre. Since April 2015 I have been working on a two-and-a-half-year project with two aims: to make Ramsey a visitor destination and to increase residents’ pride in where they live. There are seven volunteer-run heritage sites in Ramsey, which is a small market town on the edge of the fens. The main challenges I faced were the area’s rural isolation (there isn’t even an A road to Ramsey) and the limited opening hours of the heritage sites. The Great Fen was an obvious lynch pin to any offer I could market to potential visitors: the Great Fen is always accessible, is free, has an amazing story to tell and is on Ramsey’s doorstep. Being a “gateway” to the Great Fen is of huge benefit to Ramsey’s offer as a visitor destination and so is an intrinsic part of any marketing that I have produced.



- [www.discoverramsey.co.uk](http://www.discoverramsey.co.uk) contains information on the Great Fen, links to their website and includes any activities on the events calendar
- All leaflets and tourist information folders for marketing Ramsey have a half page on the Great Fen with website details
- Promoting Ramsey has exhibited at community and discovery events put on by the Great Fen
- Any Ramsey display boards in the town feature the Great Fen
- A display board positioning Ramsey as both a place to visit and a town near by with facilities has been provided and installed at the Countryside Centre
- A driving trail from Peterborough Cathedral to Ramsey Abbey was developed and includes two stop off points on the Great Fen. This driving trail also included a stop at another Great Fen gateway, Yaxley.
- Twice yearly Heritage Open Days in Ramsey always involve the Great Fen. The showing of the Spitfire film at the 1940s Camp this year was particularly popular.

The Great Fen enhances Ramsey as a place to visit and in which to live. The Discover Ramsey project will continue in some form after the funding finishes in October and an integral part of that will be the Great Fen. I feel that positioning Ramsey as one of the gateways to the Great Fen is a fantastic opportunity for Ramsey and one that will continue to develop.”

## The Fen Edge Trail

The Great Fen is working with the Cambridgeshire Geological Society's (CGS) Geosites Team on the Fen Edge Trail ([www.fenedgetrail.org](http://www.fenedgetrail.org)) to deliver tourism benefits. The GSC is mapping the edge of the East Anglian Fenland Basin and working with local communities to tell the story of the landscape, the geology and soils, and the links to human history and the natural environment. The Great Fen played a central role in giving the project a platform and building a consensus of Fen Edge Communities when it hosted an inaugural meeting of representative of Fen Edge Communities in October 2015. One of the early outcomes for promotion of tourist attractions along the Peterborough to Ramsey section of the Fen Edge is a 13 mile *Fen Edge Heritage Drive Trail* which was launched in 2016 and which features both the Great Fen's Gateway Partners, Yaxley and Ramsey, and the Great Fen itself.



Information Point 2016

Top:  
Launch of  
the Fen  
Edge  
Heritage  
Drive Trail  
at New  
Decoy

Left: A new tourist route is born - section of Fen Edge Trail from Yaxley to Ramsey, both gateways to the Great Fen.

## 7.4 Brand development

The Great Fen's socio-economic strategic planning and *Routemap* recognize the importance of brand development as a delivery tool for economic development. We have had approaches from businesses wishing to establish land-related businesses on the Great Fen and sell Great Fen branded goods, including for example a micro-dairy, a micro-brewery, and Great Fen branded grass-fed meat. The development of branded goods and services is likely to become more significant once the Great Fen has a central retailing point at its Visitor Centre and/or can develop on line retailing, both aspirations for the future.

In 2008, an appreciation that the Great Fen name had potential to deliver economic benefit (beyond the benefits of recognition and support) prompted us to seek legal protection for the name **Great Fen Project**. The registration was affected in November 2008 under a series of classes to provide cover for several types of business activities, including:

- Retail services connected with the sale of livestock, food products, dairy products, meat, fish, poultry, game, fruits, vegetables, preparations made from cereals, bread, pastry, confectionary, jams, alcoholic drinks and non-alcoholic drinks.
- Education and cultural services
- Environmental conservation services including advisory and consultancy services
- Services providing food and drink and accommodation services
- Animal breeding, agricultural services relating to environmental services and related information and advisory services.

The renewal date for this registration is 2018. In 2008 it was considered that these classes would be sufficient to support the socio economic business areas that have been discussed to date and give a good amount of flexibility.

Since 2008 the word "project" has been used less and less and "**Great Fen**" is the standard logo and brand used. In 2016 **Great Fen** was registered as a brand and as a logo (in all its colourways) in the UK.



## 7.5 Summary

Referring back to the questions at the start of this section:-

- *Is the Great Fen a better place to live, work and visit?*
- *To what extent have we changed how people use the Great Fen?*
- *How have these opportunities benefited people?*

The Great Fen's socio-economic development has changed attitudes, and is challenging and changing deep seated societal trends in rural employment.

*“Working with communities, and land-based and other local businesses to deliver change benefiting the local economy has been an unexpected and inspiring outcome of the project. I feel hugely proud that the Great Fen has been able to help young people get started in their careers, improve their job prospects and help grow their family businesses”*

**Kate Carver, Great Fen Project Manager**

This section has shown that the Great Fen is working with local communities to achieve a common aim of sustainable economic development and wellbeing. People and businesses have benefited, lives and opportunities have in some circumstances been transformed, and there has even been an impact on deep-seated employment trends relating to changed land use and management. A key driver of further development will be the growth of sustainable tourism for socio-economic development and financial sustainability and much has been achieved in the creation of tourist infrastructure and relationships.

## Section 8

### Reaching Out

- *Has [the project] opened new partnerships? [financial and otherwise]*
- *What is the reach/wider impact of the Great Fen?*
- *How can we spread the learning further?*

*The **evidence** we used in this section included: financial data; interviews; activities; focus groups; mapping*

#### **8.0 Introduction**

#### **8.1 Public consultation**

#### **8.2 Partnerships**

#### **8.3 Volunteers**

#### **8.4 Skills training**

#### **8.5 Dissemination**

#### **8.6 Communications and branding**

#### **8.7 Awards**

#### **8.8 Summary**

## 8.0 Introduction

“By imagining, a better world is possible”

*Thomas More, Utopia, 1516*

“It can be possible if you dream it”

*Steering group member, 2017*

Reaching out and sharing has been a massive element of the project: listening, making new relationships and partnerships, helping others to organize and learn, sharing our skills and good practice, telling and sharing our story. We can demonstrate a huge and growing influence in so many areas of our work from a local to a global level, in the conservation sector and beyond. Working together we have made the dream possible.



## 8.1. Public consultation

*“I’m not part of a massive organization or large corporation, just a small business hidden away in rural Cambridgeshire. But from the start it felt important to be involved in some way. Much to my surprise the team welcomed me in and more importantly listened! Together we worked to promote the project from my wildlife gallery. Imagination and creativity go hand in hand and we shared our ideas and enthusiasm with other artists, poets and writers. Exhibitions, concerts, talks and events followed, interest grew and the good news spread.*

*Thank you Great Fen team for listening!”*

**Anna Kinnaird and The John Clare Society**

Public consultation has been embedded in the culture of the Great Fen from the outset and has shaped delivery in every area of activity, such as work plans, strategic planning, visitor infrastructure, communication and provision for specific user groups.

### 8.1.1. HLF bid 2007-2008 formative consultation

An extensive formative consultation programme was undertaken in 2007-2008 during the development phase of the Heritage Lottery Fund grant application process; this consultation took the form of a public questionnaire, a stakeholder questionnaire, interviews and site visits. Full details can be found in the *Education and Community Involvement Strategy 2008*, part of the suite of documents comprising the stage two HLF submission *The Purchase and Restoration of the Holmewood Estate*. From this consultation, the Education and Community team’s work plans were developed.

### 8.1.2. Masterplan consultation



When creating this long term vision, the Project Partners were aware that the Great Fen could only be achieved and sustained with the support of the people and communities that shaped the land in the past and who work in the Great Fen today.

The *Masterplan* was therefore written with the advice and help of local people, farmers, businesses, and other interested parties, gathered through a wide consultation exercise. This included:-

- 19 events at public venues, where the Project Partners received feedback from over 270 people
- 16 information points at libraries and information centres between Peterborough and Huntingdon
- 260 questionnaire responses received and analysed

- Consultation with local organizations, public bodies, and specialist groups such as Disability Cambridge, The British Horse Society, English Heritage, The National Union of Farmers, and Sustrans.



### 8.1.3. Visitor Centre and visitor infrastructure Consultation

“There was a strong feeling from many consultees across the groups that the new visitor facilities should provide unique and inspiring experiences”

***Stakeholder comments taken from the Great Fen Masterplan Consultation 2009 Phase 1 report – Visitor Experiences Section***

Formative visitor centre consultation was undertaken (before the current economic climate) as part of the *Masterplan* consultation and was instructive in informing the brief for the RIBA competition (see section 7).

Consultation continued at the Community Forums/celebrations (2012 – to date), when displays showing the winning design were exhibited and discussed with visitors.

Further consultation with Project Partners and interested parties on visitor infrastructure takes place via the Visitor Services Working Group which meets to plan the delivery of visitor infrastructure. Several planning applications relating to visitor infrastructure (e.g. the pedestrian and horse bridge on the Last of the Meres Trail, and the New Decoy bungalow demolition and replacement building design proposals) have all been subject to public consultation via the statutory consultee requirement of the planning authority. The visitor centre design will also be subject to full public consultation when a planning application is submitted for the visitor centre and visitor centre site.

### 8.1.4. Great Fen Community Forum: from heated views to warm words

The Great Fen likes to listen. One way of doing that is through the creation of a Community Forum, a commitment to consultation enshrined in the Great Fen *Masterplan*. Over time, the event has evolved in both format and function.

Right: Steering Committee Members engaging with stakeholders at the Great Fen Community Forum Open day 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014





*"I just wanted to email you and say how lovely the event was yesterday. I spoke to lots of very nice and interested members of the public and gave out lots of leaflets. Generally the atmosphere was very nice, so well done to you all."*

**Countryside Services, Huntingdon District Council, 2015**

*"My sister along with my nephew (Joshua 19 months) really enjoyed your event on Sunday afternoon. It was a safe environment for Joshua's first pond dipping experience, and the volunteer there (Callum) was ever so welcoming. Joshua was drawn to the bug hotel*

*next to it: he particularly enjoyed sticking his fingers in the empty holes (not sure he should have been!) and the fir cones. He correctly identified a bee and flower sweep netting, and Callum introduced him to a grasshopper".*

**Participant in 2015 Community celebration**



Top: answering questions at the 2014 Community Forum; Above right: young participant and family, Community Celebration 2015; Above: Food and Farming tour, Community celebration

It has been very clear that, as the Community Forum has evolved, the engagement element has increased and the consultation element declined, in the sense that there are fewer issues people want to raise about the Great Fen. In the early days, concerns about food security, flooding the land, and the health implications of wetlands (mosquitoes) were notably prevalent. These publically expressed concerns have markedly diminished as the Great Fen has developed and engaged more and more people, testament not only to the efficacy of the forums themselves, but also to the transformational nature of the project as a whole: evident positive changes on the ground, in the community and in the local economy, have allayed and neutralised people's initial fears and enabled them to see the Fen as an asset worth celebrating.



## Great Fen Community Forum

### October 2011 First Community Forum

- Formal structured evening meeting
- Invited audience of 20 representatives from local government, special interest groups, local community
- Project Partners and Great Fen staff
- Consultation opportunity through questions (and some hostility) from floor on wide range of topics including water quality, land ownership, the impact of rising water levels on farming operations, asset protection, public health (mosquitoes), the impact of climate change, visitor facilities and services, and delivery of economic benefit timescales. Some heated views expressed
- Immediate output: new Frequently Asked Questions section on Great Fen website

### October 2012 Second Community Forum

- Same format as 2011
- Lower attendance and fewer questions
- Consultation earlier that year on economic development
- Immediate outcome: falling attendance led to review of timing and format

### May 2014 Third Community Forum

- Weekday daytime event in the summer
- Invited guests as before plus partners and local schools; 35 attended
- Displays indoor and out on aspects of Great Fen's work
- Project staff, project partners and volunteers all helped
- Immediate outcome: creation of Gateway relationships with Yaxley and Ramsey (see section 7.3) and decision to change to weekend in 2015 to attract family visitors

### May 2015 Community Celebration

- Weekend daytime event in the summer
- Open to invited guests and general public: 200 attended, a good mix of families and other age groups
- Theme of "Food and Farming" was chosen as loss of arable land for conservation was voiced as an ongoing concern for local people
- Many displays inside and out from Great Fen and external contributors, and guided tours
- Q&A sessions throughout the day

### July 2016 Community Celebration

- As for 2016
- Theme of "have a go" Rural Crafts
- Over 200 attended
- Displays, tours and workshops

*By 2015 the community thinks the Great Fen is an asset worth celebrating!*

### 8.1.5 Consultation with user groups.

Consultation with user groups (in contrast to policy makers and executive bodies in the public arena) has progressed in a different fashion. The Project Partners' original intention was to create a parallel body to the Community Forum for representatives of user groups (such as ramblers, cyclists, horse riders, access groups etc.). Over the course of the HLF project however, consultation and engagement with single-interest groups has taken place on a group by group basis and through a variety of methods such as one-to-one meetings, group meetings, and site visits. This approach will be further developed over the life of the Great Fen, although a users' forum has not been ruled out for the future. Examples include:

Year	User group/interest	Output/outcome
2008-2017	Huntingdonshire Ramblers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formative trialling of way-marked walks within the Great Fen</li> <li>• Guided walks within and outside the Great Fen</li> <li>• Development of long distance route Rothschild Way</li> </ul>
2012 2014 2017	Landowners and neighbours to discuss footpath routes into the Great Fen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening of dialogues</li> <li>• Potential routes identified</li> <li>• Review of proposed access routes</li> <li>• Digital mapping of routes</li> </ul>
2011 2014	NFU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established relationship with local NFU branch</li> <li>• Site visits</li> <li>• Visit of regional staff</li> </ul>
2012 2014	Farmers and local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formative input into Great Fen socio-economic development strategy</li> </ul>
2015 2016	British Horse Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installation of horse bridge on Last of the Meres Trail</li> <li>• Trial event planned for autumn 2017</li> </ul>
2014	Birdwatchers and photographers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed access/parking protocols</li> <li>• New infrastructure (installed)</li> <li>• Input into planned new infrastructure</li> </ul>

There are many other examples of consultation with user groups and resultant outputs and outcomes throughout this report.

## 8.2 Partnerships

Partnerships and a collaborative approach have been cornerstones of the Great Fen since it was conceived, and every year new partnerships take us further and faster than we could have dreamed of. Partnerships bring expertise and experience that not only take us into new fields (the Spitfire dig being the most eye-catching example) but enable the Great Fen to be an exemplar in all that it delivers.

**Restoration partnerships** with academic and research institutes help us understand the impacts of our restoration work on climate change, and are beginning to explore new uses for wetlands to make them financially sustainable. We have hosted researchers in fields as diverse as pollinating beetles and carbon sequestration, and in turn they provide data and expertise.

**Education and community engagement partnerships** have played a vital role in achieving the project's objectives, helping to create new opportunities education and community involvement that have enhanced the project beyond initial expectations. [see appendix 8.0]

One of the joys of the project has been the ability to seize new partnerships and approach old issues in new ways to achieve change.

The Bevill's Leam Local Advisory Group (DRY LAG) is a good example. The DRY (Drought Risk and You) project was founded in April 2014, with an aim to develop an easy-to-use, evidence-based resource to inform decision-making for drought risk management in the UK over a four year period. The project includes The Bevill's Leam catchment (wherein sits the Great Fen). DRY takes a unique approach because it draws together information from multiple perspectives on drought science, stakeholder engagement, citizen science and narrative storytelling to better understand drought risks, and water usage, as well as mathematical modelling of drought risk.

See <http://dryproject.co.uk>

The Great Fen joined with academics from the University of the West of England, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Loughborough University, Harper Adams University, and the University of Sheffield, and with representatives from government agencies, national organizations (such as the NFU) and local groups to create the LAG. One output of the DRY project was *The Reasons* in June 2016, an evening of performance to allow the community to expose and discuss various dilemmas around drought and water scarcity in the Bevill's Leam catchment. It took the form of a mock court presided over by a judge with members of the audience playing the jury. In turn, various participants (including the Great Fen) who had different requirements for the use of water, or who were managers of water, or who had local perspectives on the historical use of water in the catchment, were invited to tell their story. The audience were able to question each storyteller.

See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjBO4cNUOJE>



**Dr Antonia Liguori****Research Associate, School of the Arts English and Drama, Loughborough University**

Professor Mike Wilson, myself and other academics from the School of the Arts English and Drama at Loughborough University are leading the stakeholders engagement in the Fenland as part of **'Drought Risk and You - DRY'** Project (4-year interdisciplinary project, funded under RCUK's Drought and Water Scarcity programme).

The main aim of this research project is to bring together experiential and scientific data to support multi-stakeholder decision-making through new knowledge exchanges and the inclusion of previously unheard voices within and between different sectors.

To do so the project team is working in collaboration with a Local Advisory Group that includes the Great Fen Project, together with representatives from Environment Agency, Middle Level Commissioners, National Farmers Union, Fenland Trust, Natural England, Angling Trust.



As an interdisciplinary team, the group of academics and the Local Advisory Group members are co-designing the research and the contribution of the Great Fen Project team has revealed to be crucial especially to investigate different perceptions of drought and water scarcity in the area and to organize community workshops that use drought science as a stimulus for conversational storytelling and other multiple narrative approaches. In particular Kate Carver and the Great Fen team are giving an amazing contribution in terms of local knowledge, ability to engage the general public and the capacity of sharing ideas for a long-term vision.

The academics from Loughborough University really appreciated the enthusiastic support received from all the staff and volunteers involved in the Great Fen Project and would be keen to invite them to cooperate in future research projects.





Images of the Great Fen's representation at the Utopia Fair at Somerset House June 2016.

The Great Fen also took part in the **Utopia Fair** at Somerset House in June 2016, part of a year-long programme of activities and events to celebrate the spirit of *Utopia*, the starting point being that by imagining, a better world is possible, which has certainly been the experience of the Great Fen. Over 35 projects, including The Bevill's Leam Local Advisory Group (DRY LAG) and "*The Reasons*", came together to offer a range of interactive displays, events and activities for everyone to enjoy.





Another significant partnership has been with the Cambridgeshire Geological Society:

**Chris Donnelly, Geosites team, Cambridgeshire Geological Society**



The Cambridgeshire Geological Society has been pleased to be able to work closely with the Great Fen team to promote the understanding of landscape and geology in the county. We are grateful to the Great Fen for being a key partner in our landscape heritage project, the Fen Edge Trail, and particularly for hosting our meetings with local community groups and enabling us to participate in a number of public events including two held in a local village.

As well as working together to educate and enthuse the local community about their landscape heritage, we have also been able to share scientific information that is helping us to identify sites of significant geological importance in the Great Fen and surrounding areas. This assists us when deciding where to focus our research and enables us to carry out further investigations where necessary, liaising also with geologists from the University of Cambridge

Geography Department. The Great Fen contains areas of geological interest that are unique in the country and we are working with the Great Fen team to decide how these sites may be better protected and managed, possibly by qualifying for designation (via the county planning system) as Local Geological Sites (RIGS).



A definitive example of the power of partnerships is that of the Spitfire Excavation in October 2015 (see also section 6) which took the Great Fen to unimagined areas.

### **Spitfire X4593: The Great Fen Spitfire**

During the Rymes Reedbed element of the Great Fen restoration project in 2015, Oxford Archaeology East was required to excavate the remains of a Spitfire, which had crashed at Holme Fen in November 1940. The pilot, Harold Penketh, sadly lost his life in the accident. The excavation was to become a hugely successful partnership involving an array of organisations and groups (20+) including OAE, the Wildlife Trust, Historic England, MoD, local Great Fen volunteers, local schools and many elements of the wider community, all of which were able to participate in the archaeological excavation. Serving military personnel from Operation Nightingale and the nearby RAF bases at Wittering and Wyton were also part of the dig team and provided a unique insight into a project to recover 'one of their own'.

The excavation of Spitfire X4593 was also a rare opportunity for a professional archaeological unit to recover a crashed aircraft, and as a result the Great Fen Spitfire project will now be used by Historic England as an exemplar on how all future archaeological excavations to recover crashed aircraft will be conducted in the UK. The project has therefore been hugely important for a multitude of reasons, not just archaeologically and to provide information on an important part of the local history but above all of this it was able to provide closure to the family of Harold Penketh, all of whom were incredibly supportive and pleased to see Harold's sacrifice honoured by so many people. The project enjoyed International media coverage and was broadcast on the BBC on Remembrance Day Sunday November 2015, and in 2016 a memorial plaque to Harold Penketh was erected on the site. The remains of the Spitfire are currently on display at RAF Wyton but may eventually be on display at the Great Fen.

Oxford Archaeology East has been involved in the Great Fen project since its inception and this partnership has been a huge success for us not just in archaeological research but in enabling a wider audience to become involved in the local archaeology of the Great Fen.

**Stephen Macaulay, Oxford Archaeology East**



Day 4 – Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015, project team observe a minute of silence for Pilot Officer Harold Penketh prior to flypast by Mark I Spitfire.





© Matt Lodge

Excavation of Spitfire X4593 – October 2015

### 8.3 Volunteers

Volunteers are an integral and essential part of our success in delivering all of our aspirations. The Great Fen has delivered a wealth of volunteering opportunities and now has a bank of dedicated volunteers who bring skills, expertise, experience and enthusiasm to the team and are a key to the long-term sustainability of visitor engagement and habitat management.

As well as the amazing contribution they make to our work, volunteers get untold benefit from their time with us – certified training, social interaction, exercise, confidence, learning and skills development – and many go on to be employed in the conservation sector



#### 8.3.1 Restoration Volunteers

There are several ways in which volunteers have been involved in the land management and monitoring side of the Great Fen –

- a regular volunteer work party of up to 12 delivering on-the-ground management
- a team of 80+ dedicated and expert naturalists and surveyors
- a team of eminent ecologists, hydrologists and soil scientists who are part of our Joint Technical Advisory Committee
- pairs of Volunteer Officers who work alongside staff for up to a year gaining qualifications and experience whilst delivering huge amounts of events, monitoring and management
- A pair of skilled regular volunteers helping with carpentry and other specialist tasks.





Restoration volunteers

### 8.3.2 Education and Community Volunteers

A variety of voluntary roles help to deliver our education and community engagement aims and objectives, including:

- **Education and Community volunteers** helping to develop and deliver school programmes, school visits, and family and community events.
- Two **Wildlife Watch leaders** and four Wildlife Watch assistants, who have been delivering innovative monthly wildlife activity sessions for children aged six to 12 for over eight years.
- A retired primary school teacher regularly assists one of our team in the planning and delivery of the successful monthly **Little Bugs Club** for the under-fives
- The ten regular members of **The Heritage Group**, which formed in 2011, meet monthly and are involved in a variety of education projects, playing a crucial role in helping the team to deliver its heritage objectives.
- Sixteen **Community Rangers** help to enhance the visitor experience at weekends, opening and closing visitor facilities, checking waymarked trails and wildlife sightings, and engaging with visitors across the Fen. They have been a wonderful addition to the team, representing the Great Fen when staff members are not available
- Three **Reminiscence Volunteers** help to deliver the very popular nature-themed reminiscence sessions in local care homes and to organisations such as the Ramsey Stroke Association and Peterborough Blind Association.





- Two **IT volunteers** with extensive experience of building and managing websites assist the Interpretation and Community Officer in keeping the Great Fen website and the Fen Friends Blog up to date.
- **Photography Volunteers** have contributed amazing photographs from across the Great Fen for use in digital and hard copy interpretation and media. The volunteers also assist with taking photos on our community event days.
- To date, nine people have completed six- to nine-month placements as **Volunteer Education and Community Officers**, many of whom have progressed into paid environmental positions, internships or further education after their volunteering experience ...see section 7
- The **Great Fen**



**Local Group** was formed in 2011 and is currently run by five volunteers delivering regular rambles, themed indoor talks and fund raising activities such as an annual quiz evening. To date the group has raised **£14,208.03** to support the work on the Great Fen which has included funding the training and protective clothing for the Volunteer Reserves Officers. One of their major achievements was developing The Rothschild Way long distance path between Wicken Fen and Woodwalton Fen and having it officially endorsed by Ordnance Survey in 2017. [see appendix Local group newsletter 2017]







## The Great Fen Archaeology Volunteers

The second phase of the project, the restoration of Engine Farm 2012-2016, opened up new and amazing opportunities to mobilize local people to take action for heritage.

We worked in partnership with **Jigsaw**, an HLF funded project delivered by Oxford Archaeology East to create community archaeology experiences. Through Jigsaw the volunteers learnt new skills in historical research, excavation, artefact identification and recording.



Left: field walking at Engine Farm. Right: pinpointing the Spitfire impact site

Projects they worked on included field walks at Engine Farm – exploring the traces of human occupation within the footprint of the vanished Whittlesea Mere – digging a test pit to learn archaeological skills, and metal detecting to establish the exact impact site of the Spitfire.

They also played helped with the Spitfire excavation, working alongside the professionals, and spent many hours, cleaning and sorting the finds.



Left: the recovered propeller Right: The pilot's cigarette case

*"I am really pleased that I an amateur and a volunteer, had been able to take part in such a worthwhile activity alongside the professionals. A truly memorable occasion".*

Sue Wallis – Archaeology Volunteer and Chair of the Great Fen Heritage Group





Education and community volunteers

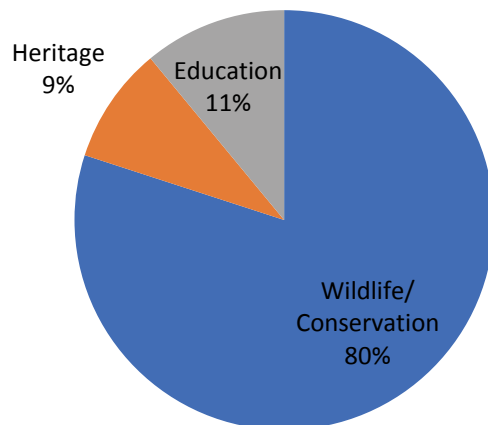


## Results of a 2017 survey of Great Fen volunteers

### Why did you decide to volunteer for the Great Fen?

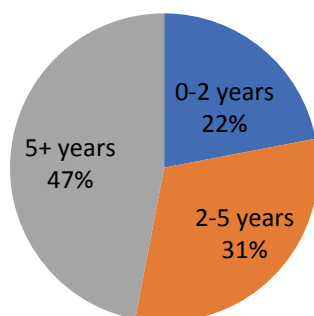
Make use of retirement, wildlife interests, contribute to practical conservation, teach others about wildlife (adults and children), safeguarding area for future, belief in the ethos and vision of the project.

#### What is your specialist interest in volunteering?

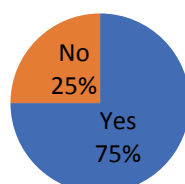


Restoration & maintenance; education; Watch group; photography; heritage; community projects & mental health.

#### How long have you been a volunteer?

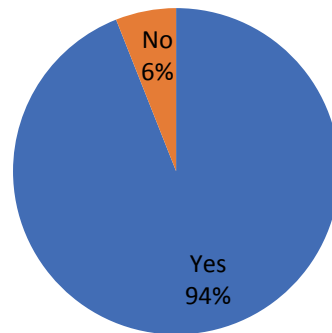


#### Have you been able to develop your skills or attend a training course?

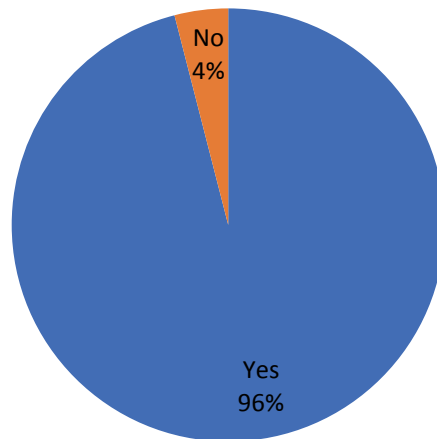


Skills learnt included: Brush-cutter use, archaeology skills, willow weaving, coppicing, species ID, education outdoors, first aid, photography, website creation, working with others.

**Has the Great Fen team made you feel connected to the Great Fen?**



**Do you get the information you need to understand the Great Fen environment?**



*Comments:* Team at Classroom very helpful and knowledgeable.

### 8.3.3 Enabling structures for volunteers and others

The Great Fen's work with volunteers has entailed not only recruiting and training volunteers, but also creating volunteer structures enabling volunteers to form self-managing groups, of which the Great Fen Local Group is a good example.

*"The Great Fen provides benefits to the environment, community health and education, local businesses, flood protection and carbon dioxide reduction. The Local Group sees the Great Fen as a worthwhile and much needed venture that will greatly benefit the local area and the country as a whole. As such we will continue to support this important project as much as we can through promotional activities, fundraising and voluntary work."*

**Andrew Cuthbert, Secretary to the Great Fen Local Group.**

The Great Fen has brought together disparate community groups with a common interest. As described in Section 7 it played a central role in inaugurating the mapping of the fen edge project in October 2015. Another example is the North West Cambridgeshire Partnership (mission statement: "to achieve positive outcomes for communities in North West Cambridgeshire") involving local authorities, the County Council and community groups, which is due to hold its inaugural meeting later this year, hosted by the Great Fen.

In 2012 The Great Fen began working with Jigsaw, which started as a five-year (2011-2016) Heritage Lottery Funded project by [Oxford Archaeology East](#) and [Cambridgeshire County Council](#) to assist local history and archaeological societies in historical research, excavation, artefact identification, recording, and much more. They assisted in getting the Great Fen Community Archaeology Group (subsequently amalgamated with the Great Fen Heritage Group) up and running in 2015, providing professional advice and support, offering training courses, and introducing them to other local Jigsaw groups who gave valuable assistance on the Spitfire excavation and other projects.

## 8.4 Skills Training

*"In terms of what I learned on the Great Fen there are some really tangible things like how to drive a tractor and how to use a chainsaw, so all those practical skills, also things like how to use an identification key, but I also learnt that I was capable of doing things I didn't think I could do. I spent the whole of my education not feeling like I was able to do sciences and the kind of clever things and then I was able to work with a team who supported me and fully believed in me enough to push me further and I think that has been really evidenced in what I've done since the Great Fen. The Great Fen was a very positive introduction that sort of set me up for a career in conservation."*

**Filip Wieckowski, Great Fen Volunteer Officer 2015**



Great Fen staff and volunteers have benefitted from over 80 training courses/workshops since 2009. Wildlife Training Workshops for interested volunteers and local people have been delivered from the Countryside Centre on a wide range of topics, from basic ecology, through sedges, aquatic plants, grasses, warblers, water voles, great crested newts and ground beetles, to digital photography and traditional management techniques such as hedge laying.

Our volunteers have access to an enormous amount of 'on-the-job' training in terms of hands-on learning at events, in monitoring (e.g. species identification) or on practical tasks.

Volunteer Officers on extended placements can access a range of certified training including chainsaw, brush cutter, first aid, tractor driving, pesticide application and tree safety inspection. The training is tailored to each officer to ensure they leave their placement with a well-rounded C.V.

Training days for staff and volunteers delivering education and community activities have included:

- creative interpretation techniques,
- storytelling
- willow weaving
- greenwood crafts
- connecting with a youth audience
- environmental education techniques
- social horticultural therapy
- access for all
- recording oral history and reminiscence
- filming techniques
- first aid at work
- health and safety courses such as safeguarding and manual handling.
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Adobe packages
- social media and blog writing

Training for individual staff development needs has also been accommodated including Forest Schools level 3, report writing, first line management, challenging communication, dealing with conflict situations, using Microsoft packages, writing risk assessments, ISOH, First Aid At work, time management and recruitment training.

## 8.5 Dissemination

The Great Fen has been extremely successful in forging links with researchers and practitioners, forming partnerships, sharing knowledge and spreading the word about landscape-scale conservation.



### 8.5.1 Restoration

We receive scores of visits from conservation practitioners who come to see how we are delivering restoration and we benefit from reciprocal visits to learn about their work elsewhere.



We have presented posters and workshops to a range of events and conferences at home and abroad, including the IUCN “*Creating a Legacy for Peatlands*”, the Conversazione, the BTO annual conference, the Cradle to Cradle Network’s transfer workshop on rural development in 2011 in Milan ([www.c2cn.eu](http://www.c2cn.eu)) and the Landelijk Steuneunt Verdroging’s meeting in 2011 in Arnhem “*An integral approach is the key for rewetting nature*”.



The Wildlife Trust represented the Great Fen Project on a European initiative called Climate Proof Areas, which included partners in Sweden, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. The project sought to raise the profile of climate change adaptation through the delivery of practical projects, the development of an adaptation toolkit and by engaging politicians in the North Sea Region of Europe in order to ensure adaptation is considered in future plans and projects. The Great Fen was one of eight diverse projects showing how planned adaptation can deliver meaningful benefits for communities.



Our involvement enabled a detailed investigation of Great Fen hydrology, building upon the investigations the Partners undertook in the early years of the project. Incorporating novel science, pioneered by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, and engineering expertise from Atkins, the work has provided the Partners with up-to-date knowledge on water resources and habitat creation, climate change impacts and the practicalities of using the Great Fen to protect land and property from flooding.

This level of engagement and sharing of conservation evidence was unprecedented within our organisation. The Great Fen has a very high profile as a result, and is regarded as a forerunner in the field of landscape-scale conservation in England. Our renown has meant we are regularly approached by researchers and academic institutes looking to engage with our work and include us in research as diverse as soil science and socio-economic development. This means we are involved in several forward-thinking projects which will produce conservation benefit which could have a massive impact on both the Wildlife Trust (understanding and monetising carbon storage) and on the wider environment (new forms of wetland agriculture and how they could clean polluted water). Without dissemination and the partnerships it has spawned we would never have been involved in these pioneering areas, and it pushes us to aspire to more and better things all the time.



### 8.5.2 Education and Community

Over the past eight years, we have shared information with the local communities through talks, walks, community events and school visits.

#### Sharing good practice with teachers

We delivered ten twilight teacher training sessions to teachers from schools in Peterborough, to introduce them to our tried and tested techniques for outdoor learning including planting and growing seeds, inspirational outdoor literacy, hands-on art and creative projects that teachers can link easily to their topic areas and curriculum. We also offered advice on improving school grounds to facilitate the delivery of outdoor learning.

We produced a promotional film (available at <http://www.greatfen.org.uk/education/outdoor-learning>) about the positive effects of learning outside the classroom in collaboration with staff and pupils from Old Fletton Primary School.



The successful delivery of our heritage objectives using innovative projects such as the formation of a volunteer heritage group, the oral history project, the memory boxes for reminiscence and the Fen Memories film has afforded opportunities to disseminate this information and share best practice with:

- RSWT (The Royal Society For Wildlife Trusts),
- GEM (Group For Education In Museums) at their annual conference,
- the Fens Museum Partnership on their heritage projects
- Wildlife Trust BCN, where heritage has now become an important inclusion for future project proposals across the three counties.



## 8.6 Communications and branding

### 8.6.1 Communications

From the very earliest days the Great Fen Project Partners have recognized the role of coherent and comprehensive communications.

*“Communication is not just an add-on but a core business function that underpins every aspect of our work. We need to strengthen our communications function across the whole project and the role it plays in achieving our objectives. We should engage in early and extensive two-way communications with those people who are interested, who may be affected, or could influence the outcome of issues”*

#### The Great Fen Project Communications Strategy 2009 – 2012,

This document was created in 2009 by the Communications Working Group comprised of communications, press and engagement professionals. It was updated in 2013 and has since been reviewed annually by the Steering Committee to keep it fresh and ensure it is fit for purpose. An annual Communications plan has also been produced. [See appendix 8.1]

The annual Communications Strategy [appendix 8.2] also covers frequently asked questions, and the Great Fen branding protocol.

The success of this approach can be demonstrated both in the day-to-day media coverage [communications activity, [see appendix 8.3 ] and in coverage for special events such as that surrounding the Spitfire project in 2015 which was the Wildlife Trust’s most successful media campaign ever in terms of coverage and engagement .



In recent years there has been a shift of focus to digital and social media communications (see section 7) on the Great Fen website, and to digital interpretation. The Great Fen Newsletter is a good example: prior to 2012 this was a hard-copy publication produced twice a year in-house and sent out to a 500 strong mailing list. In 2012 it was replaced by a digital e-news produced by the Great Fen Interpretation and Community Officer sent quarterly to 884 recipients.

Social media communication has also grown in recent years. The Great Fen **Twitter** account opened in November 2009 and currently has:

Tweets	Following	Followers	Likes	Moments
3,167	793	1,660	1,652	0

The **Facebook** page was set up in 2010 and has 1,285 likes to date.

Both are used to communicate information and promote events, news and promotions. Some of the most popular tweets were based around the Spitfire Excavation.

Working on communications throughout the lifetime of the project has enabled the team to develop expertise and an ability to adapt and be flexible, and to harness change and make the most of new opportunities.

### 8.6.2 Branding

As the personality of the Great Fen developed, so did the need to attract recognition and support from a wide range of audiences and stakeholders. Comprehensive branding guidelines were developed to give a consistent look and feel to the new means of communication and engagement.

The branding guidelines cover key aspects of the Great Fen brand, positioning and presentation of Great Fen, Project Partners' and funders' logos, design (colour palettes, text sizes and fonts, use of language, use of images and multi-media), and partner branding on sites. Accessibility and RNIB's clear print guidelines (see <http://www.ukaaf.org/guidancedocuments/pdf/g003/finish>) were a key consideration in the development of new branding.



*Orange background works well on white, blue and black backgrounds*

*Blue background works well on white*



*and green backgrounds*



*White background works well on white backgrounds e.g. for letterheads, although orange can also be used for letterheads*

*New Great Fen logo in three colourways developed for Great Fen Branding Guidelines 2009*

With five Project Partners, there was a need for a democracy, rather than a hierarchy, of logos to reflect the involvement of each Partner and to acknowledge the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund (see also section 5 on acknowledging HLF support). Thus, the Project Partner logo bar was born.

**The Great Fen is delivered by:**





## 8.7 Awards

The project has received numerous awards demonstrating external recognition of the Great Fen's achievement in three areas: strategic planning, heritage education, and environment.

### 8.7.1. Strategic planning: Royal Town Planning Institute

The *Masterplan* won national recognition in 2010 when it was awarded Royal Town Planning Institute's highest award, the Silver Jubilee Cup, in addition to receiving the institute's award in the Rural Areas and the Natural Environment category.



RTPI Award ceremony November 2010

In their comments about the project, judges said:

*“The Great Fen project directly addresses Defra’s key areas of sustainable development by contributing to diversification and development of the rural economy. The project demonstrates the role that planners and the planning system can play in providing sustainable green infrastructure. As such it provides a model for planning work elsewhere and a sound basis from which other similar projects can learn.”*

### 8.7.2 Heritage Education: Sandford Award for Heritage Education

In 2014 the Great Fen's countryside centre and education services were awarded the Sandford Award for Heritage Education, joining sites such as Hampton Court Palace, Brunel's SS Great Britain in Bristol, Fota Wildlife Park in Eire, Edinburgh Castle, and Big Pit - the National Mining Museum of Wales which have received this independently judged, quality assured assessment of heritage education programmes since its inception in 1978.

These annual non-competitive awards focus on formal, curriculum-linked education opportunities offered to schools by heritage sites and are a 'kite mark' for high quality education provision which is recognised by schools and other education institutions across the United Kingdom.



Above: Lucy Worsley and the winning Great Fen team at the Sandford Award ceremony at the National Maritime Museum, December 2014.

*“The Wildlife Trust Countryside Centre at Ramsey Heights has a fantastic story to tell relating to the heritage of the Fens. The classroom is in the most magical setting where learners can explore, investigate and interpret how people in this area used to live. Changes in land use are brought alive while delving into the impact of the drainage of the Fens from Roman times to the present day. Fen Time Travellers meet their guide, Billy the Brick-maker, who appears from the dusty brick kiln and invites them on a journey through time to find out about life in times past and to meet characters across the woodland and meadows, all of whom are based on real historical figures. We meet Sybil, the wise woman, who makes potions and medicines from fenland herbs and plants, and Willie the Fisherman. Heritage abounds in this unique setting, rich in both culture and habitats.”*



**Sandford Award Lead Judge Christopher Green, 2014**

### 8.7.3 St Neots Film Festival

In 2016, the Great Fen's Spitfire excavation was the subject of Martyn Moore's film *The Spitfire* (see section 6.5) which won Best Documentary at the St Neots Film Festival.

### 8.7.4 National Lottery Awards 2017

The Great Fen has been selected from over 1,300 entries to be a finalist in the in the **Best Environment Project** category (having received a certificate of commendation in this category in 2015). The winners are decided by public vote over the period June 29<sup>th</sup> - July 27<sup>th</sup> 2017, and announced in August. We submitted a 30-second promotional film for use on social media channels and on the National Lottery Draw show on Facebook live:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BUG56znCol>



## 8.8 Summary

This section asked:

- *Has [the project] opened new partnerships?*
- *What is the reach/wider impact of the Great Fen?*
- *How can we spread the learning further?*

The case studies of new partnerships in this section, and many more examples throughout the report, demonstrate incredible outcomes, opening up new ways of thinking and doing, with far-reaching consequences including lasting contributions to professional and technical knowledge in many sectors.

The reach and impact of the Great Fen extends globally, influencing thinking, action and policy on climate change, conservation, land restoration and environmental and heritage education. Our partnerships, volunteer programmes and skills training have ensured the dissemination of learning and good practise throughout the conservation sector and beyond.



## Section 9

### What happened behind the scenes

#### 9.1 Staffing

#### 9.2 Land purchase and tenancies

#### 9.3 Assets

#### 9.4 Permissions and consents

#### 9.5 Acknowledging the Heritage Lottery Fund

An enormous change has been brought about to the land and the lives of local people through the course of this grant. Arable land has become a rich and diverse fledgling nature reserve on an unprecedented scale and we have inspired and engaged many thousands of people. None of this could be achieved without land, staff, equipment and permissions. This section details the development and delivery of the behind-the-scenes aspects which can make or break a project.

#### 9.1 Staffing

The Great Fen was a project beyond the scope and aspiration of anything previously attempted by the Wildlife Trust. The original bid set out staffing in a traditional way with education-focused staff and land management staff. Engaging with large and hard-to-reach audiences to win over and inspire people with the new concept of landscape-scale conservation quickly pushed us beyond our traditional skill sets and has led to us working collaboratively in a cross-disciplinary team which has become a model for working throughout the organisation.

##### Education and Community

To deliver an enhanced range of education and community engagement activities, a team of skilled and highly dedicated staff was employed.

- Great Fen Education and Community Manager (full-time)
- Great Fen Interpretation and Community Involvement Officer (full-time)
- Great Fen Education and Community Involvement Officer (full-time)
- Great Fen Volunteer Support and Administration Officer (part-time 16 hrs per week).

We were also supported by a part-time (three days a week) Senior Education Officer who was core funded by the Wildlife Trust and was already looking after the events and school programmes at the Countryside Centre. This position retired in 2013 and wasn't replaced.

The above staffing capacity was also rolled out into The Restoration of Engine Farm bid in 2013. In 2015 a request from the Great Fen Education and Community Involvement Officer to reduce his

hours resulted in two part-time positions being created, two days a week looking after the events and three days a week looking after the school programmes. The Interpretation and Community Involvement Officer has had three changes of staff due to maternity leave and resigning to take another position with another Wildlife Trust.

All staff have worked tremendously hard and have built an amazing portfolio of experiences and



legacies that have helped make the Great Fen the success that it has become today.

Above: Great Fen team 2017; below: Restoration Officer & volunteers assessing the success of management

### Land restoration

The land entering restoration during the HLF-funded period is on a grand scale. The impacts of scale have become apparent as land has entered into restoration in an incremental fashion and the workload has gradually increased over time. Creating new habitats in untested situations, turning damaged peat soils into a seedbed for new habitats and restoring lost processes to drive the habitat development has required new thinking and an ability to adapt and evolve.

The original bid included provision for a Restoration Officer, overseeing land restoration, and an Estates Officer, undertaking practical work and managing livestock. This model has adapted and changed over the eight years of the HLF-funded restoration.

Initially, the preparation for restoration was handled by the Cambridgeshire Reserves Manager (the line manager of the Restoration Officer post) without filling any new posts. As the first agricultural tenancy ended in 2008, work on the ground could begin (largely undertaken by agricultural contractors). A Restoration Officer was appointed in 2009, who worked on tasks such as water vole surveys/strategies, contractor management and farmer liaison. This was a pivotal time in the switch between arable tenancies and restoration and that member of staff was a key first contact for farming tenants, setting the tone for our future relationships. When the Restoration Officer moved on to other employment, the then Cambridgeshire Reserves Manager moved to the new role of Great Fen Restoration Manager, focusing on Great Fen delivery and covering contractor management for a time.

In 2011, a new Restoration Officer was appointed, and the second post included in the bid was revised from Estates Officer to focus on monitoring and survey. This was possible as most practical work could be delivered by the Restoration Officer and volunteer officers, graziers were delivering grazing without the need for the Wildlife Trust to own its own livestock, and the importance of establishing a volunteer force to deliver monitoring was evident. A Monitoring and Recording Officer was appointed in 2011.



Over the remainder of the funded period, the core team of Restoration Manager, Restoration Officer



and Monitoring and Recording Officer has remained in place, with a series of personnel changes, periods of maternity leave and significant absence due to a terminal illness. The team has been supported by other members of the Great Fen team, the Wildlife Trust staff and the Project Manager throughout. Each of those involved in the restoration to date has been a passionate advocate of the project who has left their mark on the landscape forever.

Staff and volunteers supporting each other as a close knit team

Latterly we have expanded the core team to include a second Restoration Officer as the area of land under restoration reached target levels and the amount of practical work to deliver restoration has increased.

We end the period of funding with a highly experienced, committed and settled team which is being taken into the core running costs of the Wildlife Trust.

### **Project Management**

The project has been supported by the Great Fen Project Manager, appointed by and funded by the Project Partners, whose role is to deliver the *Masterplan*. <http://www.greatfen.org.uk/great-fen-masterplan>

Challenges faced were three periods of maternity leave, one of which was complicated by the prolonged absence of a team member due to illness. The Project Manager covered:

- line management of the Education and Community team for a year in 2013
- line management of the Restoration and Monitoring team when the Restoration Manager was on maternity leave for a year in 2011-12 ;



- line management of the Restoration and Monitoring team when the Restoration Manager was on maternity leave from November 2014 – February 2016. The particular circumstances of the second period of maternity cover for the Restoration Manager were challenging as there was no opportunity for handover from the temporary Restoration Manager and during this period major planning consents were submitted and major contracts let (for Engine Farm). However, all was achieved and delivery of those elements of the Engine Farm restoration were not affected.

This shows the great commitment that the Project Manager had to the team and the project.

The death in 2013 of a loved and valued team member, Jon Smith, Great Fen Restoration Officer 2011 – 2013, had a profound effect on the whole of the Great Fen team and Wildlife Trust colleagues, and it would have been strange indeed if morale had not been affected for a period; however the team and Jon shared a passionate commitment to the Great Fen and carrying on with the work, whatever the circumstances, was, in the end, the best memorial we could have made.

The project staff are part of the Wildlife Trust's organizational structure; following the project, the majority of the project-funded posts have been absorbed into the Wildlife Trust's core staff establishment. Additional support, advice and resources throughout the project period have been provided by other Project Partners, all of which have shown consistent commitment to the project and to the wider Great Fen.

Volunteers have been a key component of the project delivery and their contribution is discussed in section 8.3.

## 9.2 Land purchase and tenancies

### The Purchase and Restoration of the Holmewood Estate

In October 2008, The Wildlife Trust purchased the freehold of 1317ha of the Holmewood Estate from the Crown. This land was under a series of tenancies: three Agricultural Holdings Act tenancies (Chalderbeach, Engine and Ladyseat Farms), one long-term Farm Business Tenancy (Iron House Farm until 2030) and a series of shorter FBTs which came to an end during the HLF-funded restoration period.



Other areas of land were also included in the original funding application: Top Farm, which was part of the Holmewood estate, and Speechley's Farm to the south. Part of Top Farm was removed from the Crown's offer of land at a very late stage and sold to a third party; Speechley's Farm was removed from the market. The budget and restoration plan was adjusted to reflect these changes.

Most of the shorter farm business tenancies were taken into restoration at the natural end of the term, although in the case of part of Top Farm, Stokes Farm, and Old Decoy, tenants were given extra time either to ease their business transition or to stagger restoration.

Any buildings associated with the restoration land have been let to local farm businesses who take on obligations for maintaining them in good repair until they are required for restoration management. In 2009, Corney's Barn was taken back into Wildlife Trust control and used for storage of restoration machinery and as a site management base.

### The Restoration of Engine Farm

In 2011 we were approached by the AHA tenant of Engine Farm who was restructuring his wider farm business and expressed an interest in selling the Wildlife Trust the residue of his tenancy. The restoration of Engine Farm, together with habitat creation on what is now known as Kester's Docking, formed the basis for a second tranche of HLF restoration funding. Engine Farm tenancy was surrendered in 2013 and restoration began after the holdover period for the remaining crops.



© New Engine Farm Mere, The Wildlife Trust BCN







## 9.3 Assets

### Facilities

At the HLF application stage, it was recognised that the existing Countryside Classroom would not provide adequate accommodation for the Education and Community staff, since it was used by the general public on school and event days. Therefore, a porta-cabin office and site safe tool store was purchased and placed next to the classroom. This continues to be on a four-year running planning consent.



It quickly became apparent that the storage provision in the site safe at Ramsey Heights was neither sufficient for the needs of both Education and Community and Land Management staff, nor in a good location for accessing restoration land, so an alternative was sought.

**Corney's Barn** is a brick and timber agricultural barn located at the heart of the project at Corney's Farm. Initially, safety work was carried out to rewire the building and make good the doors, which provided excellent storage capacity for materials and equipment. Then, in 2010, the barn was upgraded with construction of a workshop/office, secure tool storage and toilet. This transformed the efficiency of our land management work, with staff based at the heart of the operation and easily able to engage with graziers and contractors on the ground.

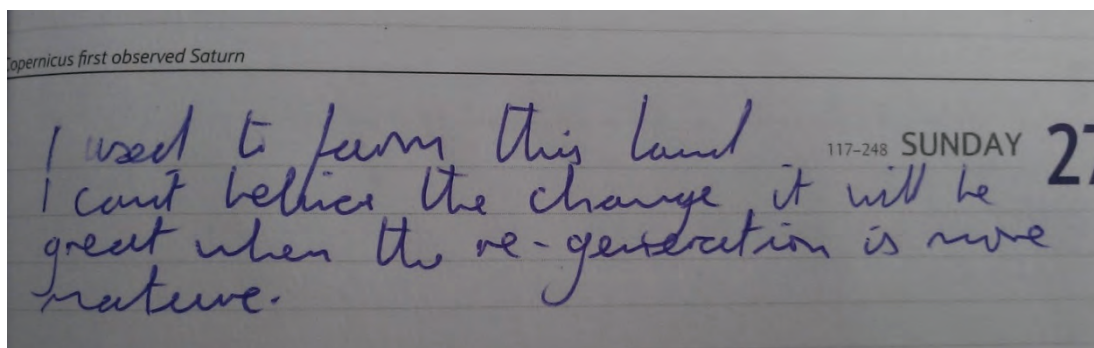
It cut travel time to site, and provided a unique facility with space to maintain tools, hold meetings, and carry out office work, lab analysis and teaching. Staff from other Wildlife Trust teams could hot-desk there too, bringing the restoration work into regular contact with the day-to-day running of the Trust. The removal of restoration equipment from the site safe at Ramsey Heights freed space for the Education and Community team to create and store resources for their amazing range of activities.

Before this HLF-funded project began, public access in the north of the Great Fen area was limited to Holme Fen National Nature Reserve. The only parking available was in the passing places on a single-track road. In 2011 we created the **New Decoy Information Point**: a car park, information point and picnic area at Halfway Farm buildings, where people could visit and enjoy the restoration land at New Decoy. From the car park, one can walk a loop along the first permissive path in the area and get a taste of what the wider Great Fen will become. The route takes the visitor around an area which will be for a haven for wetland birds, thence to Railway Covert – a woodland with a railway heritage, and onwards to one of our newly installed viewing hides.

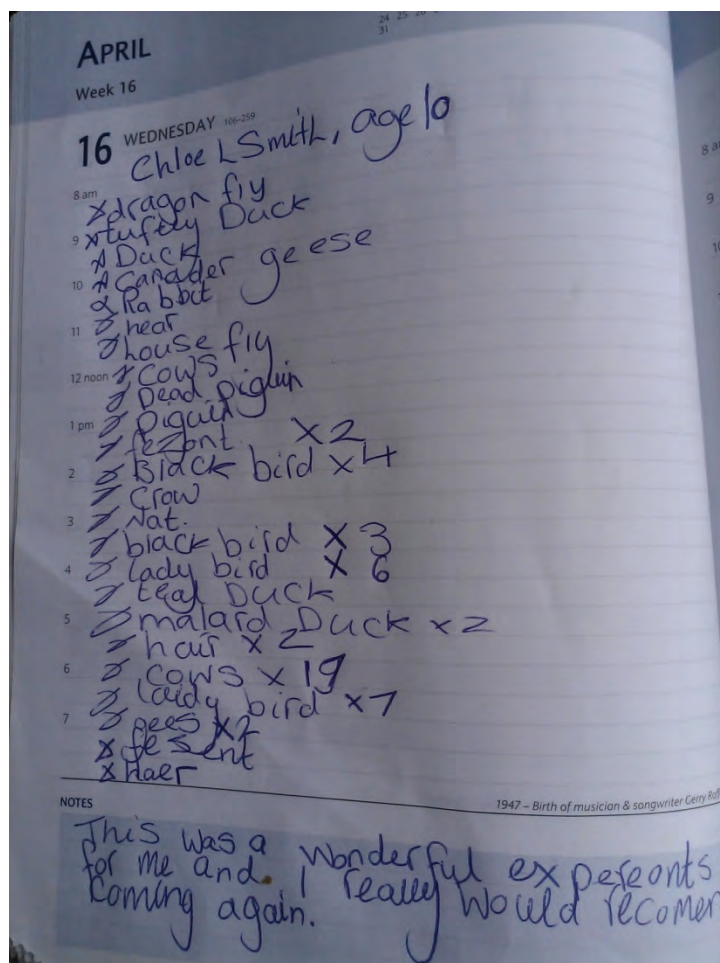


We wanted each hide to be unique and become a landscape feature in its own right. This one, **Jon's Hide**, is a straw-bale building, built in 2012 by local volunteers with straw from the Great Fen (and even some recycled tyres from on site!).

A second hide, **Trundle Mere Lookout**, was installed in 2013 on the area now known as Rymes Reedbed. It is a unique custom-built cedar tower hide, large enough for teaching and events, giving an elevated view across the far north of the project, allowing visitors to see and appreciate the wildlife in its natural, undisturbed setting. This hide was installed prior to the engineering works creating the pools and reedbed, so that visitors could watch the transformation over time, and it has been a massive success.



Comments left by visitors in the Trundle Mere Lookout



The hide and the colonising wildlife (particularly birds) generated enormous interest among the public, and it became obvious that there were issues with the capacity for parking in the area. A very successful consultation took place with local bird watching groups and visiting birders to gather their thoughts. This turned a potentially negative situation into a positive engagement and resulted in a section of the Great Fen website which directs visitors to the best viewing places for each spectacle as it happens, and the development of plans for a **car park and new viewing area at Kester's Docking**. There were insufficient funds available during the life of the HLF project to construct the car park, but we have been able to secure planning consent and initiate it by installing gates and fencing on site.

Comments left by visitors in the Trundle Mere Lookout

## Machinery

Over the course of the eight years of the project we have acquired an array of tools and equipment for land management and monitoring. The Education and Community team purchased a Toyota Hilux for use in outreach visits, and a Landrover was purchased by the Restoration team which is used as a 'workhorse' on the Great Fen. Several of these have transformed the way we are able to deliver our work across the project. For example, the **tractor** with attachments for mowing and flailing has meant we can carry out access cuts, weed control and ditch management on a much larger scale than was ever possible as part of traditional nature reserves management historically.

An excellent illustration of the importance of equipment and the step change it can bring about is our new water pump.



## The water pump

Late winter of 2016/2017 was a pivotal moment on the Fen as we set the pump up. We could see how the engineering works, including the sluices, came into play and eagerly followed the water from the pump along newly cut ditches and finally into a large reservoir at Engine Farm,.



The effect of the pump has been transformational, wetting areas that have been dry for many years. Increasing the water levels has encouraged prospecting waders and wildfowl such as Plover, Little Egrets, Shoveler, Widgeon, Little Grebes and numerous wetland birds to start feeding on the newly wetted areas. This will become an integral tool to our management in both the short and long term.

The pump gives us the ability to move water around the site, but it is reliant on diesel. We are excited to have acquired a syphon pump, which will work in some areas without fuel and noise.

The future of the Great Fen is wet!



## 9.4 Permissions and consents

A number of types of consent have been required for the restoration work on the Fen. These have included planning consents (building work, demolition and engineering works), land drainage consent (Internal Drainage Board consent for works affecting their operations), highways consents (works connecting to or adjacent to roads) and abstraction licences.

The Local Planning Authority, Huntingdonshire District Council, is a Great Fen project partner and has been very supportive of our work throughout. We worked closely with them in the early stages of the project to define what works could be carried out as permitted development, and they have contributed expert time and help with drawings and applications for works requiring planning and highways consent. We have been successful in 100% of the planning applications sought for the project. (See appendix 9.0)

Land drainage consents have been more problematic. These are required on works within nine metres of an IDB watercourse. The majority of members of the board are not supporters of the project and many decisions can be made at the discretion of the chairman.

## 9.5 Great Fen Steering Committee

As introduced in section 3, the Project Partners are responsible for the strategic oversight and direction of the Great Fen. How the Project Partners organize themselves and operate has influenced the delivery of the HLF-funded project.

The benefits of project partnership are reciprocal: not only does the Great Fen benefit from the expertise, resources and commitment of the Project Partners and their parent organizations, but involvement in, and support for, the Great Fen allows the parent organizations to deliver outputs for those organizations' own strategic requirements.

*“Natural England shares a vision to create a resilient and sustainable fenland landscape. The Great Fen is one of the flagship lowland wetland restoration projects in Western Europe and inspired many similar projects in England. It is an honour and exciting to be part of an innovative partnership which aims to create a new wetland landscape which will not only ensure the long-term future of two important national nature reserves but also enable local communities to benefit socially and economically. This certainly could not be achieved by individual organisations working in isolation and is immensely important in demonstrating Natural England’s commitment to partnership working.*

*Being part of the steering committee is a hugely positive experience as partners have always worked effectively together to pursue the joint vision and drive forward new ways of conserving a vibrant landscape.”*

**Natural England Project Partner Representatives on the Great Fen Steering Committee**  
**Catherine Weightman (current member) and Alan Bowley (former member)**

*“From our perspective, the habitat restoring going on in the Great Fen area is already delivering against a broad range of our corporate objectives – including furthering conservation interests, increasing biodiversity and providing a marvellous opportunity to engage with other organizations and the public in order to educate on environment matters and promote and deliver environmental gains. This landscape scale project helps us to deliver our responsibilities under DEFRA’s Biodiversity 2020 objectives by creating and linking priority habitats, supporting priority species and delivering more ecosystem services so the fenland will be more resilient to climate change”.*



**Helen Smith, Environment Manager, Environment Agency**

*“The Middle Level Commissioners have a duty to further conservation and a need to plan for the future, taking into account the effects of climate change. The Great Fen project has been (and continues to be) seen as a key element in delivering these objectives and the Heritage Lottery Funding has not only helped deliver on the conservation objective but has also helped to put in place some of the building blocks necessary for progressing a future scheme for providing a safety valve for extreme events through temporary flood water storage.”*

**David Thomas, Clerk and Chief Executive, Middle Level Commissioners**

Skill and knowledge sharing between the Project Partners and the Great Fen team comes in diverse areas, and the project has received support from the Project Partners in many areas of delivery. Examples include planning consents, engineering, contract procurement and management, and strategic development of economic sustainability (Huntingdonshire District Council); water control design and installation, hydrology, flood attenuation (Middle Level Commission); evaluation of potential access routes and permissive paths, use of unmanned aerial vehicle for monitoring purposes (Natural England); water quality, invasive species (Environment Agency).

Another great benefit of the partnership to the Great Fen is that it allows the Great Fen to “punch above its weight” in situations where the value of the partnership is worth more than the sum of its parts. Up to two representatives from each of the Project Partners are appointed by their organizations to sit on the Great Fen Steering Committee.



In 2009, the Project Partners entered into a five-year Collaboration Agreement to “develop, promote, manage and secure funding for the Great Fen”. In doing so they agreed “to exercise good faith and mutual co-operation towards each other in relation to the Great Fen and to work diligently and use reasonable efforts to achieve the Great Fen”. The Collaboration Agreement was renewed in 2014 for a further 5 years.



The Steering Committee meet from time to time for site visits both within the Great Fen and externally, to disseminate, share and learn from good practice. The Steering Committee is assisted by Working Groups: some “task and finish” groups, some long-standing to fulfil constitutional or advisory functions (as in the case of the Joint Technical Advisory Committee which has special responsibility for joint oversight by Natural England and the Wildlife Trust of the National Nature Reserves). At present there are five working groups: the Joint Technical Advisory Committee, the Hydrology Working Group, the Access Working Group, the Economic Working Group, and the Biosphere Working Group.

## 9.6 Acknowledging the Heritage Lottery Fund

We have taken every opportunity to promote the Heritage Lottery Fund. At community events and family events at the Countryside Centre, our signage and interpretation boards display the HLF logo.



The logo is also present on resources for outreach visits such as the Great Fen Hilux, banners and display boards, and on our *Memories from the Fen* and *Spitfire Excavation* DVDs.



In house, HLF is acknowledged via our publications such as events leaflets, trail leaflets and posters for events as well as through external communications including the Great Fen website.

### Restoration News

You may have noticed the large earthworks happening at the Great Fen Information Point as the final phase of wet grassland creation occurs.

This follows on from the work undertaken during the beginning of 2015 where thrust boring under the B&Q was completed in preparation for connecting the ditch systems of Corney's Farm and New Decoy Farm.

A new channel has now been dug out and existing ditches re-shaped making them more suitable for wildlife and allowing water to reach onto the fields to create new wet grassland.



### Fen Friends Blog

Follow the Fen Friends: Newton, Luna, Verity and Swoop as they travel around the Great Fen meeting all the creatures and people that live and work there with their new blog found via [www.greatfen.org.uk](http://www.greatfen.org.uk). Plus discover activities and ideas to help wildlife in your own green space!

### Talks, Walks, Schools and Volunteering

We offer a range of services for local communities and schools including:

- Education services for all ages
- Talks and guided walks for groups
- Reminiscence sessions
- Nature's Therapy sessions
- Local Heritage Group
- Volunteering
- Wildlife Trust Workshops

### Contact Details

Tel: 01487 710420 / 815524  
Email: [info@greatfen.org.uk](mailto:info@greatfen.org.uk)  
[www.greatfen.org.uk](http://www.greatfen.org.uk)

The Wildlife Trust Countryside Centre,  
Chapel Road, Ramsey Heights,  
Huntingdon PE26 2ES.

Member of: 

## Your Guide to Great Fen

### A Living Landscape for Wildlife and People



July - December 2017

[www.greatfen.org.uk](http://www.greatfen.org.uk)

Around site our information panels and contact points such as Trundle Mere Lookout and the Countryside Centre all display the Heritage Lottery Fund logo and/or acknowledge the Heritage Lottery Fund.

## Mysteries of the Mere

Whittless Mere - a way of life. The Great Fen includes a huge area that was once the largest lake in lowland England. In geological terms it did not exist for very long - some 2300 years - but it had a big influence on the culture and heritage of this part of the Fens.



To find out more about the Great Fen and places to visit go to [www.greatfen.org.uk](http://www.greatfen.org.uk) or visit our website [www.greatfen.org.uk](http://www.greatfen.org.uk)

**Great Fen**  
[www.greatfen.org.uk](http://www.greatfen.org.uk)

## Rothschild Way Challenge 2017

Join the Wildlife Trust BCN

30 Days Wild - Time to connect with nature

### Latest News

**Woodhouse Farm Bridge Repairs**  
Thu 13 Jun

**Empower Adventure**  
Mon 5 Jun

### Forthcoming Events

**Rothschild Way Challenge 2017**  
Sat 26 Jun 1000m

**Wildlife Watch - What's hiding in the meadow?**  
Sat 25 Jul 1000m 1250pm

### Great Fen Apps

**Great Fen App**

**Great Fen Quest**

### Wildlife Sightings

**Monitoring Project Sightings**  
The 1 km

**Monitoring Project Sightings**  
The 11 May

The Great Fen is delivered by:



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Tel: +44 (0)1487 710420. Email: [info@greatfen.org.uk](mailto:info@greatfen.org.uk)

### 4 The ponds appear

This pond below you and other ponds around the nature reserve were created by the brick workers.

They would have the hard task of digging out the clay with a shovel. Over time, the holes filled with water and then wildlife moved in, including the rare Great Crested Newt.

### 5 Horses pulling boats

A hundred years ago quite large boats could use this drain. Rather than using engines, the boats were moved by horses pulling along the bank.

Horse-drawn barges would have carried fuel for the kiln fires - coal from a hundred miles north, and blocks of peat called torres from nearby Woodhouse Fen. The same barges would then transport the fired bricks all across the country. Bricks from Ramsey Heights have even ended up as far away as Australia.

### 6 The burning boat

Here you can see what looks like a pond. It is hard to believe that this was once a harbour for the boats. Here, the brick workers would have loaded hundreds of bricks onto barges. Once, the bricks were so hot after firing, that one of the barges actually caught fire!

### 7 See brick-making tools and the kiln

If the staff are here when you visit, please do ask to take a look round the classroom and centre, or come along to one of our many events.

Discover more trails, history, photos and film on the Great Fen website, [www.greatfen.org.uk](http://www.greatfen.org.uk)

**Great Fen team**  
Tel: 01487 710420  
Email: [info@greatfen.org.uk](mailto:info@greatfen.org.uk)  
The Wildlife Trust Countryside Centre,  
Chapel Road, Ramsey Heights, PE26 2ES,  
(usually staffed Sat-Sun Mon-Fri).

This trail guide is also available in large print from the Great Fen team.

**Discovery Trail: Burning Bricks and the Hidden Harbour Wildlife Trust Countryside Centre**

Distance: 900m  
Time: 20-30 mins

**Great Fen**  
[www.greatfen.org.uk](http://www.greatfen.org.uk)

This trail is Heritage Lottery Funded



## Section 10

### Finance

#### 10.0 Introduction

#### 10.1 Project costs: how was the money spent?

#### 10.2 Quarterly expenditure and cash flow: when was the money spent?

#### 10.3 Changes over the course of the project that affected the budget

#### 10.4 Match funding in all its aspects

#### 10.5 Funding and time extension (Engine Farm) 2012

#### 10.6 Use of project contingency 2017

#### 10.7 Evaluating financial performance

#### 10.8 Achieving value for money

#### 10.9 Funding and future financial sustainability

- *Is the Great Fen more financially sustainable?*
- *Has the project given the Great Fen financial gearing?*

*The **evidence** we used in this section included: interviews and financial analysis.*

#### 10.0 Introduction

This section sets out the financial framework of the project and assesses how we ensured achieving value for money and whether we made best use of the funding.

#### 10.1 Project costs: how was the money spent?

We have spent 99.87 % of the project funding of £9,101,700 comprising an original grant of £7,204,000 and a further £1,897,790 in 2013.

Expenditure was front loaded to secure land purchase (see section 9.2).

Throughout the course of the project we have spent against the funder's categories: repair and conservation work, building works, professional fees, equipment, materials, vehicles, staff, recruitment, freelance contracts, training, travel, overheads, stationary and contingency. We have spent within the restoration and monitoring function, and within the education and community function.

We have recorded all permitted volunteer hours and assigned a cash value to them against which we have drawn down grant.



## 10.2 Project expenditure and cash flow: when was the money spent?



## 10.3 Changes over the course of the project that affected the budget

The extended time period of the grant, tenancy reversions and the evolving nature of the work on restoration has meant that the overall budget has changed significantly several times. Works have always been delivered to time, to plan and to revised budgets.

Land purchase in 2008 went as planned and to budget. The establishment and delivery of the community and education work has followed programmes set out in the original delivery plan and its successors. The detail of restoration work was more difficult to anticipate. Original restoration plans and budgets were based on best estimates, but we had no access to land until tenancies ended. Over the funding period we have gathered on-site information, carried out feasibility work and built relationships with contractors and graziers, allowing us to better understand efficient delivery of habitat. In consultation with HLF staff we recast the budget to reflect delivery of the restoration more accurately, producing even better outcomes than originally anticipated.

At several points during the life of the first phase of funding, tenants with long-term agricultural tenancies expressed interest in selling their interest in the land, and as the first tranche of funding was drawing to a close we were able to secure agreement for Engine Farm to be returned to restoration. We now had accurate ideas of the costs and techniques for restoration and engineering works, and the second tranche of funding included a budget for the restoration of Engine Farm and additional works on other parts of the restoration land. We could also accurately cost and deliver an

exciting new suite of heritage and history themed access and engagement.

As the second tranche of funding progressed, it became clear that while a few items were over budget – for example the Spitfire excavation project – overall the project contingency was untouched, and the final engineering works at New Decoy farm were taking longer than planned. We were invited by HLF to extend the project and to budget to spend the contingency by the end of the extension. We recast the budget for a third time to deliver a final push on the engineering and restoration works, which enables us to come to the end of the final funding period having delivered in all areas and spent **99.87%** of the grant available.

## 10.4 Match funding

See appendix 10. List of funders 2008-2017

The Wildlife Trust and our partners have worked collaboratively across the lifetime of the project to successfully secure £7.75 million of match funding. £2.96m of funding has been granted from across the statutory sector and we are particularly grateful to our project partners, Environment Agency and Natural England, who have contributed a significant amount of this funding (£716,779) and acted as a catalyst for others. The Great Fen Project has attracted grant funding from a large number of Trusts and Foundations (£3.05m) with significant contributions being made by Tubney Charitable Trust, The Rothschild Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Garfield Weston Foundation. The Landfill Communities Fund has also shown tremendous support for this project by granting a total of £1.09m in match funding, WREN BAF giving the largest grant of £246,707 for habitat creation at Rymes Reedbed. We are extremely grateful to all of our corporate supporters but particularly to the BGL Group who over the lifetime of the project have donated £194,000 enabling us to establish a meaningful and accessible community education programme that is a legacy for future generations. A further £493,227 of match funding has also been generously donated by our membership (through appeals and significant individual donations) and local community groups who have been inspired and enthused first by the vision and now by the reality of this amazing landscape on their doorstep.

In our search to secure this level of match funding over such a sustained period, we have been both innovative and strategic in our approach. We have developed credible and inspiring stewardship programmes for our donors and strengthened our communications around impact and achievements, to inspire further support from some of our most loyal benefactors.

### 10.4.1 Crowdfunding Campaign

In late 2015, the Wildlife Trust BCN was invited to become part of a pilot crowdfunding project coordinated by [The East of England Biodiversity Forum](#) and [PJ Elements](#). The project included other organisations such as Natural England, Froglife and the National Trust.



In January 2016, The Great Fen crowdfunding campaign was launched on Kickstarter to raise £5000 for a new digital educational game. As part of this campaign a fabulous promotional film was made <http://www.greatfen.org.uk/great-fen-great-fun>. Promotional support for the campaign was secured from celebrities Ben Fogle and Warwick Davis, and from BBC Radio Cambridge.

Warwick Davis retweeted to his half a million followers helping to raise the profile of this campaign to a new audience of potential supporters.



Although not successful in reaching the fundraising target on this occasion, the team learned some valuable lessons about the crowdfunding concept that mean it can be considered as part of future fundraising campaigns.



### 10.4.2 Rothschild Way Challenge

In developing sources of match funding we have also created some new and sustainable sources of income. We have worked closely with the Great Fen Local Group, led by Adrian Kempster and supported by Andrew Cuthbert, to develop a bi-annual sponsored walk of 39 miles from National Trust Wicken Fen to the Rothschild Bungalow at Woodwalton Fen. Although this Challenge Event is



currently only in its third year, in 2017 it attracted 22 new supporters to the Trust as event participants, generated approx £4000 in donations from sponsorship and provided an opportunity to secure Jordans & Ryvita Company as a corporate sponsor. Our plans for the future include developing and growing this Challenge event to build a sustainable source of income, and to attract new supporters and volunteers through participant recruitment activities.

## 10.5 Funding and time extension (Engine Farm) 2012

In 2012 the Wildlife Trust had the opportunity to acquire the residue of the lease of Engine Farm, the freehold being part of the Holmewood Estate freehold purchased in 2008. Engine Farm was the highest priority land which the project could realistically have acquired at that time. The tenant, the second of three generations eligible to succeed to the land, indicated a willingness to sell his interest in the land to the Wildlife Trust, which would bring forward land restoration at Engine Farm by many decades. The total cost of the proposed extension was £3,500,990, which included £1,800,000 for the purchase of the tenancy. The Wildlife Trust sought £1,897,790 from HLF. Payment to the tenant was made in two tranches in 2013. Other costs beyond purchase of the lease consisted of other capital costs and activity costs including Education and Community activities.

## 10.6 Use of project contingency 2017

In 2016 the Wildlife Trust requested a seven-month extension to enable completion of works delayed due to unforeseen circumstances and costs, and use of £235,452 of the project contingency for costs associated with these delays as detailed in the table below, and to cover staff costs for six of those seven months. **£20,818** was left in the contingency for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2017, part of which was used to help develop the evaluation strategy.

256,270	Contingency available
<b>Contingency amount required</b>	<b>Justification</b>
£ 12,000	Engine Farm design - additional costs due to IDB
£ 40,000	Engine Farm - habitat creation additional costs due to IDB requirements
£ 69,452	New Decoy / Corneys - habitat creation additional hydrology costs due to IDB requirements
£ 15,000	Spitfire excavation - additional costs
£ 99,000	Staff for 6 months - for extension
£ 235,452	
£ 20,818	Contingency remaining

The total staff costs of the activity and project delivery period of the extension were £180,393 (salaries and overheads including travel and training), £99,000 of which came from the contingency, the remaining £81,393 being funded from project underspends with the approval of HLF.

## 10.7 Evaluating financial performance

Evaluation of financial performance has been carried out through monthly examination of expenditure and cash flow requirement through internal project meetings; quarterly update of the project budget; annual auditing of Wildlife Trust accounts by external auditors; and through quarterly meetings with HLF monitors and quarterly submission of claim form and drawdown.

At the time of writing (still within the pre submission period for the final drawdown of grant), our best estimate is that we have spent a staggering **99.87%** of the £9 million budget.

## 10.8 Achieving value for money

This has been achieved through the following means:

- Following HLF and Wildlife Trust procurement protocols
- Participation in rigorous on-line procurement processes through Delta E-sourcing which took our large contract tendering into the European procurement environment
- Regular price comparison exercises with contractors
- Land agents market testing for purchase prices
- Economies of scale, using on-site contractors in several locations.
- Reducing travel costs by using local contractors
- Taking every opportunity to use the skills of staff and volunteers to maximize in-house delivery of tasks

## 10.9 Funding and future financial sustainability

The original 2008 Business Plan proposed ‘progress with prudence’ and a strategy for delivering the project’s aims whilst ensuring financial sustainability in the long term. It identified income from land management as: rents, single payment supplement, Higher Level Stewardship, and new agricultural enterprises, and noted that “the only guaranteed income is from agricultural rents, which will decline steeply as land undergoes restoration”.

At this stage, the most sensible approach would seem to be to seek to achieve as wide a portfolio as possible to support economic sustainability for the Great Fen and other Living Landscapes. To this end, the Wildlife Trust is actively exploring, and committing resource to, business development, such as payment for ecosystem services especially carbon storage, land-based income streams, innovative commercial (and other non-traditional) partnerships, and developing income streams from visitor services, as well as maintaining effort on all its more traditional forms of income generation such as fundraising and membership schemes.

## Section 11

### Risks and factors that impacted on delivery

#### 11.0 Introduction

#### 11.1 List of risks as originally identified

#### 11.2 Factors that impacted on restoration and monitoring delivery

#### 11.3 Factors that impacted on education and community delivery

#### 11.4 Factors that impacted on socio-economic delivery

#### 11.5 Macro impacts

#### 11.6 Rumsfeld element

#### 11.7 Summary

#### 11.0 Introduction

This section describes and evaluates how we assessed and managed risk and how we dealt with the unexpected. Over the course of eight years circumstances, local and further afield, arose or changed with the potential to disrupt delivery across all areas.

#### 11.1 List of risks as originally identified

<b>List the nature of the risks</b> Tell us about the probability of the risk occurring – high, medium or low – as well as the potential result on your project	<b>What was done to reduce the risk?</b>
<b>HLF or other key staff leaving.</b> Low probability. Would result in delays to the work programme, extra costs in recruitment and loss of knowledge from the project	Staff worked to a written work programme that can be adopted by any new staff that have to be recruited. A management plan for the Holmewood Estate was developed to give consistency of management. There were regular meetings between staff and their line managers. Line managers were mindful of the need to ensure staff professionally satisfied. Wherever staff changes have taken place, the rest of the team has worked together to cover periods of vacancy and to help induct new staff thoroughly. Staff changes through pregnancy, ill health and for employment elsewhere have been unavoidable but good measures were in place to mitigate effects.
Low/medium risk that <b>weather conditions</b> will mean works are delayed, or that seeding will fail.	Seeding work was carried out at optimal times in Autumn and Spring. In dry years, germination was delayed but still successful when the rains arrived. Some engineering work was slowed down due to wet weather and in some cases ground water levels were deliberately lowered to facilitate works. Weather caused no significant delays.



Modification of drainage systems delayed because of an <b>unavailability of contractors</b> . Risk low-medium	Quotes were sought for drainage contractors and ecohydrological design work on the open market, through established contract tender platforms. This has always yielded at least one successful tender of good value and quality.
<b>Withdrawal of cooperation from the Internal Drainage Board</b> . Medium. Would result in the inability to undertake certain works that affect any IDB drain	Wildlife Trust and Natural England staff have been members of all Internal Drainage Boards where we are actively carrying out restoration work. Site visits, reports and additional meetings with the Chairman have helped to improve relations. All relevant consents have ultimately been secured, however there have been significant delays and extra costs relating to IDB requirements for alterations and additional feasibility works.
Capital items <b>cost more than budgeted</b> for. Medium. Would result either in changes to the quantities or specification of items purchased, or in extra funding needing to be found.	Regular price comparison and quote gathering have taken place throughout the period of grant funding and the budgets adjusted to reflect any changes, such as rising fuel and steel prices. Other items coming in over budgeted costs were due to changes in our required design for capital engineering works largely associated with IDB requirements.
<b>Construction problems</b> during the installation of the temporary building. Low	A project manager was appointed during construction works at Ramsey Heights and advice has been taken from engineers on other demolition/construction works throughout the project.

## 11.2 Factors that impacted on restoration and monitoring delivery

The risks identified prior to the project commencing are described in section 11.1. The table below summarises other significant factors which have impacted on the delivery of the project.

Impacting Factors	What was done to mitigate?
<b>Ladyseat negotiations:</b> the central farm in the Holmewood Estate, Ladyseat Farm, is a key area of land for restoration. It is currently farmed under a successional Agricultural Holdings Act tenancy but at two points over the last eight years there were negotiations to secure the reversion of the tenancy with a possible land swap or purchase. Restoration works were put on hold while these opportunities were explored leading to delays to restoration in 2010/11	If successful the negotiations would have materially changed the order and nature of the restoration work on the Great Fen over the medium term. This was a 'once in a generation' opportunity to explore the potential to regain management control of the lowest lying land in the project and it would have been remiss not to pursue it. Once it became clear that a mutually acceptable arrangement could not be agreed, plans for restoration of the land in hand were committed to and delivered successfully to an adjusted timetable.

<p><b>Availability of graziers:</b> initially, there was a concern that a lack of graziers in the county would present a challenge and restoration was designed to be established through mowing and topping by contractors.</p>	<p>In actuality we have been able to sell grazing and hay licences for 100% of the land once grass is established. Topping has been required for weed control in some areas but on the whole there has been a massive cost saving from the original budget which has been reallocated to cover landscaping works that have developed over the life of the project and far exceed original aspirations within the funding period.</p>
<p><b>Soils and feasibility:</b> as explained in section 6, very little information was held on soils in the early stages of the project, and the soilscape is complex.</p>	<p>Feasibility studies have been undertaken on each area of land as it has been returned to our control. This has been important and informative. There are significant constraints to what we can deliver and where, caused by the chemical nature of the peat, gravel deposits and roddons. With sufficient information we have been able to work around these to produce cost-effective wetland schemes that operate successfully as designed.</p>
<p><b>Planning and protected species:</b> planning consent is required for the engineering of new pools and ditches; at times there have been delays to the usual eight-week decision period which have had knock-on implications where delays have meant missing the safe working seasons for protected species</p>	<p>Planning consents have always been submitted in close consultation with the local planning officer and with a full set of environmental statements and protected species surveys. At one point, the local authority took some time to review whether an Environmental Impact Assessment was required, but ruled it was not. We have been mindful of protected species in all of our working; the most challenging to accommodate are water vole. Surveys were undertaken in support of planning applications but sometimes delays have meant that these had to be repeated. In some cases mitigation work was carried out, by cutting and scraping ditch edges to ensure that areas surrounding engineering works which have no watervole are unsuitable for colonisation so that works could take place outside of the recommended safe times. Delays on planning decisions have made working more complicated at times but have not significantly impeded achieving our aims</p>

### 11.3 Factors affecting education and community delivery

Impacting Factors	What was done to mitigate?
The <b>opinions and perceptions of local communities</b> were central issues in the sustainable management and development of the Great Fen. Some residents living in close proximity to conservation areas feared reduced employment, taking farm land out of arable production, or increased flooding, among other negative views. There was little resource to communicate fully to local communities in the early years of the project, during which time the education and community team encountered negativity from some members of the local community.	<p>The team rolled out a programme of engagement and communication both digitally and hands on. Frequently asked questions and answers were added to the website and staff were trained to deal with confrontational situations.</p> <p>Heritage themes emerged as a successful way of engaging with those who were initially negative about the project and/or unenthused by wildlife and conservation.</p>
<b>Transport to the Great Fen:</b> Because of the rural location and lack of public transport to the area, people found it very difficult to access the Great Fen.	Throughout the project, we have offered schools bus subsidies and have put on minibus transport for events. We have worked in partnership with Ramsey Heritage Group to provide bus transport on heritage days and we adopted an exhibition trailer from a Wildlife Trust education centre so that we could take the Great Fen out to the communities.
During 2015, the full time Education and Community Officer requested to go down to 3 days a week. This posed problems on how the work-plan for this position would be carried out.	A job share was created with a two-day position covering the events side and a three-day post covering the education side of the role. Despite initial managerial challenges, this proved a viable and successful solution
The opportunities arising have far exceeded the initial HLF proposals. Attempting to maximise these opportunities has created staffing resource challenges.	A hugely successful volunteering programme has enabled us to vastly expand the team's capacity to deliver events and activities, as described in Section 8
As the project developed and wildlife started to colonise the restored areas, weekend visitor numbers increased, with no weekend staff available for community engagement.	In 2013 we set up a volunteer weekend ranger group who are the public face of the Great Fen at weekends.
Realising that we can't make all of the Great Fen physically accessible to all.	We focused on making the Countryside Centre as accessible for all abilities as possible, for example by purchasing all-terrain wheelchairs, and installing hearing loops and accessible pathways and bird hides. Our digital applications give people with sensory impairments the opportunity to engage with the Great Fen, and sensory nature themed outreach visits take the Great Fen to those who can't physically access it.



## 11.4 Factors affecting socio-economic delivery

Impacting Factors	What was done to mitigate?
The termination of the first tranche of negotiations in 2011 around the reversion of the lease of Ladyseat Farm in 2011 effectively removed the possibility of developing a visitor centre with a perceived critical view northwards over restored wetlands, potentially limiting the ability of the project partners to raise large capital sums for the visitor centre	The adoption of a phased approach to the creation of visitor facilities in 2010 meant there was room for manoeuvre. HLF monitors having advised against short- to medium-term commitment to capital build in favour of innovative engagement strategies, the Project Partners conducted a strategic review resulting in the adoption of a revised model for the delivery of built visitor facilities, visitor engagement and socio-economic development, as described in Section 8, which have shaped delivery for the remainder of the project.
The financial environment has changed over the project period, which has presented challenges for the Project Partners in maintaining levels of resource for the Great Fen. Both government-funded agencies (Environment Agency and Natural England) have lost 40% of their staff complements, and Huntingdonshire District Council has also undergone huge restructuring. This has meant that specialist staff who helped to drive socio-economic development in the early years of the project are no longer available.	The socio-economic Routemap was developed which identifies discrete areas of delivery which can be brought on stream as and when resources allow.  Externally resourced specialist advice has been sourced where appropriate.

Unforeseen positive impacts on socio-economic delivery have included:

- the involvement of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) leading to a step change in furthering the strategic planning of visitor infrastructure at the visitor centre site, imparting a new level of professionalism and affording the aspirations of the Project Partners international exposure as the design competition attracted entrants from all over the UK and Europe
- developing and deepening relationships with farmers and local business people, and the business community's increasing confidence in the sustainability of Great Fen, resulting in more proposals for economic development.

## 11.5 Macro impacts

In 2008, the world changed. The global financial crisis triggered a recession in the UK and debt reduction led to severe public-sector financial constraints. This in turn affected incomes in the third sector. The Wildlife Trust was not immune to these impacts and planned accordingly. The Trust published Five-year Corporate Plans, which recognised the challenging external funding environment, in 2010 and 2014. The plans restate the Trust's top priorities to ensure organisational

focus. Living Landscapes, including the Great Fen, remain preeminent amongst the Trust's operational activities. The plans have ensured that the Trust has:

- invested in core income-generating activities. As a result its membership is sustaining whilst other organisations' are shrinking
- invested in its high-level giving activities for the Great Fen and beyond, which also generates core income
- updated its Communications Strategy and significantly updated its web presence. This and other online communications tools are enabling the Trust to reach new audiences and supporters.

## 11.6 The Rumsfeld element or Dealing with the unexpected

*“There are known knowns.... There are known unknowns. That is to say there are things that we now know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns”*

### **Donald Rumsfeld – US secretary State of Defence 2001-2006**

One of the strengths of this project has been our ability to respond to change effectively, and the flexibility we have built into what we are delivering, from changes to restoration resulting from land availability to tailoring education programmes to fit evolving school syllabuses.

An early example of this occurred in the final stages of land acquisition at the very start of the project, when two parcels of land, Speechley's Farm and Top Farm, were taken off the market. This impacted immediately on what we were able to deliver on the ground due to land availability, drainage requirements and water movement issues. Budgets and restoration plans were reworked to encompass the change, and delivery of restoration on the remaining Holmewood estate has been achieved.

Another example with potential impact on visitor infrastructure, access and engagement and socio-economic development, was the announcement by Network Rail in 2014 of the possible closure of four level crossings over the East Coast Main Line (which forms the western boundary of the Great Fen). The Great Fen took a very proactive approach in engaging with Network Rail and developing a well thought out strategic plan to mitigate impacts on wildlife and derive positive gain for access and engagement and socio-economic development. After a two-year consultation process, the project was shelved by central government; however, the exercise demonstrated the Great Fen's resource (e.g. communications networks, professional expertise) and ability to respond to potential change effectively.

The long-term nature of the Great Fen – with a 50-100 year vision for the landscapes – means that flexibility and open-mindedness are essential for success. It is simply not possible to predict with accuracy what will be happening in 20 years, ecologically, economically or in terms of future land availability. This makes defining our ethos (through the topic papers – section 6), our management tools (Management Plan – section 5), and our strategic direction (Masterplan) very important. We have designed in flexibility to take advantage of opportunities (e.g. research partnerships on paludiculture, landscape engineering with budget reallocations) and cope with unexpected constraints (e.g. soils or prospecting common crane).

As well as planning and strategic documents, we have developed a highly skilled and well integrated, cross-disciplinary team of staff. This means we can respond quickly to changing circumstances and cope well with novel or large pieces of work.

The staff team and the underpinning planning are both powerful legacies of this phase of the Great Fen, and as we complete the amazing achievements funded through this HLF bid, we are already looking to the possibilities for the future.

### **11.7 Summary**

Throughout the project we have successfully identified and managed risk across all areas of delivery. In mitigating we have often turned challenges into opportunities, such as the creation of a weekend volunteer Ranger group to mitigate lack of staffing at weekends. We have also dealt with the unexpected using our skills and flexibility of approach to meet any circumstance. This is a powerful legacy for the future.





## **Section 12**

### **Impacts and Outcomes: Don't just take our word for it...**

- 12.0 Introduction**
- 12.1 The difference brought about by the project for restoration, conservation and monitoring**
- 12.2 The difference brought about by the project for people**
- 12.3 The difference brought about by the project to communities**
- 12.4 The difference brought about by the project for partnerships**
- 12.5 Reputational impact**
- 12.6 Summary**

## Impacts and Outcomes

- *Has it enhanced the Project Partners' reputations?*
- *What is the reach/wider impact of the Great Fen*
- *What impact has the project had on the Wildlife Trust and other partners (Great Fen project partners and others)?*
- *Is the Wildlife Trust more financially sustainable?*

*The **evidence** we used in this section included: interviews; activities; focus groups; and financial analysis.*

### 12.0 Introduction

It is relatively easy to measure outputs: numbers of visitors, species present or hectares of grass, for example. Capturing outcomes - lives altered by experiences, for example, or reinstated ecological processes – is more challenging. Here, we aim to demonstrate the transformational nature of the project, in respect not only of the landscape and wildlife, but also of people, communities and organizations; transformation that has made a real difference to lives. We shall set out some inspiring examples of how people, organizations and organizations feel about the project and about change.

This theme is also explored more fully through other media, in an inspiring evaluation film offered as part of our digital submission, and as a visual journey through the landscape by artist Carry Akroyd. (see Appendix 12.0)



## 12.1 The difference brought about by the project for restoration, conservation and monitoring

*“Year by year there is visible progress in new areas and in habitat diversity.”*

**Wildlife Trust member, AGM October 2016**



Above: Four spot chaser, Paul Tinsley-Marshall;



Right: Five Garden Tiger moths recorded at Corney's Farm, 04<sup>th</sup> July 2016, Henry Stanier

We aimed to:

1. improve the hydrological regime in Holme Fen NNR, contributing to the aims and objectives of its management plan

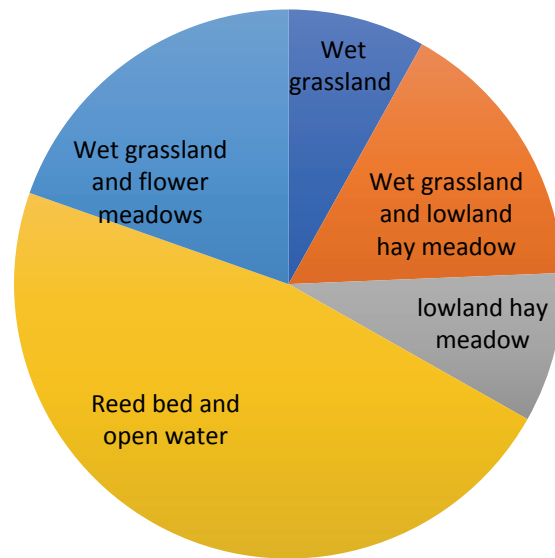
*“Woodwalton and Holme Fen are two of the most iconic national nature reserves (NNR) in England, yet are heavily modified fragments of the once mighty wetland of Whittlesey Mere. Both are impacted by surrounding water level management including inappropriate flooding and drainage. Neither site has a sustainable future in isolation and the original objective for the Great Fen was to improve surrounding habitat to ensure their survival into the future by linking the sites, improving water management, reducing the impact of arable farming and improving public involvement.*

- *Rymes Reedbed is creating wetter conditions around Holme Fen, slowing seepage of water from the reserve and may create conditions suitable for raised bog.*
- *Wetland and grassland establishment on the Holmewood Estate is encouraging birds and mammals which are keystone ‘landscape’ species such as common crane and otter.*
- *Public interest from a wide range of interests has been greatly increased.”*

**Alan Bowley, Senior Site Manager Woodwalton and Holme Fen (retired), Natural England**

2. restore a variety of habitats on the 1317 hectares being purchased (748 hectares during the HLF project – with further 182 added with the Engine Farm extension), with an emphasis on fenland priority habitats such as reedbed, fen, wet grassland, wet woodland and open water

## Target habitats on restored land

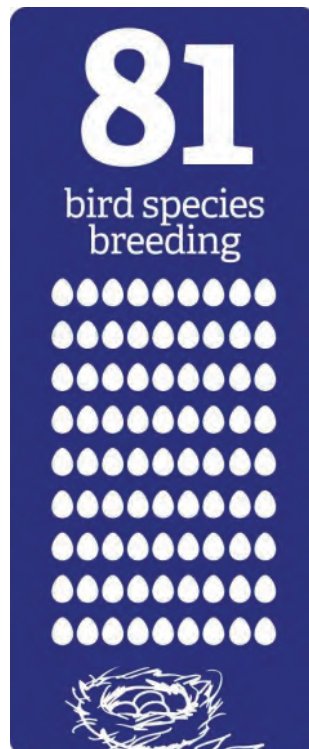


*"A changed and inspirational landscape that's rich in biodiversity"*  
**JTAC member, during evaluation workshop**



*"Hope for the future"*  
**Wildlife Trust member, AGM October 2016**

## 3. conserve important species throughout the area





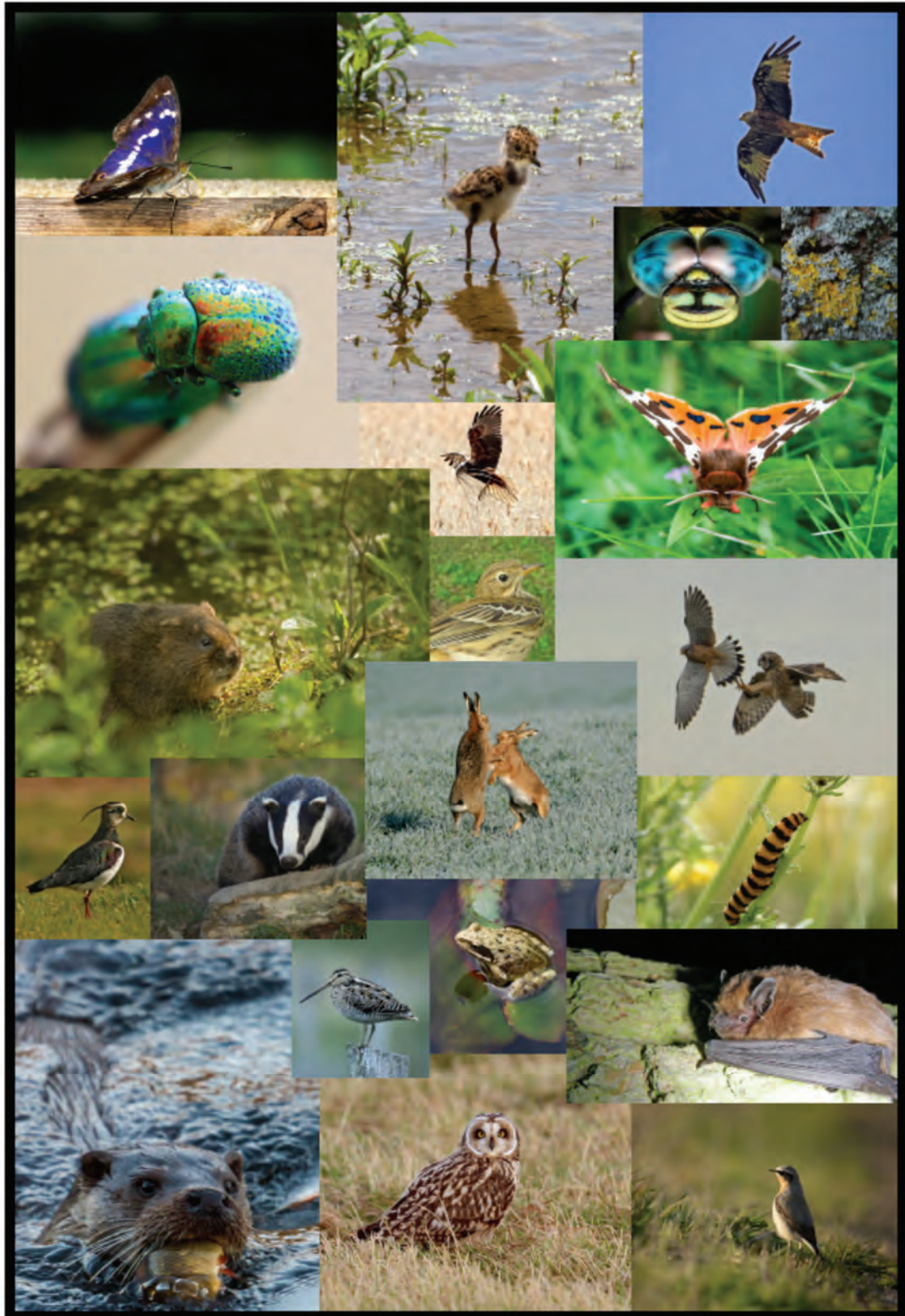


Swifts and Drain – Carry Akroyd

*The divide between the reserve and the arable land shows how much more insect life there is for the birds to feed off on the reserve side. Diversity produces more diversity.*

*“It’s been amazing really to see just how everything’s evolved, how the land has changed, seeing the land forming that went into it, seeing the changes where the wildlife is coming in and seeing water levels a lot higher where the soil is getting wetter which is just as we wanted it to be. I feel immensely proud representing the Wildlife Trust working on the Great Fen”*

**Helen Bailey, Great Fen Restoration Officer**



## 12.2 The difference brought about by the project for people

Our aim was to inspire and encourage people to want to learn and get involved with the Great Fen and to connect with nature for health and wellbeing. We wanted to help people find fulfilling volunteer roles and develop skills, and create thousands of opportunities for an enjoyable day out. Helping the next generation to experience the natural world is more challenging now than it was in the past. Children were given a great deal more freedom than they are now. There was a lot less traffic then, less fear of 'stranger danger', a less litigious and risk-averse culture, and far fewer things to do indoors like watch TV or play computer games. So many grew up playing outside, largely unsupervised: climbing trees, building camps, looking for animals like toads and hedgehogs, and damming streams. The Great Fen has given many opportunities for children, and their parents the confidence to embrace, connect with and value the natural world. They have been involved in activities with the potential to transform lives.

The world may have changed but our need for nature hasn't, and community projects like the Great Fen help make sure all people of all ages and abilities can find a way in.

Here are some heartfelt stories and letters from people who have been involved with the Great Fen, showing how it has helped transform their lives.

### **Barbara Cracknell, Retired teaching assistant Great Fen Volunteer**

After my husband, Richard, died in 2007, I was drawn to Woodwalton Fen because it was a special place to us. Even though we had always lived close by, we hadn't even known it existed until we saw a display at the East of England show when the Great Fen project started. The first time we went there, it blew me away – it was so beautiful.

In January 2008, I retired from my job as a teaching assistant in a secondary school and began volunteering for Natural England at Woodwalton Fen.

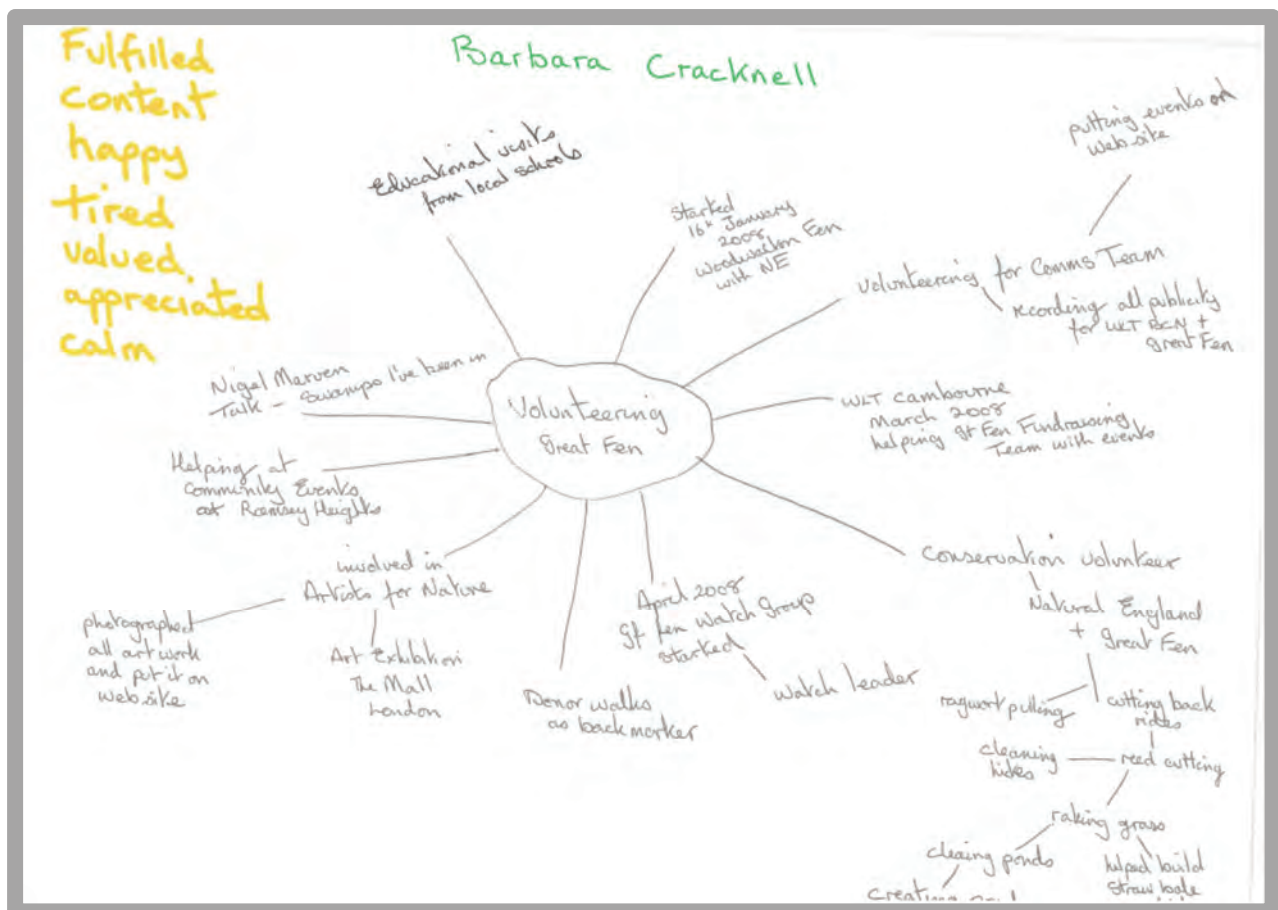
The thought of Richard inspired me and it totally changed my life. I began as a conservation volunteer, cutting back trees and clearing ponds. Meeting so many lovely people helped me beyond measure, and my involvement escalated naturally.

As I had years of experience working in schools and playgroups, I was asked to help with school visits and the Great Fen Wildlife Watch Group, a junior branch of the Wildlife Trust for children aged eight to 12. They meet once a month at the Countryside Centre and have fun pond-dipping, log rolling or simply looking for bugs.

It's so encouraging to see the children get excited when they find an earwig or a spider - it's a good reminder that the smaller things in nature are important, too.







Barbara's mind map on volunteering at the Great Fen.

#### Lauren Stonebridge, Education and Interpretation Officer

"I remember once when a school came out to us from a big city, the children were wary about even touching the grass it was so alien to them but by spending a day with us on the fen they were so inspired! Touching everything, all their senses came alive and they really understood

what the Great Fen was doing. For the surrounding towns and cities it's the perfect green space for people to enjoy - you know these guys are going to be taking over the Great Fen in the future and that is what the Great Fen is all about: we can change the landscape but we also need to inspire people to become the custodians of the future. I'd like to think people can get a connection to the Fen in whatever way suits them, whether it's information on the website, or a school assembly, or coming to an event, or reading an interpretation panel. I hope that perhaps I have made an impact that might inspire them to come out to the Fen."

### Calum Urquhart, Great Fen Volunteer Ranger

This article was on the Heritage Lottery website. Calum is one of the Great Fen's ranger team.

[www.hlf.org.uk/about-us/news-features/changing-lives-calum-finds-his-path-great-fen-project](http://www.hlf.org.uk/about-us/news-features/changing-lives-calum-finds-his-path-great-fen-project)

#### Changing lives: Calum finds his path on the Great Fen project

Seeing a TV advert for the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch 12 years ago was a turning point for Calum Urquhart then aged six. He already loved being outside, but taking part sparked an all-consuming love of birds.

It was really no surprise that when the chance of volunteering for the HLF-supported Great Fen project came along Calum was there, helping to build a straw bale bird hide.

His enthusiasm shone through and he was asked by the project team to run minibeast hunts for families during the summer of 2012. He was then invited to attend some wildlife identification workshops, normally reserved for adults.

Then came the chance to be a volunteer ranger on the project, so Calum and his dad stepped up. Calum, now 18, has been acting as a volunteer one day a month ever since, engaging with the public, clearing paths, cleaning hides and signs and recording wildlife sightings.

"I have also helped out on a few plant surveys, a water vole survey and a ground beetle survey and last year I ran a guided dawn chorus walk at Woodwalton Fen," says Calum, who lives in nearby Huntingdon.

As a volunteer he can attend five free workshops per year and this has helped him to mug up on general ecology and botany as well as invertebrate identification. "I now have my own microscope and a great deal more knowledge," he says. "I also have a better understanding of how to conduct ecological surveys." The Great Fen restoration project has run for a total of eight years, supported by over £9million from HLF. Alongside environmental improvements, community involvement and wide public engagement and understanding are key. Calum is in no doubt that he personally has reaped considerable benefits from his ongoing commitment to the project. "I've been told by professionals in the field of ecology that many graduates need one or two years' volunteering experience before they can enter a paid role. My volunteering with the Great Fen project, Wildlife Trust workshops and my built-up knowledge is likely to make me much more employable after university," he says. He is in no doubt that this contributed to his being offered a place at Exeter University to read biology and ecology from this September.

"I have really enjoyed being involved with the Great Fen project," he says. "I have met some lovely people and made good contacts for the future. I've been encouraged to develop my skills further.

"I really feel that I've been part of an innovative long-term project thanks to the Heritage Lottery and I wouldn't mind having a larger part in the development of the project in the future."



**Shabana, 20/20 young photographer**

*"Growing up in the countryside, I have always been fascinated by wildlife and I know this amazing opportunity will allow me to build the career in nature photography I've been dreaming of"*

**Wildlife Watch**

*"My little boy comes along because he wants to be a wildlife ranger"*

**Spitfire excavation**

*"The staff, parents and children of Holme School would like to extend a huge thankyou to you both and the wider Great Fen team for inviting our children to the site of the excavation of the Spitfire last week. The children had a great time and came back to school bursting with excitement and pride."*

**Head Teacher**

**Andrew Cuthbert, Commercial Manager  
Great Fen Volunteer and Local Group Secretary**

They usually call me when a hole needs digging: a regular conservation and maintenance volunteer. It's not very glamorous, but it's all good fun. It must be, because when I was recently offered a new job, I negotiated part-time hours so that I could continue my work at the Great Fen.



It's good to get outdoors: you feel better about the world, especially when you're in such beautiful surroundings.

After going to an open day in 2010, I got so wrapped up in what I heard that I put my name down as a volunteer there and then. They threw me in at the deep end with my first task. I was in waders and a life jacket, up to my waist in water, clearing reeds from pond-dipping ponds. Clearing trees, building log

stores and making cattle pens are just some of the diverse tasks that I get involved in. Volunteering isn't a one-way street, though: there's great enjoyment in giving something back to a project that really benefits the local community.



*"I started volunteering for the Great Fen work party in order to get out in the great outdoors and socialise with like-minded people, as well as benefiting the local wildlife. However I didn't realise, that in the process, I would make some great friends and have lots of fun!"*

**Vanessa, Great Fen Volunteer**

*"I volunteer for the Great Fen Education team for many reasons. I have always been passionate about the environment and believe that the children should be given every opportunity to enjoy, explore and understand the environment. I also thoroughly enjoy working with so many enthusiastic people at the Great Fen. I go home after each visit smiling because I've had so much fun."*

**Helen Barber, Great Fen volunteer**

*"I volunteer with school visits and at family events because I want to enthuse children to learn about the amazing fenland environment and the history which created it."*

**Anne Bowers, Great Fen volunteer**

*"All the students thoroughly enjoyed the whole day. The addition of the guided walk was a real success too and many students asked if we could go round again. The knowledge and fun the staff gave to their talk was fantastic and they made it really interactive being able to get up close and touch their natural surroundings. The all-terrain chair was great too, as it made accessing the walks so much easier for both student and support worker. All the activities were enjoyed and they do like making things to take home to talk about too, which helps make conversation and spread the word. All in all a great day was had by all :-) Thank you looking forward to the next visit."*

**Vanessa White, Facet Disability Group**

**Peterborough Association for the Blind****Centre 68, 68b Westgate****Peterborough****PE1 1RG****14<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

Peterborough Association for the Blind is very grateful for all the work that the Wildlife Trust/Great Fen has done with our members. They have been along and delivered sessions to groups, which has included autumn wildlife and birds. They brought along activities that were tactile, smelly (lavender) and sounds to help our visually impaired members learn and benefit from nature around them. For many of our members it is hard if not impossible for them to get out alone and enjoy the wildlife so for the Wildlife Trust to bring it to them has been superb. The members were able to bring back memories of past experiences and activities and reminisce. Our members have all gone home with items they have made and the joy of nature.

We were very lucky to be invited down to the Great Fen on May 10 to spend the day there and I can say on everyone's behalf that we had an amazing day. For many of the members it was the first time in a long time that they were able to get out into the countryside and experience it first-hand. The staff and volunteers made the day a very memorable one for all and one in particular who has trouble walking now wants an all-terrain mobility scooter as she loved the ride and freedom it gave her. Every time I see anyone who went on the day it's all they are talking about.

In the future I would really like to keep up the relationship that PAB has with the Wildlife Trust and the Great Fen team to help our members connect to nature.

Quotes from members:

*"You know you have started something now...where we going next?"*

*"I have never seen the group so happy and chatty in a long time, thank you"*

*"Oh my goodness I have found a bug" - after putting her hand in a bucket of dried leaves – "what fun!"*

*"It's been a super day thank you everyone"*

When asked on a scale of 1-10 did they enjoy the session everyone shouted *"10 - when are you coming back?"*

Best wishes

Nina Lutterer, Activities Coordinator

**Adrian Kempster****Great Fen volunteer 2007-2017****Chairman of the Great Fen Local Group**

The aspect of access to the Great Fen has been a challenge since its formation and I have been extremely privileged to be involved in looking at potential routes inside and outside the project area. With walking in mind **it was an ambition of mine to set up a long distance footpath between Wicken Fen and Woodwalton Fen called The Rothschild Way** to



celebrate the notable work of Charles Rothschild in the field of wildlife conservation at the end of the 19th century. To achieve this it was necessary for the Great Fen Local Group to have a collaboration with the Huntingdon Ramblers and The National Trust at Wicken Fen.

This was a very satisfying liaison and resulted in the path being established in 2013. One main aim was to have the path identified on the Ordnance Survey land maps as a recognised long distance path and this was achieved early 2017.

**This has been personally an extremely gratifying and fulfilling project** as this path now exists as a focus for people who want the challenge of walking to the Great Fen with the aim of finishing at the iconic Rothschild's Bungalow. Also the path offers the opportunity of fundraising to support the Great Fen by people walking it as an organised event i.e. The Rothschild Way Challenge.

**Alan Malt, Great Fen Volunteer for the Heritage Group since 2010.**

Alan Malt is the member of the [Great Fen Heritage Group](#) who is primarily responsible for the group's archive. Here he describes how, with his own family roots in the fens, he became interested in the area's history and the great satisfaction he derives from re-discovering its lost heritage.



"Because of my interest in wildlife, I became a member of the Wildlife Trust over thirty years ago and have enjoyed working on and visiting many of its local nature reserves. When I heard of the formation of a Great Fen History Group in February 2010, I realised that this would bring together my two great interests: here was the opportunity to find out about the history of a nature reserve! I went along to the second meeting and I was delighted to be asked to archive the collection of fascinating items the group members were amassing.

The archive now stands at over 1150 items including books, photographs, maps, recordings and transcripts of interviews. Those we have talked to are proud of their history and delighted to know that their memories and mementos will be preserved for the benefit of the generations to come."



### Valetta Cranmer

"I am the 1st cousin of Pilot Officer Harold Penketh, whose Spitfire crashed in the Great Fen on 22nd November 1940. On the 5th October 2015 watching the news I saw that a Spitfire was being excavated from a field in the Great Fen and the name of the Pilot was Pilot Officer Harold Penketh who was my late cousin.

I then contacted the Wildlife Trust; they were very pleased to hear from me as they had not been able to trace family members. Through the excavation I got into contact with my cousin whom I had not seen for 25 years.

The Wildlife Trust kept us informed of all the details of the dig, emailed and sent photographs of everything they were doing, which they carried out with the utmost sincerity and respect to honour my cousin's memory. This was and is greatly appreciated by all our family.

On 22nd September 2016 a Memorial Dedication Service was held in the field where the Spitfire crashed. It was a very memorable day and has brought us closer as a family and brought to life part of our family history which was little known to us. We feel that Harold's memory has been justly honoured and he will always be in our hearts and minds. The Wildlife Trust does marvellous work and we are greatly indebted to them for everything they have done for our family and for helping to preserve our heritage."

Mrs Valetta Mary Cranmer B.E.M, 20th June 2017



*“Conservation will engage with general audiences much more effectively if it delivers outcomes that are more relevant to individual lives”*

**Mike Harding, HLF Monitor**

We aimed to:

1. Enhance people's enjoyment of the natural environment, particularly the Great Fen

*“I had no idea that such a wonderful place existed on the very edge of Ramsey until recently. I visited today and came away feeling energised and full of life. Having been shut in the office for so long, the opportunity to be outside amongst such natural surroundings is wonderful. Completely lifted my spirits!”*

**Jill Stringfellow, Ramsey**

#### **Results of a recent visitor survey (sample size: 100 people)**

*Why do you visit the Great Fen?*

Wildlife 95%

Heritage 32%

Exercise 53%

Dog-walking 13%

*Comments:* Teaching children about nature, volunteering, photography, peace and quiet.

*How do you feel about the landscape changes in the Great Fen area?*

Positive: 97%

Negative: 2%

*Comments:* Good for walking, access to land, water, wildlife, land protection, and attracts more varied species. Not good for farming, loss of food production. 'A bit disappointing'.

*Have you noticed changes in the wildlife of the area?*

Yes: 79% (more species and numbers)

No: 20%

*Are you interested in the heritage of the area? If Yes, what interests you most?*

Yes: 80%

No : 19%

*Comments:* Old maps, Whittlesea Mere, history of area and communities, impact on landscape, flora and fauna, fen ecosystems, traditional farming, how people lived from the fen, Rothschild bungalow, Spitfire excavation.

2. Provide opportunities for learning about fenland heritage, and help people develop the awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills and participation that will support conservation of local heritage.

Heritage that was previously hidden or not widely known has been recorded for future generations through the local history project, collecting and recording people's memories and stories and presenting this information through film, booklets and digital media.

We have provided many innovative interpretation opportunities including embracing digital media i.e. website, Great Fen app, web game and social media for people to learn about their local heritage and natural environment and enhance their experience and understanding.

We have inspired young people through school programmes, family events, youth projects, Wildlife Watch club and little Bugs clubs to learn and take positive action for their local environment and heritage.

**Holme CE Primary School**

**Church Street**

**Holme**

**Peterborough**

**PE7 3PB**

**01487 830342**

**E-mail: [office@holme.cambs.sch.uk](mailto:office@holme.cambs.sch.uk)**

Dear Louise,

We have found the Great Fen to be an invaluable source of education, information and inspiration for the children and adults at our school. Through various projects such as the Spitfire Excavation, Forest Schools and the support offered to transform our garden into a wonderful learning space with our 'Green Team,' the Gt Fen have really enhanced our offer for our children. Their level of expertise and enthusiasm has been wonderful and **this has made a real difference to us.**

With Very Best Wishes,

**Mrs Tamara Allen, Headteacher**

3. Develop community involvement in the project and ability to take action for the natural environment through volunteering opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

**Sue Wallis, Chair, Great Fen Heritage Group.**

The Great Fen History Group was formed in 2010 with the aim of researching and recording events in the past and present of the Great Fen area. A group of about 10 people, including an archivist, started investigations, which have resulted in populating the Great Fen heritage pages on the website, and a 1050 item archive of artefacts including pictures, maps and oral history recordings from local people. The research has been very rewarding for the members as this area has been under-recorded in the past, so we felt we were breaking new ground.

In 2014 we formed a sub-group, the Archaeology group, as plans were being made to excavate a WWII Spitfire buried in the peat of Home Fen. With guidance from Oxford Archaeology's Jigsaw initiative, we learned basic techniques. We worked alongside professional archaeologists, Service members, University experts and people from other archaeology groups. Taking part in the Spitfire excavation was one of the most rewarding things I have done.

The two groups have now combined to form the Great Fen Heritage Group. We provide members to man stalls at outside events, some of us go to Reminiscence events at local care homes and special needs groups. We have visited other local sites such as the Must Farm excavation, the Pathfinder Museum to see 'our' Spitfire parts restored, and the Bronze Age site at Flag Fen. We collaborate with other organisations: two of us are currently taking part in a ground survey with Warboys Archaeology Project at Ramsey Abbey; we shall be helping the Fenland Trust populate their new museum at Farcet and we are involved with Cambs Geosites in establishing information points on their Fen Edge Trail, along the 5m contour.

The group is grateful for:

- The chance to investigate a fascinating and under-recorded area and to develop our skills, using a variety of sources.
- Being able to take part in the Spitfire dig and being involved in the wider aspects of the Great Fen project.
- Increasing our knowledge and collaborating with other organisations and people.

We hope in the future to continue our research activities, especially in areas such as the history of fen drainage, local family history and the influence of the local Abbeys (particularly Sawtry and Ramsey Abbeys) in pre-Reformation times on the Great Fen area.

**I feel honoured to have chaired the group for the past two years, working with a talented and diverse group of members has been very rewarding.** The Great Fen Community & Education team has supported us enthusiastically in our activities; we hope we have amply repaid their investment in us.

Sue Wallis, Great Fen Heritage Group.  
June 2017



### **12.3 The difference brought about by the project to communities**

The scale of the Great Fen's reach into communities, and the degree to which it has enabled positive outcomes for those who became involved, has been impressive. Over 45,000 people have taken up the opportunity to experience and enjoy nature and their local heritage, many for the very first time. Investment in visitor facilities, including access improvements, was made in six areas across the Great Fen, and improvements to the quality of the natural environment undertaken at over 55 per cent of the project area. This opened up the potential for those areas to reach new and wider audiences.

Crucially, the programme also enabled people to move on from their first encounters with the natural environment, offering them the chance to learn about nature and apply that learning through practical work in natural places. Over 22,000 school-age children undertook a learning activity through the education programmes, and many others took the next step in their learning by participating in a training or development programme.

This in turn has generated a commitment, leading to over 120 people volunteering to regularly give their time in caring for, maintaining, promoting and supporting the Great Fen.

The communities of Ramsey Parish, Peterborough, Huntingdon, Yaxley and Sawtry have benefitted from physical and intellectual access to their local living landscape, giving the Fens an identity and encouraging the local community to take action for heritage and the natural environment and instil a sense of pride for their local area.

The shifts in knowledge and ownership achieved by the project suggest that increases in quality and access will be lasting, as people use their new-found enthusiasm and skills to continue to help conserve and manage natural places in their own communities. In this way the project has created a substantial legacy in the volume of people in communities who now know about, care for and have an active role in conserving the natural places around them.

Dear Louise,

As the Ramblers we are an association of people and groups who come together to both enjoy walking and other outdoor pursuits and also to ensure that we protect and expand the infrastructure and places people go walking. As such we see the development of the Great Fen in our area as a **marvellous walking resource to the walking public**. Situated as it is between the rapidly growing populations of Huntingdon and Peterborough it will provide an essential benefit to people who want a chance to enjoy a relaxing and healthy environment in delightful countryside

**We are proud to be associated with the Great Fen efforts to improve footpath access in the area and especially our joint collaboration to establish The Rothschild Way.** This being a new long distance footpath between Wicken Fen and Woodwalton Fen and finishing at the Rothschild Bungalow. We are very encouraged by the progress made so far by the Great Fen and look forward very much to continuing our collaboration in the future.

Yours faithfully

Terry Gill

Chairman

Huntingdon Ramblers

#### **Jonathan Papworth, Great Fen Farmer**

I'm a fourth generation fen farmer and home is Middle Farm. As a family we got involved some years ago, we sold the Great Fen some land and have been working with the Great Fen to convert that land from arable. It's been a big change for my family and for our staff and for everybody we work with.

We have gone forward and embraced change; our business is actually bigger now, we employ more staff, we do more different and varied things. We've gone from basic arable farming to managing an awful lot of grass and we have created a hay forage business. The cows are a new enterprise, we have been able to use some of the farming practices we had already intermingled with habitat management and grass management. We do an awful lot of contract work for the Wildlife Trust and the Great Fen and for Natural England as well, that can be anything from building roadways to car parks to picnic areas. The latest project we are working on is to convert a build for holiday accommodation for people to come and stay in the Great Fen and hopefully enjoy the wildlife and habitats created around us. I am helping people get close to wildlife and it's something I didn't think I'd be doing a few years ago but now I am definitely working with nature.



We are making it work for us, working as a partnership as well and working with some great people. All of the work we do is within five miles of where we are, so we employ lots of local people, everything is local and it's sort of creating a bit of a circle of life.

My vision for the future is that this massive environmental project will certainly create opportunities like the tourism, like the accommodation, and that's where I think we've got to concentrate. There will still be ongoing management here for years and years and years to come and hopefully we'll be involved in it.

**From: Andrew Cuthbert, Secretary to the Great Fen Local Group.**

I am writing to you as Secretary of the Great Fen Local Group to confirm our support for the Great Fen, both as a much needed wildlife habitat restoration project and as a potential benefit to the local community. As you know, the Great Fen will increase biodiversity by providing varied landscapes and habitats for wildlife and will also create a massive green space for people. This will provide new opportunities for recreation, education and local businesses through tourism and land management support activities and sub-contracted work. The Great Fen is already a major local attraction and resource. Through the educational and community projects undertaken by the Great Fen staff, it provides a wonderful inspiration and facility for local people and schools. I have personally seen evidence of the benefits to local schools of the organised visits to the Wildlife Trust Countryside Centre at the heart of the Great Fen and to local communities through the various events and educational days held at this venue.

In addition, through my efforts with the Local Group I know of the important work carried out by the Great Fen Local History Group with older people, in sheltered accommodation and elsewhere, involving memory boxes and recording recollections of bygone days. This gives great pleasure to the elderly and provides considerable health benefits as well. As a regular volunteer, I have been able to see the value of the restoration work in creating a haven for wildlife and a centre for recreation and tourism. The latter will not only bring great pleasure to the people living in the vicinity of the Great Fen but will also create much needed jobs in an economically deprived area through tourism and reserve management.

The Great Fen Local Group is a highly active voluntary body who go to great efforts to promote the Great Fen and fundraise for it. Our programme of regular educational Talks has attracted some 250 people or so over the past year while our popular series of guided rambles and walks has attracted even more participants.

Also, our fundraising activities (sponsored walks, quizzes and manning stalls at local fetes) have allowed the Local Group to provide assistance with the provision of much needed maintenance and survey tools and equipment, educational information boards and training sponsorship for reserve officer volunteers.

**The willingness of local people to give up their time to support the various activities in support of the Great Fen, whether it is as Rangers, volunteers on work parties and at events, educational project volunteers or individual land management volunteers, speaks volumes for the importance of, and the passion for, the Great Fen to the local community.**

Highlights include the building of the Straw Bale Hide (which involved around 500 volunteer hours), the Centenary Celebrations at Woodwalton Fen and the Countryside Centre, the archaeological excavation of a crashed World War Two Spitfire and two Local Group Talks on the Spitfire excavation and on the WWII Pathfinder Force, which both attracted audiences in excess of 90 people. **Such activities bring great pleasure and benefits to the volunteers themselves and form an important role in forging community spirit as well as indicating the variety of benefits the Great Fen brings to the local community as well as to wildlife.**

As such we will continue to support this important project as much as we can through promotional activities, fundraising and voluntary work.

#### **12.4 The difference brought about by the project for partnerships**

The project has enabled the Great Fen Project Partners to deliver their strategic aims against corporate and government objectives and statutory responsibilities (see appendix 12.1, 12.2, 12.3) Beyond the Great Fen project Partnership, this report has shown many examples of other partnerships, and in the words of the Middle Level Commission, the Great Fen

*“has also set a national example of what is possible in achieving landscape-scale change for wildlife and people through working in partnerships”*

...as demonstrated by the correspondence on the following pages:



20<sup>th</sup> June 2017

Kate Carver  
Great Fen Project Manager  
Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust  
Wildlife Trust Countryside Centre  
Chapel Road  
Ramsey Heights  
Cambridgeshire  
PE26 2RS



Dear Kate,

Thanks to a Heritage Lottery Fund grant Froglife spent circa £13,000 on direct habitat work for the benefit of amphibians at Great Fen. Many of the wetland areas within the Great Fen Project are interconnected and in some cases linked to rivers and ditches. This high level of connectivity means that these water bodies are likely to be colonised by fish so the importance of creating fish-free water bodies as part of the River Nene Dragon Under project was not only vital for amphibians but also important for a whole host of aquatic plants and invertebrates that cannot tolerate the presence of fish.

Initially it was agreed to construct three large fish-free ponds within drier areas of the Great Fen to ensure that high quality habitat exists for breeding amphibians. However, during the project it was decided to create a further three ponds located at Corney's Barn as an educational resource.

It is excellent to see now the results of the work two years on and extremely encouraging to see organised survey evening's successfully identifying toads using the newly created ponds. With a 65% decline in common toad populations over the last 30 years the importance of these ponds as part of The Great Fen Project cannot be overemphasised.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to work as part of the Great Fen. In recent years, Froglife has observed an impressive step change in delivery of new habitats and a new wetland landscape due to the work of the Great Fen supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. This has brought demonstrable benefits for wildlife and enabled people to get closer to nature now and in the future, and I look forward to the continued natural development of the Great Fen.

Kind regards

Kathy Wormald, CLO - froglife

Froglife, 1 Loxley, Werrington, Peterborough PE4 5BW  
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Charity Patrons: Mike Dilger & Jules Howard



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## Oxford Archaeology East

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9 June 2017

Kate Carver  
The Great Fen Project Manager  
The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire  
The Manor House, Broad Street,  
Great Cambourne  
Cambridge, CB23 6DH

### The Great Fen HLF project - Restoring our Fenland Heritage - the purchase and restoration of the Holmewood Estate – Application number HG-06-01367/2 – Oxford Archaeology East

Dear Kate,

Oxford Archaeology East (and before 2008 when OAE was CAMARC), have been involved with the Great Fen Project, since its beginnings in the late 1990's. The various Great Fen projects (and the partnerships we have engaged with), have been some of the most important and rewarding archaeological, wildlife and community work that we have had the privilege of undertaking in past 25 years of working the Cambridgeshire. The Great Fen project has been a remarkable success and continues to be hugely important not only for archaeology and wildlife conservation, but also for creating a platform for public and community engagement.

The Great Fen has hugely contributed to education and understanding of the Fens, the history of the development of the Fens is hugely important and interesting and this project has been able to convey this complex story to people, in a modern environment which normally makes this hard to understand.

The Great Fen Project is one of the Nationally important conservation projects and one to which the benefits to archaeology are great and very real. This is not only in the preservation of the buried remains but also the opportunity afforded by the project to discover buried archaeology and the chance for local communities to see, enjoy and understand the history/archaeology of the Fens in this area. The Great Fen Spitfire Project in 2015 is an exemplar of all these elements.

In addition to the clear benefits to heritage, archaeology and history, the Great Fen project's community engagement aims matched the parallel outreach aims of OA East and our HLF funded Jigsaw Community Archaeology Project. The two projects came together and the Great Fen Heritage Group was established in 2015 and joined the Jigsaw Community. This group was initially set up to work on the Spitfire project in 2015 but now continues in its own right as part of the on-going Jigsaw community archaeology project. The volunteers of the GFHG and other Jigsaw groups now regularly work on each others projects and share experiences and advice.

Oxford Archaeology East have been heavily involved with the Great Fen project around

Oxford Archaeology  
is an Chartered Institute  
for Archaeologists  
Registered Organisation  
and is bound by CIFA  
By-Laws, Standards  
and Policy





From – The Chairman, Trustees and Management Committee of Ramsey Rural Museum

**THE GREAT FEN PROJECT – LETTER OF SUPPORT**

Our association with the Great Fen Project began in 2005 when we were invited to look at a Timber Cottage situated at Darlow's Farm with a view to our moving it to the Museum.

This we did and after a great deal of effort it was finally opened to the public in March 2012 (another example of what volunteers can achieve).

Our ties have been strengthened since 2005 as we became associated with the project with the formation of the Great Fen History Group. We also have links through the Great Fen Museum Partnership where we are both working on a Fen history based project.

A further strengthening of our ties came about when we jointly decided to amalgamate our Reminiscing Boxes Lending and Talks schemes and when we are present at each other's events. Unfortunately, due to changes in the Museum's volunteers the Museum had to hand over full control to the Great Fen who continue to provide the reminiscing box lending to many schools and care homes in the local area.

We will continue to give our support to the Great Fen Project as we feel that combined with other historical venues within the immediate area it will enhance the opportunities of attracting organised tourism. The local market town of Ramsey Promotions Officer markets itself as the gateway to the Great Fen.

The reinstatement of the area of typical historic Wetlands, with the added attractions of hides, pathways along with the proposed new Visitor Centre, will provide an opportunity for visitors realising what life used to be like and how the landscape has changed.

The project has come a long way from 2005 having been supported by an enthusiastic staff and a large number of volunteers who have recreated a range of wetland features providing a haven for wildlife as well as providing a ready-made recreational area for visitors and local residents.

What is needed now is more financial support to enable the project to go forward so that it enhances not only our historical knowledge but the future stability of the local area as well.

It is our intention that we should continue the close association of our two trusts to ensure that the Fenland Heritage remains alive to all future generations to view and enjoy.

Yours Faithfully



Mr Terence Heslin MBE

Chairman Ramsey Rural Museum

I am the Promotions Officer for Promoting Ramsey and I work for Cambridgeshire Acre. On a personal level, I live in Bury which is about two miles from the edge of the Great Fen project and my husband and I are active and enthusiastic volunteers for the project. Since we moved to the area in 1989 we have seen massive strides in this restoration project and are excited about living so close to the Great Fen. My husband loves to dig and I love to talk so the combination of wildlife and heritage work undertaken at the Fen interests us both! The work for schools and children that has been set up, and often run by volunteers such as a Wildlife Watch, is excellent **and now that we are grandparents we have really enjoyed watching a new generation beginning to take an interest in their surroundings.**

With regards to my working life, I have enjoyed a very productive relationship with the Great Fen team. They are professional and very hard working. They have always been keen to work in partnership with the Promoting Ramsey Project and have supported me whenever they can. Any PR, artwork, social media or website that they have produced has been of an excellent quality and, by association, this reflects well on Ramsey. For example, the Great Fen brought national press and TV coverage to our area recently with the excellently managed excavation of the Spitfire in 2016. As well as attending Great Fen discovery days, the Promoting Ramsey Project and the Great Fen team have worked together on information boards and a driving trail from Peterborough Cathedral to Ramsey Abbey, which incorporates two stops on the Great Fen.

It has been a pleasure to volunteer as secretary of the Great Fen Steering Group and witness (confidentially) how well the Great Fen works with various partners. It is also quite humbling to see the wealth of experience and knowledge around the table as I try to capture it all in the minutes.

**The funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund has been wonderful for our area and has given a recognisable “identity” to where I live both in terms of landscape and heritage, and for that I am very grateful.**

Yours faithfully

Ann Cuthbert

Promotions Officer for Promoting Ramsey





14<sup>th</sup> June 2017

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To whom it may concern,

Over the last few years Ramsey Neighbourhoods Trust (RNT), and the projects it manages on behalf of Ramsey Million Big Local, have worked extensively with the team at the Great Fen. The objectives of RNT are to make Ramsey Parish a better place for all who live, work, volunteer or visit here. The Great Fen team has certainly made an enormous difference to this area.

RNT, on behalf of Ramsey Million Big Local, is responsible for the Ramsey youth clubs and playschemes. As part of these we have taken groups of young people to the Countryside Centre for activity days and the team have on occasion attended our sessions. Many of the young people and families we work with, despite living in a rural area, do not spend a great deal of time exploring the local countryside and all it has to offer. Being able to take them to the Great Fen and work with the team has been a wonderful learning experience.

One of the Ramsey Million Big Local aims is the promotion of Ramsey as a tourist destination and our colleague, employed by Cambridgeshire ACRE, has worked extensively with the Great Fen. On top of its great environmental significance the wonderful walks and views of the unique fen countryside has increased the footfall to our isolated rural town.

RNT has also supported by attending and promoting Great Fen events and, through the Ramsey Million Big Local Grants Programmes, has part funded various new initiatives such as 'The Nature of Memories' (A project to bring together people from different generations and backgrounds to share their stories about exploring the great outdoors) and 'From Mud Pies to Daisy Chains' (A programme of nature based activities aimed at pre-school establishments and parent and toddler groups).

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Local Trust Big Local

The Great Fen is now an intrinsic part of our community and we look forward to developing our links further to create a positive lasting change right here in our little corner of Cambridgeshire.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Aston'.

Carol Aston – Chair of Ramsey Neighbourhoods Trust

## 12.5 Reputational impact

This report has shown that the Great Fen has consistently *delivered* and in many respects *exceeded* its aims. This ability to fulfil expectations, year after year, project after project, has been instrumental in enhancing the reputation of the Great Fen and, by extension, the Project Partners. Reputation is also shaped by standards, not just what we do but how we do it, and the Great Fen has always sought to deliver everything it does to the highest standard. The Awards (see section 8.5) the Great Fen has received are not only an affirmation by others of our achievements but also building blocks of our reputation.

Returning to the major funders who originally supported the project, it is evident that the reputation of the Great Fen amongst this important constituency is extremely high and that the Great Fen is a trusted and reliable partner. Above and beyond that, however, it is also evident that the *vision* of the Great Fen and the Project Partners continues to inspire, to create passion and to evince emotion, and this too enhances the Great Fen's reputation.

### The Rothschild Foundation

*"The Great Fen Project was a hugely ambitious undertaking which will provide great benefits for both wildlife and people alike. The Rothschild family have a long history of interest in the natural world and have been involved with the Wildlife Trusts from the earliest days of the organisation, and so we were delighted to continue this relationship by supporting the Great Fen Project."*

**Simon Fourmy, Head of Grants**

### Tubney Charitable Trust

*"As a spend-out charity which closed down in 2012, Tubney Charitable Trust sought to support projects and organisations that would be transformative for society and for nature. The Great Fen fulfilled all our aspirations. The Wildlife Trusts are all about people, places and nature. The Great Fen is an amazing and inspiring place and a unique habitat. The Beds, Cambs and Northants Wildlife Trust had amazing vision to inspire this initiative and as a result the most wonderful place will be enjoyed by thousands of people for years to come."*

**René Olivieri**

### **The Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust**

*"The Trustees of the Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust are delighted to have been a part of this ground-breaking project to restore one of the one of the most significant fenlands in Europe. The benefits to rare species of plants and wildlife have been outstanding and the sighting of common cranes is testament to how much of the area has been returned to desirable wildlife habitat. The project was always much more than an environmental project however, and we have been thrilled to see the extension of work into the local communities and schools, where the next generation of conservationists and protectors of the planet have become as excited as the rest of us about this special space."*

**Sir Richard Kleinwort**

**On behalf of the Trustees of the Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust**

### **WREN**

*"WREN are delighted to have played a small part in the continuing creation of such a wonderful place. It is great to see how grants from FCC Environment through the Landfill Communities Fund have helped turn arable fields into flourishing fenland habitat for future generations to enjoy; all those involved are to be congratulated on their vision and hard work."*

**Simon Settle, General Manager**

### **GrantScape**

*"In 2011-12, GrantScape was delighted to support the Wildlife Trust's "Making Fens" project with a grant of £5,000 through the Woodford Community and Environmental Fund. We were greatly attracted by the Wildlife Trust's goal to create an innovative Visitor Hub at the heart of the Great Fen Project between Huntingdon and Peterborough, and so were pleased to be able to support the Hub's visitor picnic area, interpretation and signage through our grant. Since that time, it has been very good to hear through regular reports how wildlife and biodiversity have been enhanced at the site to help create the Wildlife's Trust vision of a 'fen in microcosm' - a mosaic of mini habitat areas including large pools, wet grassland, woodland and willow coppice and carr."*

**Andrew Budd, Grant Manager**



This report has highlighted the vital importance of partnerships, big and small, to the success of the Great Fen, and how those partnerships have been conducted has had an impact upon the Great Fen's reputation. Listening to people is important to us.



The John Clare  
Society

### ANNA KINN GALLERY HELPSTON

Crossing the Great North Road – The Great Fen meets John Clare the Northamptonshire Peasant Poet.

Driving along the long fen road to Ramsey Heights it's easy to imagine the sunlight glinting on the shimmering surface of Whittlesea Mere, a vast inland lake, once the pride of the County. One person who was familiar with this watery wonderland was our local boy John Clare the C19th nature poet. He loved the area in all its wild splendour and the way it buzzed and brimmed with life! Clare visited on several occasions collecting the rare ferns and heard the unforgettable, 'booming' call of the Bittern.

Sadly, his bountiful Eden is no more. It completely disappeared when the Mere was drained. But times and thinking change and the Vision of The Great Fen brings great hope and cheer.

My involvement with the Great Fen began in the early days of the Project.

I'm not part of a massive organisation or large corporation, just a small business hidden away in rural Cambridgeshire. But, from the start it felt important to be involved in some way. Much to my surprise the Team welcomed me in and... more importantly listened! Together we worked to promote the project from my Wildlife Gallery in the heart of John Clare Country. Imagination and creativity go hand in hand and we shared our ideas and enthusiasm with other artists, poets and writers. Exhibitions, concerts, talks and events followed, interest grew and the good news soon spread.

Thank you Great Fen Team for listening!

Seeing a lost landscape brought back to life is a truly marvellous thing! Already, so much has been achieved thanks to the dedication and sensitivity of the Restoration Team and engaging with others. Nature is forever generous and forgiving. The landscape is responding and wildlife returning. As the next phase unfolds there will be greater opportunities for people and communities, businesses large and small to be involved, share this wonderful natural area and discover the fascinating heritage of this precious place that connects with our Past – Present – Future. A special place that energises and excites as it continues to delight and surprise us all.

The Great Fen is such a place. Long may it continue to Buzz, Brim and... 'Boom'!

I wish you every success for the Future and no doubt John Clare would wish the same.

Anna Kinnaird  
& The John Clare Society.

People have always been at the centre of the Great Fen, and although we can never win over all of the people all of the time, we can and do win people over. Here is an actual example, which by the end of the conversation had not only begun to change passionately held views but also established the Great Fen in one person's esteem:

#### **E-mail correspondence March 2017**

*"To see prime agricultural land reverted back to marsh, in support of a few species of wildlife is not, in my view, a valid argument. They are out there anyway, not contained in some defined 'area of special interest'.*

*I have, all my life, been an advocate for wildlife, an avid birdwatcher and fisherman who really does value nature. But, and there has to be a 'But' I'm afraid, this scheme is in my view a nonsense. There, I've had my say, got it off my chest, my wife will be relieved, no more rants to her about it! Enough said."*

#### **Reply from the Great Fen team**

*"Thank you for your email.*

*I will not try to preach the benefits of what I feel is a truly amazing Living Landscape for people and wildlife, as at times it is just best to agree to disagree.*

*However as you have an interest in wildlife and birds, if you ever have the opportunity to check out our website [www.greatfen.org.uk](http://www.greatfen.org.uk), I am sure you will be interested in seeing how much wildlife is being sighted and monitored in this area, now that the habitat areas have been created for them. I would add that the area will be far from Marsh, simple seasonally wetted areas in amongst the mosaic of land areas managed by local graziers who happen to be the next farming generation on this part of the fen. Farming still takes place with hay crops, beef and lamb production. Also the additional work that we undertake with people in the community with regard to memories and dementia, blind and stroke associations, clubs and organisations as well as thousands of children with education service .... the list is endless. All this has come about from the formation of the Great Fen.*

*I hope this explains why we are working so hard to benefit not just wildlife but local people as well."*

#### **Response from the correspondent**

*"What can I say, you have put your case very well and thank you for replying to my luddite diatribe! I'm sure you do your very best to meet the demands of the various bodies involved. I will visit with a more discerning eye and try to be less bigoted in my view. 😊👍"*

Our partnerships - community, ecological, economic, agricultural, heritage, education, fundraising, business, digital, institutional, tourism - have spread the reputation of the Great Fen way beyond the local, to the regional, national and international.





That international standing has shaped lives and careers

### **Filip Wieckowski, Great Fen Volunteer Officer 2015**

I trained and worked in industry for a while but knew that wasn't for me and I started to look into conservation. The Great Fen appealed because it is a future looking forward thinking project that had real excitement about development and co-operative work with the community, that's what I really loved about the Great Fen and that's what I still kind of love now is the idea that we can work for wildlife and for nature with people that aren't necessarily motivated by those things to try and get a discussion going and find a middle ground that can work for everyone. I think the reputation of the Great Fen is international; it's widely acknowledged to be a massively important and innovative project and that's one of the things that attracted me to it and still inspires me.



I went to Malta to work with Bird Life International and again my role there was in two parts. It was emotionally very hard and intellectually quite difficult because I was having to learn new things very fast and I definitely had to do that on the Fen so it was a kind of natural development. Then I spent six months in Brussels working for the Institute for European Environmental Policy and I did that because I wanted to understand how to talk to people who make policy, species are international they are not one person's concern and I wanted to have an understanding of how to communicate internationally with people who can change the law. I think the Great Fen taught me how to see other people's perspectives, to recognize others' interests and work to understand them.

I came to the Great Fen thinking I knew what I wanted for my life to be and that has changed massively, it's given me confidence in myself and my abilities but it's also introduced me to new ideas about the way the world works and the way conservation has to work if it's going to be successful and that is largely to do with collaboration with people much wider than yourself with interest much wider than yours.

It really did all start here for me, learning about conservation, shaping ideas I went on to develop. Being on the Fen really introduced me to the idea that conservation isn't a local issue and because the Great Fen is recognized all over the world it made me want to explore the world a bit more and think about conservation at a global scale which is why I went to Malta and Brussels. We have to work together if we are going to get anywhere in terms of conserving what we love.



Disseminating the Great Fen's message both nationally and internationally has played a major role in building the reputation of the Great Fen at home and abroad with special interest groups, community groups, academics and policy makers.

And, dare we say it, the Great Fen's reputation even extends to a planetary influence.

*"In Sheffield there is a company producing green hydrogen. It is produced from surplus green electricity turning it into hydrogen which it feeds into the national grid, into hydrogen filling stations for road vehicles, and has a massive number of patents including a number also relating to renewable chemistry. I know this because I started the company and the company is playing its part in making this a better planet. I feel strongly that the Great Fen is making by example a **spectacular contribution to the future of the planet**, that it is doing this in such way as to provide a place for the people of this country to visit, look, learn and understand that we have a beautiful planet and that it is worth keeping alive."*

**John Wreford**

**Ashton, Stamford, Lincolnshire**

## **12.6 Summary**

This section has demonstrated with great passion and considerable depth the transformational change the project has achieved for habitats and landscape, lives, communities, and partnerships. The feelings and emotions the contributors to this section have expressed are truly uplifting, they speak of hope, and pride, and excitement and fulfilment, and opportunity, and ... so on. A shining testament of the impact and outcomes the project has achieved. The reputational impact of the project extends worldwide, and closer to home, has achieved that rarest of things, transformation in mindsets.



## Section 13

### Conclusions and lessons learned

Throughout this report we have been concerned to demonstrate *transformation*, how the project has *changed* lives and landscapes, and the *difference* the project has made to local communities and local people, to their understanding of and engagement with heritage and nature, to their lives, skills, careers, businesses, and opportunities to enjoy the new landscape created in eight years from carrot fields.

On this journey we have learned some valuable lessons around these key themes:

- 13.1 Vision**
- 13.2 Partnerships**
- 13.3 Volunteers**
- 13.4 Ways of Working**
- 13.5 Communication**
- 13.6 Project Planning and management**
- 13.7 Resources for Success**

#### 13.1 Vision

##### The Great Fen Vision

*A restored fenland landscape providing a rich variety of habitats for people and wildlife, now and in the future*

##### **Great Fen Masterplan 2010**

Without grand thinking, nothing will happen. The vision predated the project, but throughout the project we returned to it again and again, to inspire and to communicate our passion, and as verbal and visual shorthand for what the future was to bring. We learned how truly *useful* the vision is.

##### **A true landscape transformation is possible even with a fragmented land holding**

We always knew that, with tenancies reverting one by one to our control, and several with no prospect of an end for decades, the restoration would happen in a piecemeal way. We did investigate securing an early end to tenancies at both Ladyseat Farm and Engine Farm. Ladyseat Farm negotiations were not successful, but vacant possession of Engine Farm was secured with the second tranche of HLF funding. We also conducted much planning and feasibility work to understand how we could get the best results for landscape restoration in the short-medium term, without hindering long-term goals or incurring costs on engineering that would not be required long-term. We have demonstrated how wetlands can be formed on a farm-by-farm basis without detriment to our farming neighbours, and that we can work around those who do not wish to surrender their land. It has reminded us yet again that a long-term goal requires patience.

## Relativity

It's perfectly acceptable for different parts of the Great Fen to achieve according to different timescales (which is where the 100 year vision is so valuable). Whilst funding streams may dictate achievement in specified areas, there will always be areas of work which by their nature are slower burning, such as economic delivery. Having a long timescale within which to set the full range of activities and achievements and within which different areas move at different rates relative to one another helps stakeholders understand the complexity of the undertaking.

## 13.2 Partnerships

### Partnerships are key to success

There are so many examples of partnerships, large and small, which are woven into the soul of this project that it feels impossible to capture all that they have contributed. They have transformed the way that we work, and enhanced what we have delivered in every aspect of what we have achieved.

High-level partnerships, such as between the Project Partners, have offered expertise and gravitas, making this a successful and highly regarded project which can demonstrate a well-rounded commitment to local communities, economic development, ecosystem services including flood water storage, and wildlife. This has also enabled the Project Partners to punch above their weight: we were able to achieve more collectively than as separate entities (attracting funding from HLF being a case in point).

One excellent shorter-term collaboration was between the local Greenwatch group and Huntingdon Youth Group on an animated film about the project. They created a unique and timeless resource which encapsulates the whole project and speaks to all audiences: see [www.greatfen.org.uk/great-fen-animation](http://www.greatfen.org.uk/great-fen-animation)

Professional partnerships, such as with Oxford Archaeology East on the Spitfire excavation, have enhanced our reputation within the heritage sector as well as giving us fantastic opportunities to engage with new audiences.

It's also worth saying that the relationship with HLF is a partnership; they are there to guide and help, not just to monitor and release funding. We couldn't have achieved what we have without their support, their expertise and their willingness to let us do what we do best.

## 13.3 Volunteers

### Volunteers are invaluable...

The success of the project couldn't have been achieved without the help of a remarkable volunteer team. They have brought expertise, experience, skills, man and woman power, dedication, creativity and enthusiasm to the project. They have supported the team in a variety of ways and at every level. The benefit runs both ways and the need to provide our volunteers with opportunities to learn new skills, share their interests, gain experience, meet new people or know that their contribution is making a difference is a very important part of our volunteer management.



### **... and Local Champions are champion**

Local people who can be advocates for the project are invaluable for changing hearts and minds. A voice within the local farming community, a member of staff rooted in the community, volunteers who tell their friends and families about good experiences working with the Great Fen are all powerful assets, especially in the early years of a project when the communication process is beginning. As time goes on they add credibility and enhance reputation. Local Champions can also be invaluable sources of information about local land owners and managers and their situations, inclinations and concerns; such information is very important to establishing and maintaining good communications and relationships with the local community.

## **13.4 Ways of Working**

### **Patience and determination will win the day.**

All permissions have been secured eventually and all works delivered.

*“The project was always a long-term vision, and for a time the enormous boost provided by the actual purchase of the Holmewood Estate provided such momentum that many felt that progress towards restoration should be as swift. We have harnessed this enthusiasm and inspiration to push us further and faster than we ever dreamed of, but tempered it with knowledge and the experience we have built, to manage expectations while we worked towards a phenomenal result: a landscape fit for the future, bursting with potential for people and wildlife alike.”*

**Lorna Parker, Great Fen Restoration Manager**

*“Restoring wetland on land with a long agricultural history presents many challenges, both social and physical. It is not uncommon for wetland restoration projects to fail through underestimating these challenges, or the amount of time required for an environment to adjust. Much of the success of this project should then, in our opinion, be attributed to the consistent, enduring determination of the project team to meet these challenges with an open mind and responsiveness to the local area.”*

**Kirsty Spencer, Principal Ecologist (OHES Environmental)**

### **Everything takes longer than you would think**

Despite our best efforts with liaison and consultation, it has proven extremely difficult to secure consents, abstraction licences and permissions in a timely way. Delays in these areas have knock-on effects when dealing with sites harbouring protected species whose breeding seasons must be avoided. Late decisions on permissions can also mean contractors are then busy with other jobs. In the beginning we used to joke that you should estimate how long something will take, then treble it!

### **Always embrace new opportunities**

*“People will try to tell you that all the great opportunities have been snapped up. In reality, the world changes every second, blowing new opportunities in all directions, including yours.”*

**Ken Hakuta**

Don't be afraid to embrace new opportunities. Throughout the project, the team have embraced some amazing opportunities that have come their way such as the Spitfire excavation, the development of the Fen Friends animated characters to engage with our younger audiences, the

health and wellbeing connections, the digital communication, the wide-ranging skills of the volunteers and much more. These opportunities were not always in the original plan, but have taken the team on some incredible new journeys engaging with new audiences, forging new partnerships and gaining so much support for the project.

### **Don't be afraid to move outside your comfort zone**

There are synergies to be explored and gains to be made. An example is the Bevill's Leam Local Advisory Group DRY project which resulted in the Great Fen participating in *The Reasons* performances at Ramsey Rural Museum and Peterborough Cathedral, and taking part in the Utopia Fair at Somerset House in 2016. Working with a selection of academic social scientists didn't, on the face of it, look like the obvious way to create new models for water apportionment and water management but involvement with Dr Antonia Liguori and her consortium of universities opened new avenues, new partnerships and new ways of thinking for the Great Fen which may eventually feed into national policy formulation.

### **You can always make a good idea better by letting it evolve**

The Community Forum went through several iterations to reach its current format, and may go through more! We learned from year to year what worked, what didn't and how we could improve. So, never be afraid to learn and evolve. Another grand example is the Spitfire excavation which started off as an approach from a private individual to recover the wreck in an afternoon and ended up as an 18-month project of international significance (not our evaluation, but that of the lead archaeologist) for archaeological methodology.

## **13.5 Communication**

### **Good positive communication**

It is vital to implement a community communication plan at the **very start** of any project. Knowing how we would inspire, engage and communicate our project creatively to the local community even in those very first stages was crucial in helping alleviate the negative challenges that the team faced in the first two years of the HLF-funded project.

### **Branding: make recognition (and then support) easy for people**

Branding has been a challenge throughout the project. Each Project Partner has distinctive branding, the Great Fen has its own branding and identity, and of course we need to acknowledge our funders by displaying their branding. Early on in the project a hierarchy of branding was established which led to the development of the Project Partners logo bar.

This is factually correct, but not necessarily helpful in enabling people to work out who was responsible for the Great Fen. It's a difficult balance: the Project Partners are right in wanting recognition, but a visual shorthand (which is part of what branding is) needs to be just that, immediate and to the point. Above all, we needed to make it easy for people. A hard one to resolve when a multiplicity of interests has to be served but we have found that a clear knowledge of those interests' expectations and good communication are vital in reaching acceptable compromises.

## **13.6 Project planning and management**

### **Planning for the end from the beginning...**

Avoid uncertainty and inspire confidence both within the team and among stakeholders and audiences by having an exit plan right from the beginning. Don't let it be overlooked in the course of

day-to-day work. Undoubtedly a plan will need to evolve as the project advances and as circumstances (such as macro financial circumstances) change but it must be built in from the beginning.

### **Create a project archive at the beginning**

Writing this evaluation report has been challenging for many reasons, not least because of the sheer volume of material covering eight years of intensive activity. In hindsight, it would have been useful to have started a project archive in year one.

### **Impacts of success**

Apart from the general public, throughout the eight years of the project we have welcomed an enthusiastic stream - which shows no sign of abating - of what one might call “specialist” visitors: individuals or groups with a particular set of interests, be they in ecology, hydrology, landscape, land management, stakeholders, communication, funding, education or community engagement. Such specialists require focused attention, ranging from presentations and site tours to in-depth meetings and seminars, from one or several of the Great Fen team. This is excellent but time consuming and in hindsight we would have been wise to plan in from the start staff time and resources to service this need. This is certainly a learning point for the future.

### **Avoid hostages to fortune**

The *Masterplan* is an invaluable statement of our vision for the Great Fen. So much more than a document that sits on a shelf, it is the wellspring from which the Great Fen has changed lives and landscapes. However, some of the maps showing indicative or potential access routes have not been helpful as they have been perceived as definitive. This is partly a problem of communication, but also a lesson: never promise (or appear to promise) more than you can or would actually want to deliver.

### **Project management over an extended period**

- Administrative support. This was underestimated at the start of the project period. As the complexity of the project grew, as delivery increased and as the number of volunteers grew, it was necessary to increase the hours of administrative support to the project team, and in particular the hours spent on administering volunteers. In some respects we were victims of our own success.
- The support of the finance team during the project became increasingly vital as the complexity of managing the budget grew over time, particularly because we had multiple match funders. We had and needed a skilled member of staff in that team and this is a vital requirement for the future.
- In a project with longevity there will always be a risk of staff absences and movement and a need to cover project functions during absences of project team members. This risk should be part of the project risk register and reviewed with senior managers in order to consider how much of a challenge this poses on the team, especially with regard to backfilling arrangements.
- New rules and legal requirements arising after the start of the project brought challenges such as from new rules for construction (e.g. CDM expertise) which required us to develop particular skills from within the team. Because this was expensive we only trained one person, who was then absent for part of the project period. The learning point is the training and skill development budget may need more contingency in future projects.

- It is useful to have adequate external professional support from land agents for major land purchase; *high quality specialist* professional support should be factored into the initial project budget.
- Good communication with the HLF monitors is very important and we were grateful to have highly skilled monitors who understand the conservation sector.
- It has been helpful to have the wider resource of the Project Partnership and the Working Groups to draw on, as a sounding board, for advice, for encouragement, for technical and professional support as well as practical and financial support.
- Having the Masterplan with its the broad strategic framework as well as having a project framework (approved purpose and aims) provided the Project Manager and Steering Group a clearer understanding to frame the project activity and achievements.

### **13.7 Resources for success**

#### **Success depends on securing match funding and ongoing economic sustainability**

It goes without saying that a large HLF funding offer requires a large amount of match funding. This is a significant undertaking which requires a multi-disciplinary team, lots of effort and creativity, ongoing stewardship and careful administration. All of these things place demands on staff from across the organisation which must be balanced against other organisational needs. As an organisation, we have learnt a lot about getting the balance right so that a large project can be delivered successfully and leave the organisation bigger and stronger as a result. An essential part of that strength is sustaining momentum in the future, which cannot happen without economic sustainability: we are now a more forward-thinking organisation than we were, planning a portfolio of economic activity to make us sustainable.

#### **Success breeds ambition**

We know we can deliver against aims and objectives and to budget. We know we can deliver more than we set out to do. We have ideas for the future. We are ambitious for the Great Fen and Living Landscapes. We know we can do more.



## Section 14

### Legacy and Future Direction

*“To see the gradually developing changes to the visual landscape over the last few years has been fascinating, and I am full of anticipation about the new habitats ahead.”*

#### 14.0 Introduction

##### 14.1. Restoration and monitoring

##### 14.2 Education & community

##### 14.3 Socio-economic development

##### 14.4. The Wildlife Trust

##### 14.5 Future ecological, economic and cultural sustainability

##### 14.6 Summary



Heron by Carry Akroyd

## 14.0 Introduction

This section examines the enduring benefits that will result from our HLF-funded activities and which continue after the project has been delivered, into the future.

### 14.1 Restoration and Monitoring

#### 14.1.1 Legacy

The most visible legacy of the HLF funding is 933ha of rapidly developing wildlife habitats, available for the enjoyment of visitors. This huge area is already being used by hundreds of scarce and declining species, and will continue to grow richer and more diverse in the coming years and decades.

There is a huge legacy of knowledge and expertise from the eight years of HLF-funded work. This is manifested in many ways: the team of 100+ naturalists who deliver survey work and provide advice; a comprehensive long-term management and monitoring programme, actively used and reported to; and a guiding ethos encapsulated in the topic papers. We also have an enormous body of technical soil and water information which means that we now have feasibility-tested, costed schemes (some with already obtained consents) for habitat water storage which can be delivered as soon as further funds are secured. We have a comprehensive *Management Plan* for the ongoing management of land brought into restoration as well as management plans for the NNRs.

Another important legacy is the partnerships we have formed with academic institutes. We are now engaged in forward-thinking research which gives us a long-term plan for understanding the underlying processes of restoration (landscape-scale monitoring, carbon flux, weather telemetry), is exploring solutions to fundamental problems such as water quality (paludicultural experimentation) and will enable us to monetise our natural capital (carbon flux research). The Great Fen has also given an important legacy to the wider Wildlife Trust which has plans to roll out the ecological monitoring model developed at the Great Fen across the three counties, and has created new resource to make this happen.

HLF-funded posts have been absorbed into the Wildlife Trust's core establishment, which ensures a continuity of knowledge, skills and experience.

In short, our legacy is a wealth of information and a platform from which we launch into an exciting future at the forefront of the landscape-scale nature conservation movement.

#### 14.1.2 Plans for the Future

The one hundred year vision of the Great Fen encompasses over 3500ha of land. Thanks to the HLF funding, the freehold of over half of this has been secured, and most is already in restoration. Only one farm remains to link the northern area of Holme Fen National Nature Reserve and the Holmewood Estate to the southern Woodwalton Fen NNR and its extensions. It is the Wildlife Trust's ambition to secure this additional farm within the next few years, and ultimately to restore the whole 3500ha of the Great Fen.

We have a legacy of expert staff who are highly experienced in project management, delivery and fundraising. We already have well developed ideas for future projects which would continue to link and expand the areas of land under restoration, as well as developing new paradigms in wetland management for ecosystem services such as economically self-sustaining natural water filtration with paludicultural crops, and water storage both for flood attenuation purposes and habitat creation.

## Areas where major research is needed – Blue sky thinking

**Monitoring** of the **movement of wildlife** between other **landscape scale projects**

**Catchment wide review of the hydrology.** Also thinking about the catchment of the GF area and the quality of water that comes into it.

Study of scale of project – what is **optimum approach and size?** What is the **right size of project/landscape?** Should we do one **large project** or **several smaller** ones? Is there a size where it doesn't work?

**Mitigating** or **adapting** to water supply issues in a **cost-effective manner**

Types of **land management** – what do they deliver in terms of carbon balance

**Carbon balance** – what is our plan. What would it need to look like to deliver this outcome?

What effect does **changing grazing regime** have on **climate change** – does this need offsetting?

**Overlooked species** e.g. fungi and bryophytes

Understanding most **effective communication and engagement messages** and models – ensuring the route back of info from public is valued and easy. The value of **genuine engagement** with communities.

Evidence of **effects of predators** on the site – monitoring of predator numbers, bringing this together into something more coherent

Impact of **existing ecology balance** on how the project has developed – what have we **gained** and what have we **lost?**

**Alternative farming methods** and income streams – Looking at the potential of what could be done. Where is the evidence and **what is achievable?** Marsh products?

The **change in chemistry** around the site – what is leaving the site? Full **nutrient budget** for site as a whole





## 14.2 Education and Community

### 14.2.1 Legacy

Over the eight years, the tremendous work that the Education and Community team, the volunteers and our partners have achieved has left many legacies which will benefit the local communities and beyond for years to come.

Improved access routes and visitor facilities such as bird hides throughout the project area give people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to explore the area for recreation and leisure as well as enjoying the wildlife. The Great Fen is also gaining recognition internationally through our Spitfire and Fen Memories film projects, and through digital media such as the website, apps, and social media.

We have developed an innovative range of interpretive materials, both digital and hard copy including a range of information panels throughout the area telling the stories of heritage and the biodiversity of the Fens.

A remarkable heritage network has been formed with local communities, partners and heritage attractions. A history archive has also been collected with artefacts, photos and stories that is actively being used to disseminate the heritage and stories of the fens to the public through digital media, school programmes, events and reminiscence sessions ensuring that memories are collected and recorded for future generations.

The Great Fen has also given an important legacy to the wider Wildlife Trust which has plans to roll out the heritage model developed at the Great Fen across the three counties, and is creating new resources to make this happen.

We have created a network of schools who want to be engaged in wildlife and heritage activities and this has helped shape their curriculum and planning models.

We have over 150 dedicated volunteers who bring skills, experience and expertise in various roles, supporting project staff in delivering work on the Great Fen now and in the future.

Here too, HLF-funded posts have been absorbed into the Wildlife Trust's core establishment which ensures a continuity of knowledge, skills and experience.

### 14.2.2 Plans for the future

We intend to build on this phenomenal legacy of community engagement, continuing the work that we have started, engaging with as many diverse audiences as we are able to reach and seizing as many creative and innovative opportunities for delivering inspirational environmental education and engagement as we can realistically support. We aim to make the Great Fen a household name.

Our newly developed *Great Fen Interpretation and Activity Plan 2017 and beyond* (see appendix 14.0) sets out the future strategic direction and goals of the Great Fen's education and community engagement.

In particular, we will look at developing further opportunities for:

- Families with children
- The communities of Peterborough and Huntingdon
- Young people from 14yrs to 25yrs, specifically looking at promoting career opportunities in the environment and apprenticeships
- People who will benefit from 'nature's therapy', connecting people with the outdoors especially people who face barriers such as mental illness, and physical and cognitive disabilities.

### **Stories and topics for 2017 and beyond.**

These stories and topics will complement the existing work that has been achieved and will help shape and form future interpretation and activities.

1. Climate Change, Living Landscapes and Ecosystem services
2. Nature's Therapy - The Great Fen for Health and Wellbeing
3. Exploring the Dark Fen Skies
4. Taking the Fen Past into the Fen Future

"In thinking of the legacy of the project and future direction, I would re-iterate my strong view that the value of projects and land such as this to the wider community is not in rare and rarefied species or arcane plant communities, to which most people cannot relate. Conservation will engage with general audiences much more effectively if it delivers outcomes that are more relevant to individual lives. In my view Great Fen is perfectly suited to provide such outcomes in two main areas: ecosystem services and health and wellbeing. Any future direction of the project would benefit from strongly developing these two areas as the core offer to local communities, within which a natural, wildlife rich landscape would thrive. Ecosystem services and health and wellbeing also underpin the Living Landscapes idea."

Mike Harding Great Fen HLF Monitor - February 2017

## 14.3 Socio-economic development

### 14.3.1 Legacy

We have a legacy of strategic planning, the economic *Routemap*, partnerships, staff with increased levels of expertise, expert advisers, extant visitor infrastructure (and plans to develop more) and upskilling of staff and volunteers. We have the support (including financial support) of the Project Partners to continue to develop this area of activity – an area which is not always an easy fit within funding streams.

### 14.3.2 Plans for the future

In the immediate future we plan to re-invigorate and update the *Routemap* through the creation of a “high level” advisory panel of experts within relevant fields such as commercial land management, finance, the digital technologies, retail, land-based businesses, and ecosystem services, to review and refine the *Routemap* and identify the best opportunities for the Great Fen within the framework of the strategic planning completed to date. We are planning an introductory workshop in September 2017 followed by biannual meetings, and a second Business Forum in 2018.

We will continue developing the plans for the visitor centre site and will progress the project development through business planning, through site investigations and studies, through working towards a planning application; and through the creation of funding strategy. We will continue to work with our fundraising colleagues in the Wildlife Trust to identify funding streams both for the visitor site and for other areas of visitor infrastructure such as the car park at Kester’s Docking. We will continue to negotiate public access, such as a route into the north of the Great Fen via Froghall Bridge linking with Peterborough Green wheel and the Peterborough Communities, with neighbouring landowners and residents.

We will continue existing ongoing commercial negotiations with land-based businesses and will work with Wildlife Trust colleagues on identifying and developing new business opportunities. We are also taking the lead role in a potential tool to achieve sustainability, not just for the Great Fen but on a broader, regional scale , as outlined in 14.5.1 below.

## 14.4 The Wildlife Trust

The project has had many important outcomes for the wider Wildlife Trust, including:

- Raised profile of the WT regionally, national and internationally both within the sector and outside it
- Created hugely positive engagement and communications opportunities for the Trust
- Created template for engaging new audiences through heritage, now being rolled out across the Trust
- Created new template for digital engagement (e.g. the Great Fen Apps) now being considered across wider Wildlife Trust, and for digital excellence in the Great Fen website [www.greatfen.org.uk](http://www.greatfen.org.uk)
- Created new template for systematic and wide-ranging approach to species recording and monitoring; the Wildlife Trust has focused resource to apply this across its operations
- Created new template for visitor engagement and reserves “policing” through development of Volunteer Ranger concept, now being developed in other Wildlife Trusts reserves
- Created confidence amongst funders and supporters that the Wildlife Trust delivers huge and important projects successfully.
- Deepened existing fundraising relationships
- Broadened reach of Wildlife Trust fundraising activities - reached wider range of funders
- Upskilling e.g. evolved/ developed skills in stewardship of donor relationships e.g. managing multiple match funding streams simultaneously
- Strengthened existing partnerships and developed many new ones of benefit to the Wildlife Trust
- Brought new many new areas of technical expertise into the Trust as a result of experience/training gained through the project (e.g. hydrological, planning and consents, project delivery and management, CDM, health and wellbeing)



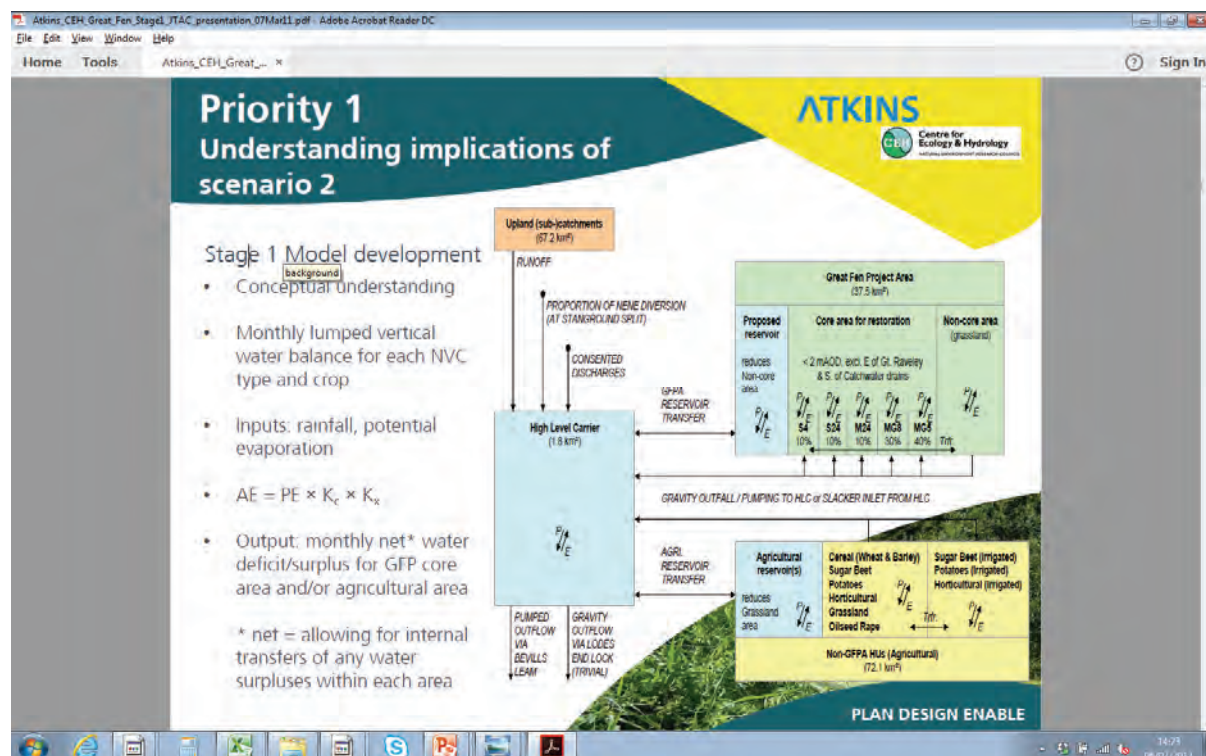
## 14.5 Future, ecological, economic and cultural sustainability

The sustainability of managing such a large area of land effectively while delivering the best conservation outcomes and visitor experience has been at the forefront of management planning and strategy through every stage and in every area of work. To this end we have adopted naturalistic processes for management wherever possible e.g. grazing or water table management. We work closely with local contractors and businesses to manage land in a mutually beneficial way to reduce management costs and generate income where possible. This process will be ongoing and aspirational (see Section 13.9 for more detail).

*“One of the great advantages of The Great Fen project is its scale, allowing it to operate at multiple levels (i.e. landscape and site level). This not only provides a robust ecological resource in terms of species populations, but also offers a much more natural and sustainable approach in terms of hydrological functioning and water storage. As each farm becomes incorporated into the project, it allows for connections which have historically been isolated (through drainage, infrastructure or ownership) to become connected once again. These connecting features (such as the presence of old buried creek systems, permafrost features and lake sediments) reflect the irreplaceable history of the area and provide a valuable resource for study. It is one of the great strengths of the project that staff continuously strive to work with the natural resources of the site and preserve their inherent value for future generations.”*

**Kirsty Spencer, Principal Ecologist (OHES Environmental)**

The financial demands are only one facet of sustainability; we have also worked hard to design habitats pragmatically, making them more sustainable in the long term. This ranges from simple things like path layouts which encourage sensitive use by visitors and prevent undesirable behaviour, through to water movement systems which use gravity rather than wind pumps. Asset protection -i.e. ensuring we do no impact houses, roads and other infrastructure - has been built into wetland design so that there is no requirement for mitigation measures such as waterproof barriers, which would entail future maintenance or investment. We have invested in machinery such as a syphon pump which will be low maintenance and fuel-free to give us maximum flexibility for future water management, and a side-arm flail so that we can target specialist, sensitive conservation management on the areas where it will have the most impact, as and when required.



Finally, and most importantly, there is an imperative for ecological sustainability in terms of water availability. Climate change scenarios have been carefully applied to modelling during feasibility studies and design for our new wetlands. Scheme designs are made to fit available water, and we have carried out extensive studies to understand where and how we can store water in times of excess (e.g. peak flow during flood risk events), to be used in times of low rainfall (e.g. summer drought). We are working very much towards the creation of a habitat for the future, in the conditions that will prevail in the future, rather than a recreation of something from a time that is past in a climate that no longer exists.

#### 14.5.1 The Biosphere approach

UNESCO Biosphere Reserves are model regions for sustainable development and test sites for conservation approaches where communities collaborate to live in harmony with the environment. They are the world's only internationally recognised 'badge' for demonstrating excellence in sustainable development.

*"Whilst exemplary in its own right, the Great Fen project has also helped stimulate a wider vision for a rich natural environment across the Fens as part of a highly productive agricultural area and home to many. Taken together with other initiatives such as the Wicken Vision, Lakenheath and our NNRs at Chippenham Fen, there is considerable support and interest in this wide vision. Natural England is now working with new partners to build on this through the concept of a Cambridgeshire Fenland Biosphere Reserve."*

**John Torlesse, Manager, West Anglia Team, Natural England**

This report has shown that over the past eight years (2008-2017) the Great Fen, the first of the Wildlife Trust movement's *Living Landscapes*, has indeed delivered transformational change to the landscape, the wildlife and to local communities, largely through the medium of the HLF-funded

project *The Purchase and Restoration of the Holmewood Estate* 2008 -2017 HG-06-01367/2 and with the support of the Great Fen's five Project Partners.

We now need to secure long-term sustainability for these achievements, define the future strategic direction of the Great Fen and manage the challenges associated with changing external factors, such as the financial pressures on government agencies (e.g. the Environment Agency and Natural England); pressures on designated sites (such as the NNRs); changes in availability of grants from Landfill tax and other funding sources; financial and organizational uncertainties created by Brexit; and changes to the regional political environment.

These issues and challenges are common to other landscape-scale conservation projects in the Cambridgeshire fens, and indeed to a wide constituency of land managers. A consensus is forming that a step change in approach must be sought. In January 2015, initially from the point of view of enhanced protection through additional designation, but with the broader issues outlined above in mind, the Great Fen Project Partners began to look at UK and worldwide designations. One of these was the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status, which shares many of the same strategic aims as the Great Fen and whose conceptual approach is the direct international equivalent of the Living Landscape. It was felt that the Great Fen's overarching aim of achieving integrated benefits through partnership, working with local communities and with wider civil society is very much in line with the Biosphere Reserve objective of sustainable development fostered by local communities.

An application has therefore been made to HLF for funding to fully scope the Biosphere Reserve concept.

#### **14.5.2 Payment for ecosystem services**

Payment for ecosystem services provided by the Great Fen, particularly those of flood attenuation, water storage, and carbon sequestration, is an exciting potential contributory mechanism in securing the future long-term financial sustainability of the Great Fen so ensuring that the legacy of all that has been achieved over the life of the project can be retained and built on.

ESS also contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities and can benefit the local economy through the provision of goods and services. [source *England's Ecosystem Services: A preliminary assessment of three habitat types: broad-leaved woodland, the inter-tidal zone and fresh-water wetlands*, English Nature Research Reports, 2006]. There are then financial and strategic benefits to be gained from ecosystem services.

The Great Fen delivers several ecosystem services on a landscape scale. Section 5 discusses achievements to date in the creation of water storage on the Great Fen and plans for water storage for habitat water and flood attenuation purposes in the future, has detailed the impact on biodiversity, and has explained how re-wetting peat can deliver carbon sequestration and prevent emissions of carbon dioxide and section 13 examines the impact of the Great Fen on health and wellbeing

The 2012 report *Socio Economic Study of the Great Fen* by Cumulus Consultants stated, “*The Great Fen could deliver income through ecosystem services relating to flood mitigation, water storage and carbon and biodiversity credits. The realisation of such income depends on the development of Payment for Ecosystem Services schemes, further analysis of benefits and costs, and agreement with future purchasers. The Brander meta-analysis function indicates the value of ecosystem services from the Great Fen to be £7.85m p.a. ... this is an indication of the ‘value’, and not a prediction of the actual ‘cash’ it could generate, as this would be dependent on the outcome of further research and negotiations with prospective buyers relating to the potential PES schemes*”.

Good progress has been made in the area of carbon credits. The Wildlife Trust has recently commissioned a study (not published) entitled *Peatland rewetting within the Great Fen Project: value calculation for carbon offset*. This assesses the magnitude of the peat resource within the Great Fen, identifies offsetting metrics and assigns a carbon offsetting price. This study is currently under informal peer review at the University of East London.

Taken in tandem with the Great Fen’s new ability to verify emissions (through the CEH carbon flux tower) the study and the metrics it identifies could potentially offer a **key tool** for achieving the economic sustainability of the Great Fen which in turn will enable the Great Fen to continue supporting the local economy.

Indicative studies for the provision of floodwater storage for the Middle Level have been completed and discussions initiated with neighbouring landowners regarding the creation of water storage areas around land directly owned by the Great Fen. In time, this could result in future application(s) to DEFRA for funding for capital works and/or compensatory payments to achieve flood attenuation provision within the Great Fen to benefit communities and businesses in the Great Fen and the broader catchment.

Natural and semi-natural habitats such as woodlands, wetlands, permanent grasslands and especially peatlands, are able to store much larger quantities of organic carbon than intensive agricultural land or built-up areas. So, there is potential for many aspects of the Trust’s land management to offer benefits in terms of carbon storage.

Mitigation and adaptation for climate change were also among the first aims of the Great Fen project, and are one of the four aims in its Master-plan (2010). Peatland soils such as those in the Great Fen gradually erode and decompose if the land is drained and cultivated, releasing large amounts of carbon dioxide. A study commissioned from the Open University in 2008 immediately before the start of the HLF funded work suggested that restoring the land of the Great Fen to wetland could avoid carbon dioxide losses of around 300,000 tons per year for about 100 years. This study had access to only approximate measures of peat depth, and did not fully consider the potentially deleterious impacts of other greenhouse gases, notably methane and nitrogen oxides.

In 2016-17, Dr Peter Bungay, a research biochemist, came to volunteer for the Trust. His background enabled him to re-visit the issues around Great Fen carbon storage. He refined the method for calculating the magnitude of present peat stores across the Great Fen, based on combining historical data for the distribution of peat thickness with estimated rates of peat loss. He also found the range of estimates of the carbon content of peat from the literature. For each of the measures, he



assessed the potential variance, so that he could provide a range of probable values. He also obtained the best current estimates for methane and nitrogen oxide production in peatlands during restoration, and demonstrated that these were insignificant compared with the size of the carbon store, and therefore the figures could be used confidently.

We will use these robust measures of the carbon storage potential of the Great Fen to consider further engagement with business.

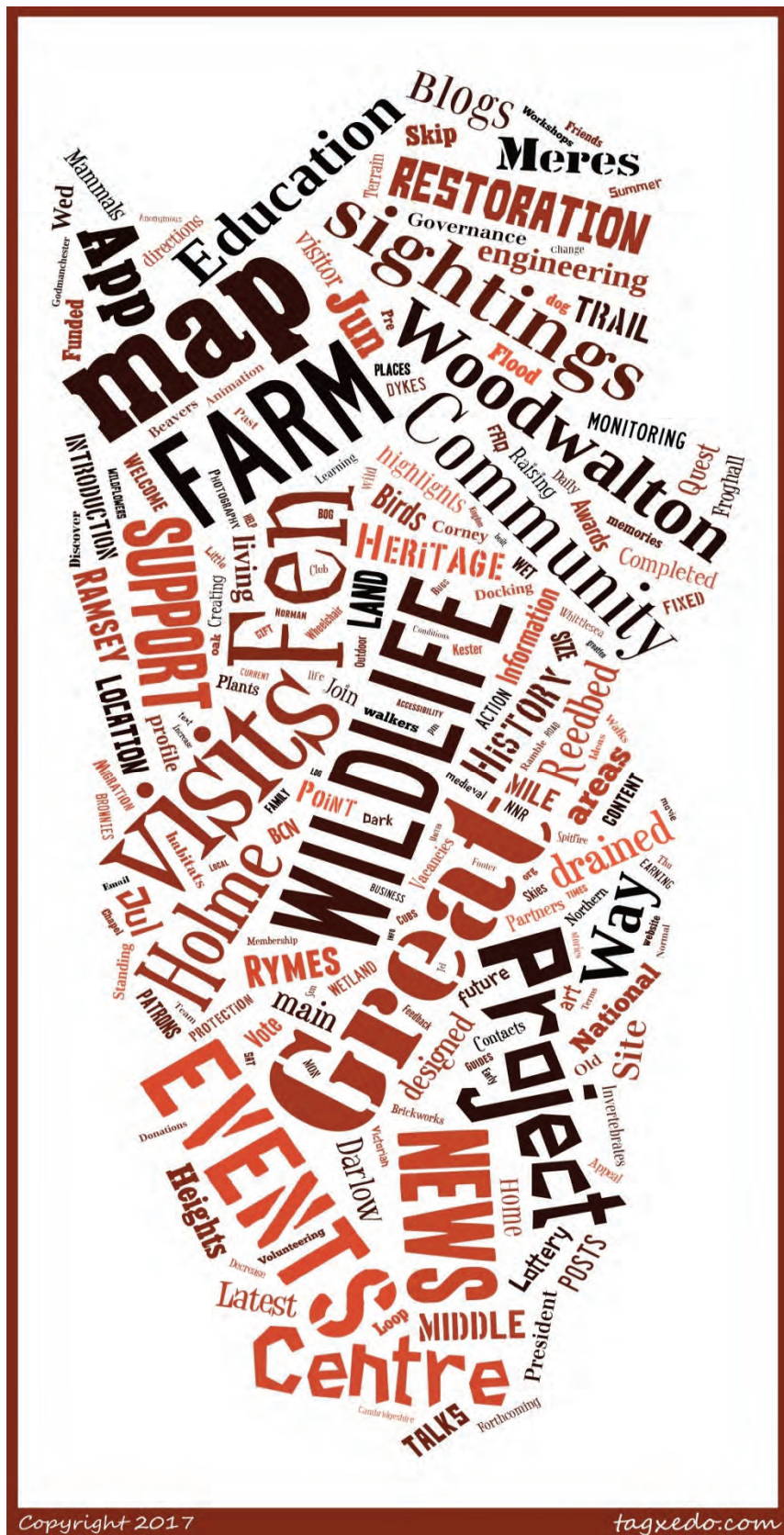
## 14.6 Summary

At the start of this project we could have had no inkling of the scale of our achievements nor of the tremendously positive impact we have made on lives, communities and organizations. Our legacy, what we have created to shape the future, is equally inspiring. Our restoration and monitoring legacy will shape this landscape and the wildlife that is rapidly populating it for decades, possibly even centuries to come. Our education and community legacy will continue to shape imagination, and enjoyment and that unique sense of fulfilment that successful partnerships and volunteering brings, not only in the Great Fen but in the wider Wildlife Trust and beyond. Our economic legacy has given us the sure and secure base from which to launch into future sustainability. All we have learned and our successes have empowered us to think of sustainability in the wider context.

In the county where Charles Rothschild created the first nature reserves at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, we have now demonstrated the future of nature conservation: landscape scale and fully involving local communities. The Great Fen has already inspired the Living Landscapes movement creating over 150 landscape scale conservation schemes across the other 46 Wildlife Trusts.



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## Section 16.

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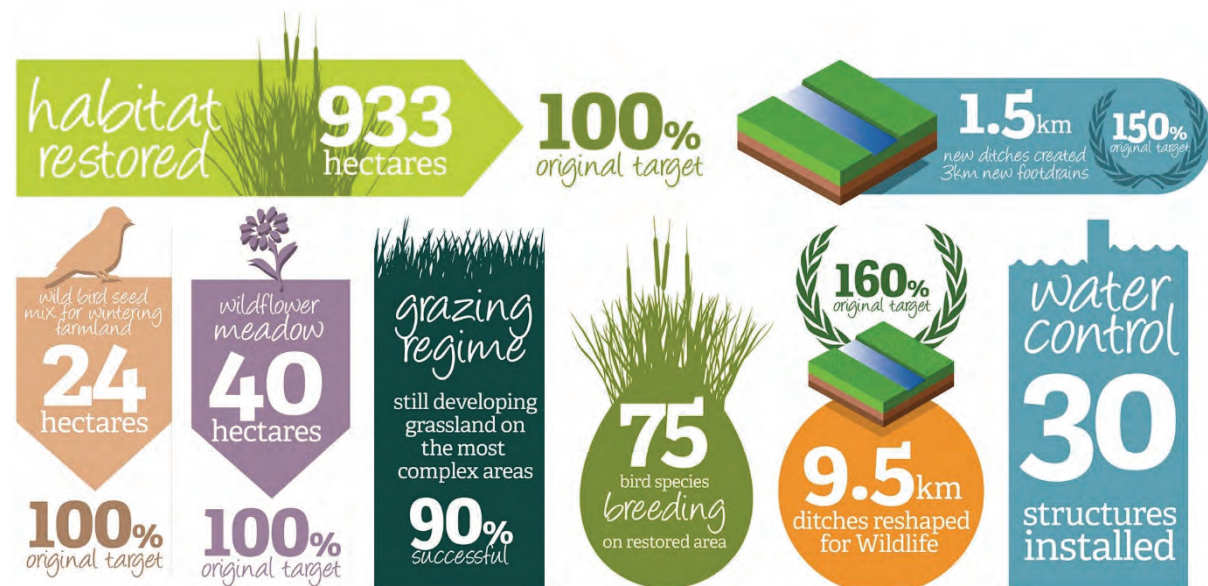
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## Section 17.

### Infographics Summary

#### Restoration



#### Education and Community

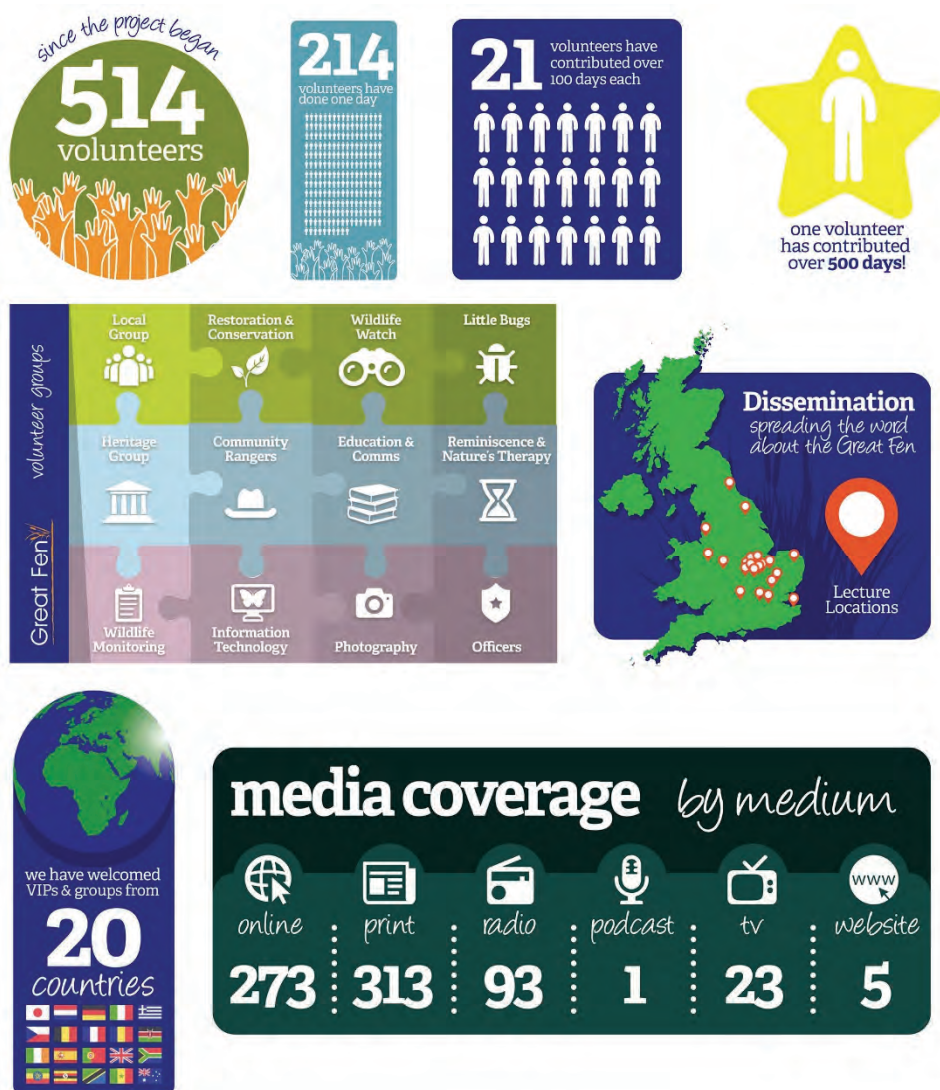




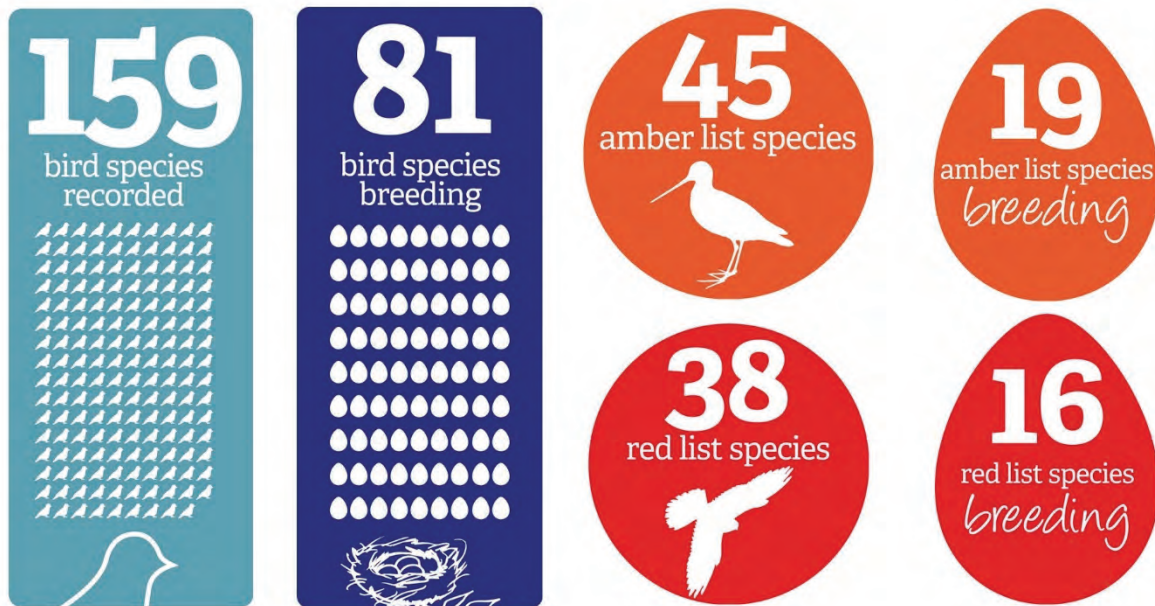
## Socio-Economic Outcomes



## Reaching Out



## Impacts and Outcomes: Don't just take our word for it...



## Section 18.

### Acknowledgements

**A massive thank you to all of the people who have shared our vision and Supported us on our first steps in the evolution of a new landscape and a new way of life for the Fens. The Great Fen has become far more than the sum of its parts, through the power of the passion of those involved, and has inspired others to action across the globe. When future generations marvel at the beauty and richness that surrounds them they will know that you were there at the beginning.**

It is not possible to list every person and organisation but here are some:

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Ramsey Rural Museum

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Sir John Major

SITA

Stephen Fry

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Stewart Lane

Sue Armstrong

Sue Wallis

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The Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust

The farm tenants  
The Fen Friends  
The Fenland Trust  
The Fens Museum Partnership  
The graziers  
The Great Fen Heritage Group  
The Great Fen Project Partners  
The Great Fen Team  
The Joint Technical Advisory Committee  
The Local Group  
The Mason Family  
The monitoring volunteer team  
The Rothschild Foundation  
The staff at Holmewood Hall  
The Volunteer Officers  
The Wildlife Trust  
The Wise Woman  
Tubney CharitableTrust  
University of Cranfield  
University of East London  
University of Loughbrough  
University of St Andrews  
Valetta Cranmer  
Vine House Farm  
Westminster Foundation  
Woodford Waste  
Woodwalton Internal Drainage Board  
WREN  
WWT Consulting  
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Yaxley Partnership

