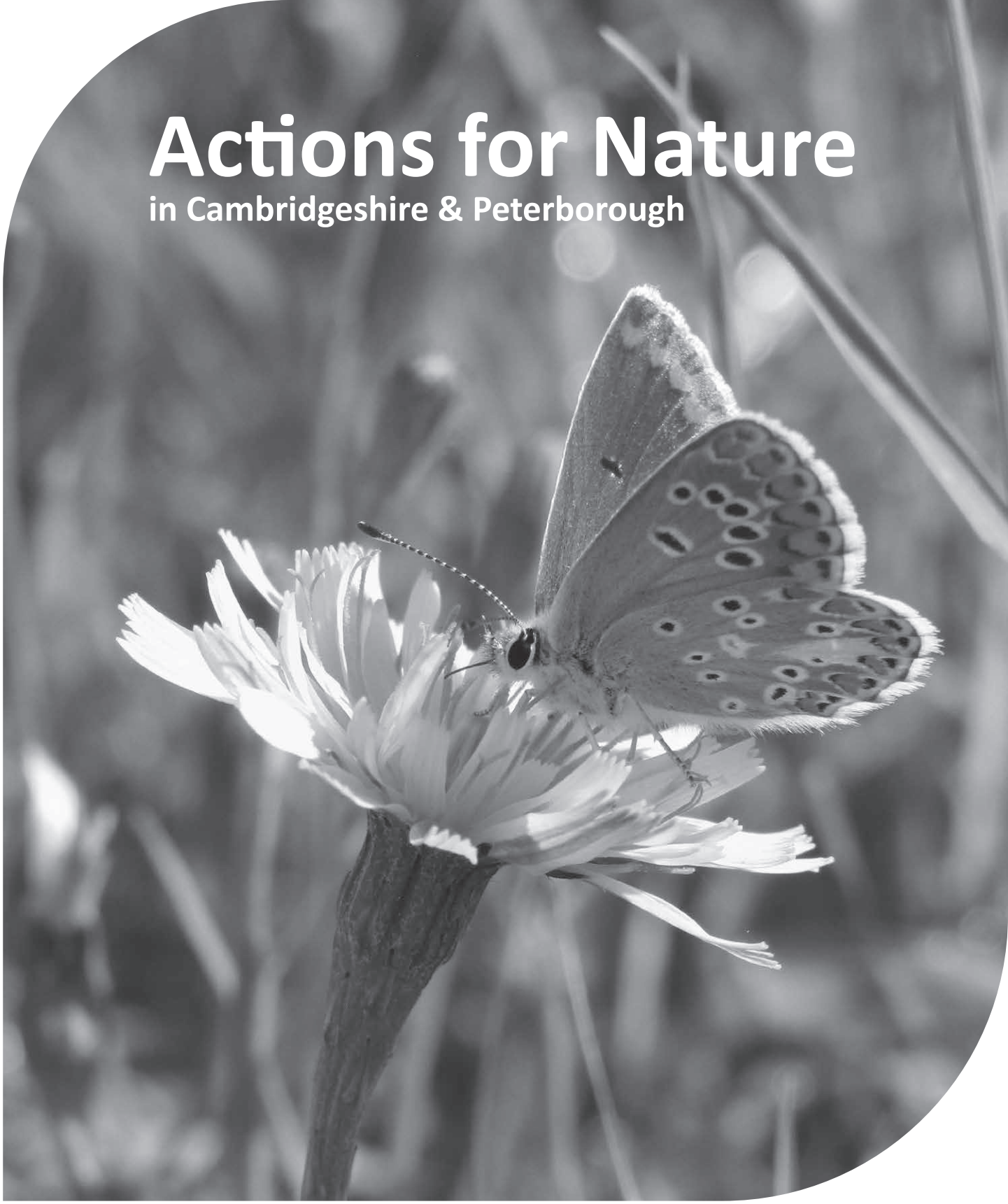
Actions for Nature

in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough



Natural Cambridgeshire

Doubling Nature Together

December 2025

Contents

Front cover: Brown argus *(Aricia agestis)* butterfly feasting in the sun.

Credit: Laura Burgess, Winner, NLOW Photography Competition 2025.

New Life on the Old West (NLOW) was a partnership project led by Cambridgeshire ACRE (page 18), which ran from 2020-2025 and delivered a wide range of wildlife habitat improvements in green spaces and farmland around the Old West River in the Cambridgeshire Fens.

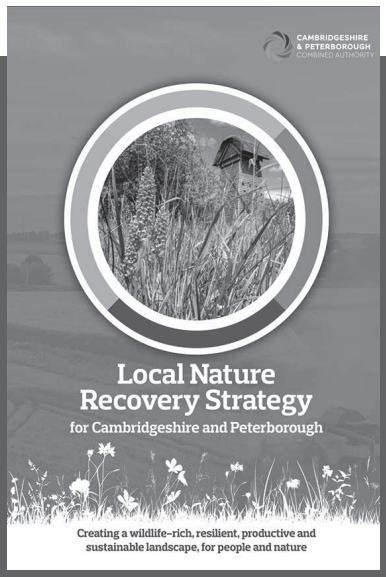
1. Introduction

Cambridgeshire is one of the most nature-depleted counties in the country. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for our area will be important for correcting this and Natural Cambridgeshire, the Local Nature Partnership for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has been working with Cambridgeshire County Council to lead its creation. Many of the organisations that have contributed to this document, together with many landowners and others, have also helped to produce the LNRS. The challenge now will be to implement its many recommendations, so as to achieve the widely-agreed aspiration to double nature in the county.

The Natural Environment Policy and Planning Forum is run by **Natural Cambridgeshire**, together with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and Cambridgeshire County Council. It enables county-wide exchanges between local authority planning and ecology officers, environmental charities and agencies, and farmer and water sector representatives. It meets quarterly to exchange information and share knowledge on policy matters, including Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) implementation, local planning, water, nature and health. It has encouraged the development of a website by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, which will host a listing of potential sites across the county for BNG investment, and has played the role of development group for the LNRS.

The Natural Cambridgeshire Partnership Forum provides expert briefings for the nature community on specialist subject areas relating to nature, biodiversity and landscape improvements. It issues a weekly news digest on nature and climate change to over 700 contacts across the county.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough was published on 23 December 2025. The Strategy will guide our collective nature recovery efforts going forwards. It can be viewed on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's website, where you will also find a link to the accompanying interactive map.



Natural Cambridgeshire participates in strategic projects including the Fenland Water Partnership which is developing the new Fens Reservoir, Water Resources East, the University of Cambridge's Centre for Landscape Regeneration, Fenland SOIL, the Cambridgeshire Urban Nature group and the CPCA's climate groupings. It supports farm clusters aimed at promoting ecological connectivity and building resilience into the landscape.

Following the release in September 2024 of funds by the CPCA, Natural Cambridgeshire made the first loan for a landscape project from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fund for Nature. It has also, working in partnership with the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation, made 28 small grants for community-led projects to improve green spaces within parishes, urban communities and on other nature sites, largely through the efforts of volunteers.

Natural Cambridgeshire has engaged with Defra, the Environment Agency, farmers and the water sector to help to resolve the water availability issues faced by our county, by providing on-farm water storage. This will help the public water supply and the future of our lowland peat soils, as well as avoiding the recurrence of the drying up of our chalk streams.

Some six years ago Natural Cambridgeshire identified six priority landscapes, which are mentioned throughout this document. These landscapes are:

Connected Fens

Nene Valley

John Clare Country

West Cambridgeshire Hundreds

Great Ouse Valley

Cambridge Nature Network

The following document is a compilation of the many contributions that our local authorities, environmental agencies and charities, water bodies, our farming community and others have made towards Doubling Nature in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in 2025.

2. Local Authorities

Cambridge City Council continues to advance its Biodiversity Strategy, its commitment to the Cambridge Nature Network and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) through partnership working, habitat management, project delivery and community engagement.

We have continued work on our Herbicide Reduction Plan, with investment in new equipment ceasing the use of herbicide across all council-owned sites, including parks, car parks and housing areas.

We have installed and promoted the Cambridge Butterfly Trail covering 30 parks and nature reserves across the city, encouraging exploration of our diverse natural green spaces and the butterfly and moth species they support.

Our Local Nature Reserve (LNR) volunteer team have delivered management across our 12 LNRs and contractors have completed significant woodland management at Nine Wells LNR in advance of chalk stream restoration around the spring heads of Hobson's Brook.

We are proud to report that 90.6% of city owned or managed Local Wildlife Sites are considered by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC) to have received positive conservation management implemented within the last five years.

We commissioned habitat surveys and habitat management and monitoring plans for 13 of our LNRs and commons, with support from the local Wildlife Trust and funding from CPCA. Adoption and delivery of these from 2026 will further enhance these core sites for people and nature.

Following a positive response to consultation we have secured Greater Cambridge Partnership funding to deliver further watercourse creation and enhancement on Sheep's Green LNR in 2026/27.

We have received great public engagement through our Lottery funded DiversiTree project with 23 artist-led workshops in 20 different spaces across the City. Five public walks, and talks were held on the cultural and biodiversity significance of veteran trees in and planned workshops for landowners and members of the public on how to manage their veteran trees sustainably.

The Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project held a well-attended conference at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), to explain the evidence-based approach and selected case study sites in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. Working with our partners at ARU we have engaged over 50 Citizen Scientists in baseline and ongoing monitoring of the case study sites. Practical works will be undertaken in the City between January and March 2026. Our evidence-based

case study driven project has been recognised by, and now forms part of, the national BIG Chalk partnership.

The Logan's Meadow wetland scheme has been delivered, creating 1 ha of new urban wetland habitats, supported by over 1000 volunteerhours. 250 people attended a summer opening picnic hosted by the Friends Group. Ongoing monitoring by ARU students has reported otters and water voles exploring the new habitats.

The Cambridge Nature Festival in the summer of 2025 was once again a huge success with activities run on many of our sites, including a Hobson's Park Bioblitz hosted by Hobson's Conduit Trust.

In January 2026 we will be consulting on our Biodiversity Strategy mid-term review and our Urban Forest Strategy to ensure we are aligned with the LNRS, and embed our ambition to collaborate with communities to become an accredited Nature City.

The **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority** has recently adopted its Local Growth Plan to accelerate economic growth in the region with ambitious targets. Sustainable growth requires Resilience and this is now one of our six core objectives in our Corporate Plan. This seeks to address strategic risks for our region's environment and the impact on it of climate change. The Corporate Plan sets out deliverables under the Resilience theme for enhancing biodiversity, boosting natural defences, peat soils, water management and flood prevention.

One of the deliverables is the LNRS. As the Responsible Authority for the development of the Strategy, we commissioned Cambridgeshire County Council to lead on this work with the support of Natural Cambridgeshire. The Strategy was approved by the Combined Authority Board and formally published in December 2025. We will be developing the delivery plan by summer 2026. The LNRS will be key to unlocking the area's potential to restore and protect the natural landscape.

The Combined Authority has funded several projects across the region to help boost biodiversity including funding Biodiversity Audits across all seven local authorities enabling biodiversity improvement plans to be developed that will support the Doubling Nature vision. In addition, the Combined Authority has continued to support the capacity funding of Natural Cambridgeshire and Fenland SOIL during 2025.

Previous schemes continued this year, including the Huntingdonshire Biodiversity for All programme and Natural Cambridgeshire's Fund for Nature along with funding Cambridge Chalk Streams and completion of the Logan's Meadow project. These projects support the area's Doubling Nature ambitions, and more details are described in other partners' updates.

New for delivery in 2025 were projects funded under the Climate Opportunity Fund and Net Zero Villages Fund. Local authorities, parish councils and community organisations successful across the region are delivering projects that will see improvements in biodiversity, flood management and enhancing landscapes.

The Combined Authority will be producing a Resilience Plan in 2026 that will replace the previous Climate Action Plan. This will set out how we will address the strategic risks for this region and we are committed to working with partners across the area, with the LNRS and other nature-based solutions key in helping to protect our area from the impacts of climate change.

Looking forward, the Planning and Infrastructure Bill will receive Royal Assent. This gives the Combined Authority the responsibility to prepare a Spatial Development Strategy as part of the development planning system. We are awaiting more information on the scope of those strategies and how nature will need to be considered as they are developed.

Cambridgeshire County Council is working to improve nature not only through actions on its own landholdings but across Cambridgeshire directly by working with partners, including formal partnerships with Natural Cambridgeshire for joint working.

The Council's Climate Change and Environment Strategy continues to evolve and drive actions to make best use of its available assets and resources. Two key commitments are to improve biodiversity across the Council's estate by 2030, and to understand and grow Natural Capital accounting to benefit people and nature by 2025 including integrating this into the delivery of Council functions by 2030.

A workstream for 'Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services' has been established to develop actions that help us understand the use of natural assets, whether that is to improve the amount of carbon assets sequester or to generally grow its natural capital, while providing opportunities to deliver multiple outcomes, where possible. This has brought the Council's work on natural flood risk management, parks and greenspaces, community nature, woodland creation and local heritage listing into a single programme. Activities under this workstream will form the basis of understanding the Council's natural capital account.

This year, we have adopted the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy. It sets out how we will restore woodland heritage, expand nature, and contribute to the England Trees Action Plan. We manage extensive holdings that offer huge potential for tree and woodland creation, so have mapped the most important locations with the greatest potential to benefit biodiversity and expand or join existing habitats and wildlife sites. The Strategy also looks beyond traditional practices to integrate nature into all land management, including managing our

woodlands. Beyond our own estate, our flagship Forestry Commission-funded woodland creation programme has commenced, looking to establish new woodlands in partnership with schools, landowners, and local groups.

The Council has also adopted its Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan that identifies opportunities for targeting key areas for improving biodiversity across the Council's estate by 2030. We have been working across the difference council departments to prioritise actions. A key priority for 2025 has been the completion of biodiversity audits on council land, assessing their current state of nature conservation against the Defra metric, and completing management plans to enhance them for nature.

2025 has also seen the commencement of our Nature recovery – From the Ground Up project. This is funded by the Council's Just Transition Fund. We are working in 20 parishes and Cambridge City to help communities take action for nature, including providing support and guidance for people to help repair habitats, look after local wildlife, and build a greener future with help from our Project Officers.

The Council has committed to explore opportunities for nature-based solutions for natural flood risk management across Cambridgeshire. Further to the Environment Agency's Natural Flood Management (NFM) Pilot Study, work is ongoing to identify locations across the county where NFM could be incorporated into the landscape to manage flood risk, enhance biodiversity and contribute to research on a national scale as to the effectiveness of different measures. In addition, the Council is supporting local community groups to design and deliver their own NFM solutions.

In collaboration with the CPCA as the Responsible Authority, Natural England and Natural Cambridgeshire, the County Council has produced the LNRS for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, which sets out the nature recovery priorities.
It is a locally led, government-backed initiative mapping out how we can restore habitats and species and reconnect people with nature.

The Council owns and manages seven Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and has been working throughout this past year to make them welcoming to residents, giving them access to nature. We've worked with our Friends Groups to deliver a variety of events, from stargazing, to newt hunts and apple days. 2025 was the inaugural year for our biodiversity recording programme, with invertebrate surveys completed across the reserves. We ran volunteer work parties including with Friends Groups and contractors to complete habitat management and access maintenance works.

East Cambridgeshire District Council's focus in the past year continued to be on the theme of Bring Back Nature, with activities ranging from community nature based Pride of Place grants, the establishment of habitat banks and the commencement of nature-related staff volunteering days. Working with the Wildlife Trust BCN, the Council is also shortly to publish 20 new habitat management plans, one each for the various parcels of open space the Council looks after. Each plan will set out how the Council can best manage each open space for both nature and for people.

Fenland District Council, employing a new, dedicated ecologist providing advice on a wide range of development proposals, has contributed to nature restoration through the planning process. This has been key to helping secure the best outcomes for nature and ensuring that BNG from developments is delivered across the district.

The Council has carried out biodiversity audits of thirteen sites in Fenland and prepared proposals for biodiversity enhancements for all of them which is to be funded by the CPCA. These include five sites in March, three in Chatteris, three in Wisbech and two in Whittlesey. This work will facilitate the implementation of biodiversity enhancements in 2026.

The Council has made significant contributions to the development of the LNRS and has helped ensure that most of elements identified through the Fenland Interim Nature Recovery Network report are now included within it. The Council is also a key stakeholder in partnership networks including a Future Fens Integrated Adaptation Fens Transition Lab, Cambridgeshire County Council's Community Nature Development 'From the Ground Up' project and the Fenland Environmental Network.

The Council has been a major contributor to several National Strategic Infrastructure Projects and particularly to the development of the Fens Reservoir scheme north of Chatteris. Around 275 ha are currently proposed for new wetlands to incorporate peat restoration near the Forty Foot and Sixteen Foot Drains, which is in line with LNRS objectives.

Practical actions have been taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity. These include raising awareness of biodiversity issues within the community and providing direct support for volunteers. Enhancing biodiversity through various projects, including Friends Groups' and Street Pride Groups. FDC supported 20Twenty Productions in setting up their Junior Naturalist programme, which involves going into schools and encouraging children to engage in bioblitz activity.

The Council has also facilitated the allocation of S106 community contributions from a number of wind turbine farms in Fenland and particularly encouraged spending on local nature projects to help boost biodiversity.

Park Lane Nursery, Whittlesey, received a grant of £36,500 from Glassmoor Local Environment Fund for an enhanced outdoor play and environmental education area, including a new pergola, bug hotels and nature play equipment.

Looking ahead, FDC are currently at the early stages of two country park (CP) developments: one in March and the other in Whittlesey. The March CP is to be funded by the Council's Inspire project, whereas Whittlesey CP is well scoped and has Member support with funding awaited.

Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to creating a resilient and flourishing environment, as reflected in its Corporate Plan 2025-2028. One of the key priorities of this plan is 'Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations', focusing on empowering communities to take action for biodiversity, reducing carbon emissions and becoming a net zero carbon council by 2040. Recognising the urgency of environmental challenges, the Council formally declared a Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency in February 2023. Since then, it has intensified its efforts to protect and restore biodiversity through its Biodiversity for All project. This initiative, developed in partnership with the CPCA, has been pivotal in the Council's Climate Strategy. Through a combination of community engagement, strategic partnerships, green skills projects and volunteering, the project has enhanced biodiversity across the district. Alongside this work, the Council is also delivering a Huntingdonshire Plan for Nature and actively contributing to the area-wide LNRS.

Following ecological audits being carried out on strategic parks and open spaces throughout the district, a programme of habitat enhancement works has been completed at Priory Park, St Neots and Hill Rise, St Ives this year. Huntingdonshire District Council has been investing in nature through tree planting, the creation of wildflower areas and other habitat improvement works.

At Priory Park, St Neots 20,000m² of wildflower meadows have been created, 62 new trees have been planted and the pond has been restored to benefit wildlife. This has enhanced the park's natural beauty and has provided increased opportunities for engagement with nature.

Credit: Molly Ward

Hinchingbrooke Country Park's new tree nursery established through the Green Recovery Project will grow hundreds of native saplings to restore local habitats, boost biodiversity, and support future planting across Huntingdonshire.

Credit: HDC

The Biodiversity for All project has also enabled community grants to be given to around 18 projects across two funding rounds. Graduate ecologists carried out ecological audits to identify opportunities to enhance habitats for biodiversity and then funding was provided to carry out the work. They also conducted ecological audits across open spaces in St Ives to explore opportunities for establishing a green corridor to connect open spaces and support wildlife. Building on these findings, the Council hosted a community tree-planting event this winter, bringing residents together to help create a thriving natural link through the town.

In the summer of 2025, a Green Recovery project at Hinchingbrooke Country Park, Huntingdon, successfully established a heritage tree nursery to grow native trees for the park. Other Green Recovery Projects have taken place through the year on Council-managed sites including Spring Common and Riverside Park in Huntingdon. This partnership scheme between Groundwork East and the Council has boosted biodiversity while teaching local unemployed adults practical conservation, horticulture and employability skills.

Peterborough City Council has predominantly been focused on updating its planning procedures in accordance with the new BNG requirements and creating its new Section 40 Biodiversity Strategy, which will replace its existing 2018 Biodiversity Strategy.

As an update from last year's Actions for Nature, we are happy to report that the Werrington Brook Drain County Wildlife Site is receiving much-needed care and attention from Network Rail and the Environment Agency. They are both working to restore the site for its invertebrate interest, with new wildlife banks and restoration of the plant diversity. The County Wildlife Roadside Verges are continuing to improve slowly over time and we are nearing completion of a

rationalisation project with the Wildlife Trust BCN that will enable us to better direct our limited resources to achieve the maximum possible biodiversity.

We are proud to say that a report is going through the governance process and will hopefully get full assent from the council in February that puts in place a number of new actions for biodiversity recovery which will be achieved across the council. These actions include a requirement on developers to justify the use of non-naturalised species and the championing of schools that are good ambassadors for nature to their pupils.

With much thanks to the CPCA for providing the funding, Peterborough City Council has employed Ethos Environmental to complete ecological management plans on 87 of the city's publicly accessible greenspaces. These plans are specifically designed to be short, provide implementable actions and be deliverable on a restricted time frame. We have tied the completion of these plans into an action within our Biodiversity Strategy. Delivering these plans will measurably increase the total land being managed for biodiversity across the whole of Peterborough.

This year has mostly been dedicated to statutory requirements and setting up projects for the future. There are several large biodiversity projects in the works which the Council will be excited to share in the near future.

South Cambridgeshire District Council over the last year has completed projects for nature on its own housing estates. A comprehensive tree survey was carried out to understand the condition, type, size and location of all the trees it is responsible for maintaining, ensuring that dead or diseased trees were replaced promptly and exploring new opportunities to plant more trees. Additionally, the Council continued to manage 21 designated Areas for Nature by adopting nature-friendly practices such as reduced mowing, wildflower planting, and creating log piles for habitat, with 10 sites specifically for wildflowers and grasses. Four additional sites were enhanced with support from the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Our watercourses team played a vital role in improving local waterways in addition to the awarded watercourses, supporting the installation of an osprey nesting platform at Milton Country Park and collaborating with Friends of the River Shep to maintain the chalk stream. These efforts complement the work of Greater Cambridge Shared Planning, which secured seven Biodiversity Net Gain offset sites across Cambridgeshire and continues to implement a minimum of 10% BNG, rising to 20% where possible on all major developments.

GCSP has also overseen delivery of a Miyawaki woodland planting project, funded by the Coronation Living Heritage Fund, which will see the creation of four Miyawaki woodlands and wildflower meadows in Upper Cambourne.

A Miyawaki woodland is a dense, fast growing forestation technique developed by Japanese botanist Dr. Akira Miyawaki. The method involves carefully preparing the soil and densely planting a variety of native trees and shrubs to create an urban forest ecosystem that quickly establishes itself, often within a small area. These woodlands offer a range of benefits: they support a range of native plant species, enhancing biodiversity and providing habitat for wildlife; the trees in a Miyawaki woodland grow faster and absorb more carbon compared to traditional planting methods, contributing to climate change mitigation; and they are particularly effective in urban areas, where they can help to restore ecosystems, improve air quality and create green spaces for community well-being.

Volunteers planting trees at the Miyawaki woodland site, Upper Cambourne and a snap shot of one of the planted sites.

Credit: SCDC

Community engagement has been central to our work for nature at SCDC. Through the Community Chest Biodiversity Grant, SCDC funded eight biodiversity projects, enabling the installation of bird nest boxes and baths, planting wildflowers, shrubs, and hedges, creating wildlife corridors, enhancing wetlands, and even providing a duck house. The annual Six Free Trees scheme delivered 162 native trees to 47 parishes and towns, further strengthening local green infrastructure. The scheme continued in 2025 and will see over 130 trees planted in 2026.

Finally, the Council drafted and consulted on the its Climate and Nature Strategy, clearly setting out future actions for nature in the district. These included: reducing pesticide use on its estate land; addressing water supply and chalk stream issues; expanding green infrastructure through planning policies; as well as continuing to support communities with nature projects through engagement events and funding schemes.

3. Other partners

Anglian Water is delivering a programme of woodland creation and enhancement that translates long-term environmental commitments into practical action on the ground, combining biodiversity gain, climate adaptation and partnership working.

The biodiversity team continues to progress a woodland creation programme supported by phased tree planting using a diverse scrub and native mix. During recent planting seasons, two new woodland ponds were created, bringing the total to six woodland ponds across the site. These features increase habitat diversity and support Anglian Water's biodiversity performance metrics by providing habitat for amphibians, invertebrates, birds and wet-woodland species.

From January, approximately 14,000 trees are being planted at Grafham Water. The species mix includes native trees alongside species more commonly found in southern England, such as sweet chestnut, lime, hornbeam and oak. This approach reflects long-term climate adaptation, designing woodlands that can remain resilient and ecologically functional over the next 100 to 200 years as conditions change.

Delivery is taking place in partnership with Creating Nature's Corridors, an organisation whose work focuses on reconnecting fragmented landscapes through strategic tree and hedgerow planting. Volunteers are supporting delivery through multiple planting sessions each week, strengthening local stewardship while accelerating progress.

For the **Cam Ely Ouse Catchment Partnership** (CamEO) 2025 was a year of change as CamEO engaged with the University of Cambridge and the water companies to put on a conference, 'Water Table III: Understanding our Aquifer' at the University's Cockcroft Lecture Theatre in July. Opened by Pippa Heylings MP, the result was an engaging and interesting discussion with a call for more data and knowledge of the impact on our aquifer from climate change and increased local growth in population. There has been smooth transfer of hosting of CamEO from the Rivers Trust to the River Lark Catchment Partnership.

Operational Catchments are now working to establish priorities in accordance with environmental destinations and a work programme led by Water Resources East. Citizen Science activity is growing and becoming significant especially in priority chalk catchments, around sensitive water bodies such as bathing areas, fens and nature reserves and in areas which are suffering from 'prolonged dry weather'.

Lack of water and river augmentation (or the lack of it) remain key issues and may not totally reflect the status of the aquifer. Relying on discharges from water recycling centres for river flow or maintaining moisture levels is not considered acceptable especially when there are more frequent storm discharges. The new reservoirs are still a decade off but we envisage that by 2032 there will be a pipeline from Grafham Water. In addition, we are monitoring the work to make greater use of on-farm reservoirs – especially if flood waters can be used to regenerate them.

Road run-off and spurious discharges continue to be identified. These are investigated where and when accessible and resources permit.

Finally, we await with interest the white paper (following on from the Cunliffe water Commission) that is now due in 2026. We hope that the regulatory climate in which we all operate will then become clearer.

From left to right: Pippa Heylings MP, Rupert Pearce Gould, Chair CamEO Catchment Partnership and Professor Bhaskar Vira Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Environmental Sustainability, University of Cambridge, outside the Cockcroft Lecture Theatre,
4 July 2025 for 'Water Table III', a conference which brought local stakeholders together to build understanding of the aquifer that provides the Greater Cambridge area with water.

Cambridge Natural History Society was founded in 1857 as Cambridge Entomological Society and is open to everyone interested in Natural History – including zoology, botany, ecology, entomology, palaeontology, conservation and the environment.

Regular activities in 2025 included evening talks in the spring and autumn, the Conversazione – our annual exhibition – a seasonal social in December, and field studies and excursions. Talks covered a wide variety of topics, from historic studies of owls, and the history of Cambridge Bird Club to plastics in the environment, and snow leopards. There were exhibitions, excursions and field studies, focussing in 2025 on the Great Kneighton area, with many opportunities to learn identification skills with Cambridge-based experts in all fields of natural history. The talks and field studies will continue in 2026, with the latter focussing on Grantchester Meadows this time.

The **Cambridge Nature Network** (CNN) partnership continues to meet to co-ordinate actions, projects and to share information and knowledge.

The CNN East Cambridge Farmer Cluster has continued to expand in both numbers of farmers and area, having combined with a group of farmers in the upper Granta catchment. Training and knowledge sharing has taken place through events, seminars and farm walks. Topics covered include managing soil health, Catchment Sensitive Farming, Natural Flood Management including a visit to the Alconbury Brook farmers group, and habitat and river restoration opportunities. With significant investment planned by Cambridge Water, Anglian Water and Water Resources East in the Granta catchment, the role of the farmer cluster will be critical in providing a co-ordinated approach and prevent multiple visits to the same landowner from different water companies with different messages. A grant from Natural England also enabled the farm cluster to purchase equipment to support conservation grazing of chalk grasslands and other meadow habitats.

Work has continued on a project to help nature and climate in Cambridge, which is made possible thanks to a significant grant from the National Lottery Community Fund's Climate Action Fund. The River Cam CAN (Climate Action through Nature) Project is supporting communities near the river to work on initiatives that will benefit them and the environment. The project is being delivered by a partnership of local organisations including Abbey People, Cambridge City Council, Cambridge Past, Present & Future, CoFarm and Water Sensitive Cambridge. Work that has taken place includes retrofitting a rain garden in a highway verge, transforming a highway verge and under-used space into a garden, a living sculpture, nature area and community space, creating a rainwater harvesting facility at a community farm, engaging communities with Cambridge's veteran willow trees and mapping the trees, organising a successful Cambridge Nature Festival in June 2025, with over 150 events taking

place and organising a ‘Rivers of Film Festival’ to showcase the importance of rivers and highlight the communities campaigning to improve them.

The partnership has engaged with the Cambridge growth agenda to advocate for more nature and green space to be included in plans for the future of the city.

The Cambridge Nature Network provides a systematic approach to bring about nature’s recovery in and around Cambridge for the benefit of wildlife and the people who live, work, study and visit the city. A Nature Network Report prepared by the Wildlife Trust and Cambridge Past Present and Future in 2021, highlighted the best opportunities to create new habitats and large-scale natural greenspaces in five priority landscape areas around and through the city. The Report continues to inform the partnership approach that will support the delivery of the LNRS for the Cambridge area.

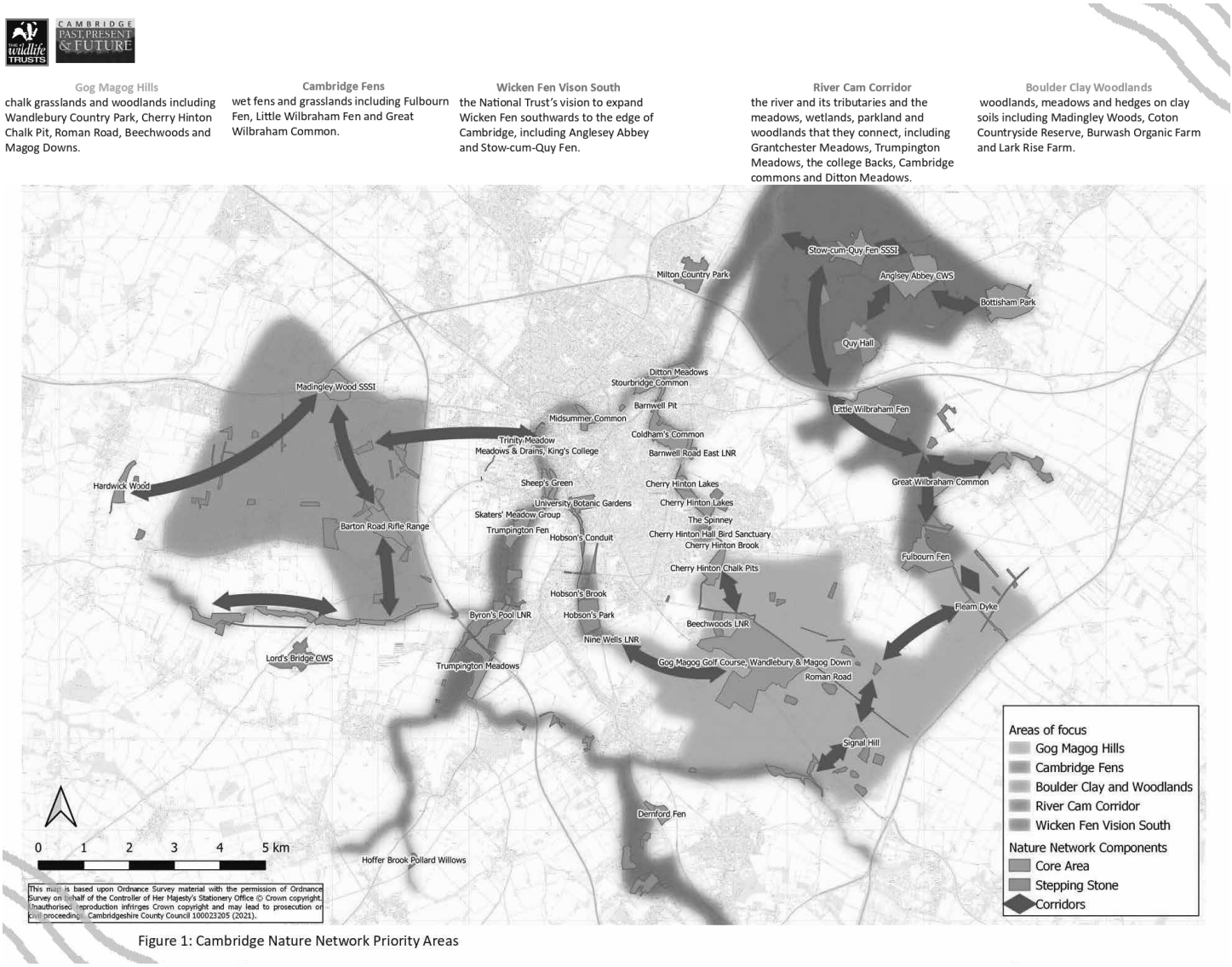


Figure 1: Cambridge Nature Network Priority Areas

Cambridge Past, Present & Future (CPPF) is the local charity that cares about the beauty of Cambridge and its environment. The charity owns and cares for several green spaces in and around Cambridge including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Grantchester Meadows and Barnwell Meadows, where it is working hard to improve their ecological value, increase the amount of habitat and better connect them to other habitats in the area. CPPF also provides opportunities for local communities to visit and enjoy these places and to benefit from free access to nature, including a schools outdoor education programme. Over 200,000 visits took place during the year.

Their work to provide more and better green spaces for Cambridge continues apace. They have significantly increased the area of land that they care for, thanks to the gift of a small woodland and a new partnership with King's College to manage Grantchester Meadows. They have set out an ambitious vision to convert their farmland at Coton into a large new nature reserve and they made a start by planting 2,400 trees and sowing a wildflower meadow. The area of land for nature that benefitted from their conservation work was 110 ha and this work was supported by 4,076 hours of volunteer effort planting trees, restoring woodland and hedgerows, maintaining ponds and meadows, and improving paths and seating for visitors. Even HRH Duke of Edinburgh planted a tree to help the environment.

They are also working with Anglian Water to progress plans for a new wetland at Coton Countryside Reserve that will improve water quality, capture carbon, reduce flood risk and create vital new habitat.

Cambridge Water continues to deliver biodiversity improvements as part of its environmental commitments. This includes investing in a chalk stream restoration programme in addition to the continuation of two funding schemes: SPRING and PEBBLE, both of which support environmental change and water quality improvements in the wider catchment and in the communities that Cambridge Water supplies.

SPRING supports landowners to make small changes on their land that have the potential to make significant improvements to water quality within the catchment. The scheme includes options that enhance biodiversity, improve soil structure, reduce runoff and protect water quality improving overall catchment resilience.

In 2024-25, 348 ha of biodiversity options have been established through SPRING in Cambridge. Biodiversity options include cover crops, wild bird seed mixes, buffer strips and collaboration on further innovative trials. Cover crops provide a wide range of benefits encouraging a wider variety of species to grow on otherwise bare soil, which helps to reduce soil erosion in the event of high rainfall. Wild bird seed mixes and buffer strips can provide habitats to up to 25 pollinator species, increasing biodiversity on the farm and helping with natural pest control. Buffer strips around field boundaries provide protection for non-

target organisms that may be impacted from spray drift and field run-off. Each option strengthens resilience in the catchment by supporting the creation of healthy, adaptable landscapes that are better able to respond to environmental pressures.

The SPRING scheme is flexible to the farmers and their business which means it has proven popular with the farming community. The scheme has identified further projects that help to improve water quality in the catchment.

The PEBBLE Fund provides support for biodiversity projects within the community in collaboration with local environmental and community groups, and is open to applications each year. Highlights for 2025 included a community rain garden, pond creation in an ancient orchard and several chalk stream and spring head restoration projects, in addition to Cambridge Water's own chalk stream restoration programme. Water Sensitive Cambridge (WSC) created an attractive and functional rainwater harvesting planter in Fallowfield for Phase 1 of a much larger project. Before WSC's interventions, rainwater and road run-off would not only flood the road but also end up in the River Cam via an outfall. WSC, with the help of local residents, installed rain gardens in the road verges to capture much of this run-off but wanted to tackle this problem further up the catchment which is where the SlowFlow SuDS planters came in. Cambridge Water funded the initial pilot for the first planter which was a massive success and six more have been added since.

Coton Orchard has created a naturally lined clay pond in addition to planting young apple trees and connecting this new habitat mosaic to Coton Country Reserve with a wildflower corridor. Due to the exceptionally dry weather, the pond hasn't fully filled up yet, but the trees have been planted using volunteers from Cambridge Water, AstraZeneca, the local community and schools. Even with a small amount of water in it, the pond provided resources for invertebrates and larger animals such as foxes and buzzards. It has been designed with turtle doves in mind in that it is shallow at one end and supplementary feeding will be provided to encourage them.

There has been a focus on springhead restoration this year with projects at Giant's Grave and Nine Wells. Cambridge Water are also well underway with their chalk stream restoration programme to improve brown trout habitat in the River Granta,

Cherry Hinton/Coldham's Brook, Vicar's/Hobson's Brook, Hoffer Brook, the River Shep, the River Mel and Mill River. With such complicated challenges, partnership working has been integral to setting up these projects, with support from the Cam Catchment Partnership and Cambridge City Council. Delivery for the Cambridge City streams, the Mill River and the River Granta is set to begin next year.

Cambridgeshire ACRE has continued to support nature recovery across the county's landscape by working with communities, landowners and partners to improve habitats and deepen local engagement with wildlife. Much of this activity centred on the final phase of the New Life on the Old West (NLOW) project, which reached a successful conclusion in autumn 2025. This National Lottery Heritage Fund project covered nine parishes between Wicken Fen and the Ouse Washes and demonstrated how local action can enhance biodiversity within a highly-managed agricultural landscape.

During its five-year lifetime the project delivered 75 habitat schemes and created new features, including 7200 m^2 of ponds, 2000 m of vegetated berms, almost 25,000 m^2 of wildflower meadow and nearly 1500 m of hedgerow. More than 3000 volunteer hours were given in surveying, planting and practical tasks and over 3500 people took part in events that increased awareness of Fenland wildlife and encouraged long-term stewardship. The final evaluation confirmed that this combination of habitat creation, public engagement and citizen science produced lasting ecological and community benefits across the landscape.

The project also generated significant evidence about the value of berms along Fenland drainage ditches. These shallow shelves, cut below the summer water level, provide the varied marginal habitat required by many specialist aquatic invertebrates. The 2025 vegetation and aquatic Coleoptera survey found that berm sites supported richer and more valuable invertebrate communities. At Queenholme Drain the number of water beetle species increased more than fourfold compared with the baseline and two Near Threatened species were recorded for the first time. At Smithey Fen Engine Drain two berm sections achieved the highest and second highest Species Quality Scores of all 110 NLOW survey sites. Near Threatened fen species, including Laccornis oblongus and Enochrus nigritus, were recorded at several berm and newly created pond sites, highlighting the importance of varied wetland structure in strengthening the ecological network. The findings also underline the value of clear specification and good supervision of construction, as well-formed berms consistently delivered the strongest results.

Cambridgeshire ACRE will continue to apply the learning generated through this work. The evidence gathered from NLOW, particularly around berm effectiveness, pond performance and community involvement, will inform future collaboration with partners and support the long-term legacy of the project across the county.

The **Centre for Landscape Regeneration** (CLR), led by the University of Cambridge in partnership with the RSPB, NIAB, and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, has completed three years of research, including three field seasons across the Cambridgeshire Fens. Their multidisciplinary research team brings together specialists in archaeology, ecology, zoology, computer science, and the social sciences. This project, funded by the UK's Natural Environment Research Council, takes a whole-systems approach and examines a wide range of topics to determine what might – or might not – work, for the future of the unique Fens landscape. Topics include water management, farmland and ditch biodiversity, greenhouse gas emissions, and land uses such as farming, food security and nature conservation. All factors influence one another, so finding a balance between priorities is crucial. The CLR works closely with farmers, landowners, policymakers, businesses, and other stakeholders across the Fens, ensuring their research is informed and enriched by those who live and work in the region.

In 2024, they interviewed representatives of 64 farms and eight nature reserves across the East Anglian Fens to inform discussions on farming, food security, and building a sustainable, resilient future. A summary report is now available. The data inform their research, including insights into the barriers and enablers of participation in agri-environment schemes as well as helping explore potential future scenarios for the region.

PhD Student Neil Mahon from Department of Zoology, Cambridge University conducting Biodiversity Fieldwork in the Cambridgeshire Fens.
Credit: CLR

The CLR runs outreach programmes that engage local children and, by extension, their communities, in ongoing conversations about the Fens and the landscapes they live in. Many of these programmes, delivered in partnership with the Cambridge Science Centre in Wisbech, the arts and well-being charity Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination, and the Museum of Zoology, use the creative arts to help participants explore and understand these discussions.

The **Country Land and Business Association** (CLA) has continued over the past year to champion and support nature recovery across the rural landscape, working closely with its members to deliver practical improvements for biodiversity and habitat resilience. The organisation's activities have focused on enabling landowners to integrate conservation into productive land management, while also promoting collaborative approaches that benefit wider ecosystems.

Across the CLA's membership, many thousands of hectares of land have been actively managed or enhanced for nature during the year. This work has included the restoration of hedgerows, the creation of buffer strips along watercourses, the re-wilding of marginal land, and the expansion of woodland and wetland areas.

The CLA's focus has encompassed a wide range of habitats and species. Woodland creation and management has been a priority, with native tree planting schemes and sustainable forestry practices helping to strengthen biodiversity. Wetland restoration has also been central, enhancing floodplain meadows and reed beds to improve water quality and provide habitat for wading birds. Pollinator-friendly habitats have been established through wildflower margins and nectar-rich planting, supporting bees, butterflies, and other insects. In addition, targeted initiatives have been undertaken to aid the recovery of farmland birds such as lapwing and skylark, alongside projects to support red squirrels and dormice in key regions.

The wider impact of this work has been significant. Improvements in soil health, increased carbon sequestration, and greater connectivity between fragmented habitats are all outcomes of the CLA's members' commitment to nature recovery. By encouraging the adoption of agri-environment schemes and regenerative practices, the organisation is helping to embed conservation into the long-term fabric of rural land management.

The **Environment Agency** has supported the development of five Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) in the Eastern Region. Partners in Cambridgeshire will be publishing the LNRS by Christmas 2025. There will be very important links between the LNRS and the Fens 2100+ initiative. The Environment Agency highlighted the importance of LNRS actions such as Nature Based Solutions and Natural Flood Management, in relation to the Combined Authority's Local Growth Plan. The Agency's Fisheries, Biodiversity and Geomorphology Team and Environmental, Planning and Engagement Teams continue to develop a wide range of environmental initiatives across the county.

Fenland SOIL is a not-for-profit member organisation that aims to inform and develop 'whole farm' land use policies, aimed at achieving climate change mitigation and biodiversity enhancement in the Fens, and to help establish an agreed set of numbers for GHG emissions for deep, shallow and wasted peat soils.

It was set up in 2021 as part of the work carried out by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's Independent Commission on Climate, as a dedicated team with farmers at its core to tackle climate issues relating to agriculture and peat in the Fens. We hope that by acting as a united front

and showing proactivity, we will be able to positively influence and help shape policy so that it is fair and realistic for those that will be implementing it. Importantly, we want to keep farmers farming in the Fens, securing supply of food to supermarkets.

Fenland SOIL has been successful in securing grants from the Environment Agency and Natural England to support mapping and raising of water tables. Our greenhouse gas emissions workstream has identified that the current numbers (usually deep peat) used by Defra are not accurate for much of the Fen. Our emissions data for deep peat is at 22 tons of C02 per ha/year and for 'wasted' peat 15 tons per ha/year. We have now mapped 30,000 ha of the Fen and compared it to the Natural England Peat Map which was published recently. We agree that approximately 8,000 ha of deep peat is left in the Fens.

In addition, we are involved in collaborative projects such as the Defra LowlandPeat3 project, and collaboration with WWF-UK, as well as with the Great Fen.

Fenland SOIL and the NFU were asked by Defra to hold a Land Use workshop. This was well attended. Defra would like a National Framework for peat which we are engaging with. We held a strategy workshop to look forward for Fenland SOIL over the next five years.

We have worked with academics including the Cambridge Centre for Landscape Recovery, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, and the University of Leicester, and have supported them in their efforts in the Fens. However, academic work needs to be supplemented with the work of Fenland SOIL.

The **Food, Farming and Countryside Commission** (FFCC) has continued to focus on the development of the Land Use Framework in 2025, particularly in the response to the consultation on Land Use that the government published in January. FFCC convened four workshops around the country – including one in Cambridgeshire – to understand how stakeholders felt about the consultation and how a Land Use Framework could or should be designed. This involved about 35 people from across Cambridgeshire from various sectors and with different expertise involved in land use. Nature was well represented in the room, with several local nature organisations present to offer their insights. FFCC's report on the workshops' discussions, highlighting stakeholders engagement with land use as a topic and concerns about scale and structure of governance mechanisms, was very well received by Defra. Since the publication of the Land Use Framework has been delayed until early next year (2026), FFCC continues to work with organisations across the country tackling land use concerns and working with Defra and other government departments to push for a more effective Land Use Framework.

The **Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group East** (FWAG East) has continued to help farmers through the increasingly uncertain landscape of agri-environment schemes. 2025 has been an exceptionally difficult year for the farming community, with the weather affecting yields badly at harvest, and the sudden closure of the popular Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) scheme in March. This left many farmers with no agri-environment scheme, facing the hard choice of leaving areas of land in unpaid options, or taking up habitat which in some cases has been in place for several years. We still await details of the revised SFI scheme and an indication of its starting date. A bit of good news for farmers whose agreements in Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier (the previous scheme to SFI) expire at the end of 2025 was the offer of a year's extension.

Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier re-opened in September with its own capital grant scheme. FWAG East has been giving advice on Higher Tier both through the Natural England Environmental Training, Advice and Facilitation Framework programme and by working with individual farmers. Two wetland projects on the River Great Ouse are being applied for which will enhance floodplain meadows and benefit breeding and wintering waders. The fen creation projects FWAG East helped with in 2024 are both up and running and attracting birds and other wildlife.

FWAG East continued to give advice on the management of existing schemes, and helped to find funding from sources other than the main agri-environment schemes, such as water companies. The team continue to carry out farm surveys, recently undertaking surveys of water, soil and grassland at a National Trust property in Cambridgeshire, which will help to form the basis of a parkland plan for a Higher Tier application.

In 2025 we continued to deliver Natural England's District Level Licensing scheme to create or restore ponds suitable for Great Crested Newt across the county, sharing the work with the Wildlife Trust. Since the beginning of the Cambridgeshire DLL project in early 2020, FWAG East have delivered 169 ponds across the county, 83 of which have begun their programme of survey and monitoring for Great Crested Newt (which will continue for a period of 25 years), a job keenly done by the FWAG East team. Of these 83 ponds, 44% tested positive for GCN earlier this year, 39% absent, and 17% inconclusive. The Cambridgeshire results are above the national DLL pond GCN occupancy rate of 31% in 2025.

Woodland management and new planting is being encouraged, with FWAG East undertaking a Higher Tier application for a small woodland in the fens which was planted at the beginning of 2025, and connecting a farmer with a planting grant from the Forest of Marston Vale. A woodland project with Cambridgeshire County Council is due to start next year.

FWAG East has worked with many other partners during the year to help farmers create habitat and access funding, and to inform policy, including the Floodplain Meadow Partnership, the Cam Catchment Partnership, the Ouse Biodiversity Project, and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, who are delivering a major project with FWAG East on wetland creation on the River Great Ouse.

As ever, FWAG East has held events and farm walks for their farmer members throughout the year, as well as those specifically organised for the West Cambs 100s Group as mentioned above. That group is coming to the end of its involvement with the Healthy Soils, Healthy Food, Healthy People project, with final results on the outcomes of switching to regenerative agriculture due by March 2026. A new project being undertaken within the group is sediment tracing with Rothamsted Research and the Cam Catchment Partnership, which hopes to identify the type of land cover the sediment in water is coming from.

The **Fens East Peat Partnership** (FEPP) partners include Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire, RSPB, National Trust, Natural England and private organisations, and is part of the Fens for the Future Partnership. FEPP was formed in 2021 to start addressing the barriers to lowland peat restoration in the Fens through a Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme 'Discovery' grant. Our work continues with the restoration grant awarded in September 2023. The scheme is administered by Natural England and supports peat restoration work which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions from degraded peat.

There are fourteen peat restoration site projects within the project and at the end of March 2025 the three of the four sites within Cambridgeshire that started capital restoration work in October 2024 were nearly completed and one finished. We continually monitor the sites before, during and after restoration to record the change to the sites. Using a drone for this work has provided wonderful images of sites, especially post restoration, seeing the restoration start to work and the peat re-wetting. This work will protect the peat from degrading further and by keeping the peat wet will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Restoration work on the other sites in the FEPP project continues through to March 2026. We will have achieved an increased area of lowland peat, supporting the Fens to be more resilient in the face of climate change, helping us to adapt and deal with the changes.

We are already seeing evidence that the restoration activities are working for nature. As soon as the work is finished birds and other wildlife appear, finding their way to these newly restored sites and calling it home.

We follow the Lawton principles to make space for nature, 'more, bigger and better', helping to create a strong ecological network as part of the Cambridgeshire Nature Recovery Strategy.

Future Fens Integrated Adaptation launched the Fens Climate Change Risk Assessment in 2025, the first place-based assessment of climate risk across the Fens. Developed collaboratively by Anglian Water, the Environment Agency, Water Resources East and academic partners, it brings together climate science, local data and practitioner insight to establish a shared evidence base.

The assessment shows how risks linked to flooding, water availability, land subsidence, agriculture, infrastructure, ecosystems and communities are interconnected and set to intensify. It provides a system-wide view of risk that underpins FFIA's convening role, supporting coordinated adaptation and informed long-term decision-making across the Fens.

The **Great Ouse Rivers Trust** (GORT) is concerned with England's fifth largest river catchment but, until 2023 when the Trust was established, the Great Ouse was not part of the nationwide Rivers Trust movement. The Great Ouse, and its tributaries, was the last gap in the Rivers Trust map, which includes over 65 local river trusts across the UK.

GORT is an environmental charity dedicated to protecting and restoring the Great Ouse and its tributaries, lakes, wetlands and wider catchment for the benefit of people and nature. It seeks to work with communities, landowners, businesses and environmental organisations to achieve its vision for the Great Ouse: a natural and healthy river enjoyed and valued by all.

GORT has adopted a partnership-led approach, aiming to coordinate action across the catchment, raise funding, and implement projects that will create lasting environmental and community impact. The Trust works in partnership with the four Catchment-Based Approach (CaBA) catchment partnerships in the Great Ouse catchment, and numerous community-led river groups that operate throughout the catchment. These groups and initiatives bring together local stakeholders and provide opportunities that support volunteering, river warden initiatives and citizen science.

For example, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation supports a four-year partnership between the Norfolk Rivers Trust, East Mercia Rivers Trust and GORT to accelerate chalk stream restoration across the Anglian region. GORT is working in close collaboration with the Upper Bedford Ouse Catchment Partnership to employ its first Rivers Project Officer.

In 2025, support from Anglian Water and the Rivers Trust Development Fund has enabled GORT to establish robust policies, good governance and financial processes and procedures and as a result, the Trust is recruiting its two first

members of staff, a Rivers Project Officer to work on the River Ivel and its tributaries and a Trust Development Manager to lead and help shape the future of GORT.

The **Great Ouse Valley Trust**'s mission is to promote, protect and enhance the exceptional landscape of the Great Ouse Valley in Cambridgeshire.

Since 2013, the Trust and its predecessor, the Great Ouse Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) campaign, have worked towards national recognition of lathe Great Ouse Valley landscape, lately with the full support of both the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC). This year the Trust continued its very successful partnership with HDC in creating a 50/50 funded Business Plan for a Designated Landscape for the Great Ouse Valley within Cambridgeshire. After vetting several excellent consultants, Arkwood Ltd was appointed to complete the study and to report back at the end of 2025. Arkwood has done an excellent job in analysing the valley's unique landscape and how this impacts the wider economy. Fundamentally the recognition of the Great Ouse Valley as a nationally important Heritage Landscape has the potential to bring exceptional benefits to nature, health and the economy, ensuring that companies are attracted to move here and that both residents and tourists can benefit from a co-ordinated management of the landscape.

Meanwhile the work of the Trust has continued. The Trust has managed and enhanced a community woodland areas of around one hectare planted four years ago and extended the riverside tree planting programme adding many rare black poplars both female and male. Working with SUEZ Recycling and Restoration Ltd the Trust has managed its dedicated Wetland Nature Reserve off Cow Lane and recorded more than 40 different bird species sightings. The woodland planting and habit restoration continues across the whole landfill site of some 30 hectares. The Noble's Field Biodiversity Project in St Ives, funded by an HDC Biodiversity for All grant, has continued with bramble cut backs, tree planting and wildflower seeding, among many initiatives to improve habitats on this riverside site.

The Trust's water testing volunteers have expanded their water quality monitoring and are now providing very useful data on pollution sites and agricultural run-off. They are also working to clear litter from the river.

The Trust's volunteers continue to keep the Ouse Valley Way National Long Distance Footpath accessible at all times of the year especially for the annual "WOW" (Walk the Ouse Valley Way) Day in July and the Ouse Valley Way Marathon in September, which included help from the marathon's organisers and the Stansted Airport Community Volunteers.

Volunteers form the backbone of the Great Ouse Valley Trust's work undertaking maintenance work along the Ouse Valley Way, clearing invasive species along the banks of the river, tree-planting, water quality monitoring and clearing rubbish.

Native black poplars grow to a significant height, and are often found on floodplains, around flooded gravel pits and along ditches where they thrive in wet conditions. They have formed an important part of our landscape and culture for centuries, from being landmarks and a focus for celebration, to inspiring landscape painters, and providing timber for floorboards. In 2025, GOVT volunteers continued with riverside planting of black poplars and other native tree species.

Credit: GOVT

Here GOVT volunteers can be seen clearing invasive Himalayan balsam from the banks of the river. Himalayan balsam (Impatiens glandulifera) is an invasive non-native plant that originates from the west and central Himalayas. Introduced to the UK in the early 19th century as a garden plant, it has since become widespread, particularly along watercourses. It is considered problematic due to its aggressive growth, which often prevents native species from growing.

Credit: GOVT

The Trust's partner members include most of the parish and town councils, national conservation groups such as the National Trust and RSPB as well as local groups and Rotary Clubs.

In 2026, with the publication of the business plan for the Great Ouse Valley Heritage Landscape and its implementation, the Trust anticipates a very productive year, when it is hoped the unique landscape of the Valley will receive the national recognition it deserves.

The **Langdyke Countryside Trust** reports that the successful fledging of two young western marsh harrier at our Vergette Wood Meadow reserve was a significant milestone in Langdyke's nature recovery programme – the first such successful nest in recent times. Just off the reserve there were four avocet nests too, three of which fledged young. All told the evolving post gravel extraction landscape between the villages of Etton and Maxey continues to support significant nature recovery, with more new habitats to be created in coming years. The Trust also worked in partnership with the Environment Agency to establish an information trail along the Maxey Cut, and is close to concluding agreements with Tarmac, the quarry operator, and the landowners for a further expansion of its reserves.

Christ's College Nature Reserve (our ninth and newest reserve) was a focus of intensive work this year, including clearance of crassula and the creation of new ponds. Initial surveys have shown the value of the site for insects, with new colonies of glow-worm and Small Copper butterfly discovered. Numbers of man orchid and autumn ladies tresses continued to increase at Swaddywell Pit.

Elsewhere in the John Clare Countryside area the Trust is similarly involved in the creation of an expanded nature reserve on the site of the former Helpston Heath. This will involve bringing together three blocks of former quarry and landfill sites to create a large block of limestone grassland, gorse and ponds. The Trust is also exploring with South Kesteven Council the potential for a large new reserve (30 ha) just north of the Welland. Our programme of monthly walks and talks ran throughout the year. Membership of the Trust increased to over 270 household memberships.

The **Magog Trust** is a charity based in Stapleford that manages Magog Down, 163 acres of former arable land, much of which has been restored to chalk grassland habitat that has suffered a catastrophic national decline in recent decades. It is a County Wildlife Site, managed to promote biodiversity with species-rich chalk grassland, woodland and hedgerows. The reserve has a diverse variety of chalk grassland flora and fauna, including 27 species of butterfly and healthy numbers of ground-nesting skylarks. Part-time rangers manage the site, with the engagement of local farmers and contractors, to cut and collect the meadow areas, provide sheep grazing, fence maintenance, dog waste collection, scrub control and hedgerow cutting. They are assisted by a monthly work party of volunteers who carry out tasks such as scrub removal, raking of meadow cuttings and in sheep paddocks the removal of ragwort.

In 2025 the Trust became the owner of an additional 37 acres of nearby arable land, Chalk Hill Down. This was sown with a wildflower seed mix (Emorsgate M6) to enhance nature recovery. There is a fallow strip to encourage rare agricultural weeds to grow from the seed bank. A third part-time warden was employed to provide additional general site management. A tree trail has been introduced to engage visitors further with the site flora.

The **Middle Level Commissioners** undertake a huge number of surveys each year to inform non-routine Internal Drainage Board work such as bank repairs. This year we have begun a new annual IDB biodiversity survey programme to help us to better understand how routine IDB work supports biodiversity: protected, rare and common. The results will help us to understand where routine maintenance is helping wildlife to thrive and where approaches may need to change to try to improve outcomes. Results will also be shared to help to better inform conservation efforts across the region.

Approaches to planning IDB maintenance programmes have also been refreshed and improved. IDBs have individually begun to consider, adapt and design their channel maintenance programmes annually, on a reach-by-reach basis, to maximise opportunities for wildlife. New Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) aim to ensure that a range of species are not only conserved but enhanced as a result of IDB routine maintenance activities such as aquatic plant management, desilting and flail mowing. The SOPs encourage the retention and non-disturbance of as much channel and bank vegetation as possible, particularly marginal vegetation, wherever flood risk allows. However, vegetation still needs to be managed to prevent more dominant plant species from taking over. The new guidance encourages targeted and rotational vegetation cutting to help to control vigorous species and succession and to allow some less competitive species the chance to establish. Rotational management also helps to ensure that a range of vegetation maturity is retained, which is important for a number of species that rely on older stands of vegetation to complete their lifecycles.

Nearly 1km of pre-planted coir roll has been installed in IDB channels following bank repairs in the last 18 months. Much of the associated bank areas have also been reseeded with a more diverse mix of grasses and flowers to help to improve provisions for pollinators and many other invertebrates. Weather conditions however have meant that establishment has been an issue in some areas.

We have long been a key partner in the mink control project across the Cambridgeshire and Norfolk fens and this year the benefits to water voles have really been seen. There are not many Internal Drainage Board ditches we have surveyed where we haven't found water voles. In addition, biosecurity policies and procedures have been updated, strengthened and promoted this year across all local networks to help to protect our sensitive freshwater wildlife from invasive and non-native species.

We have been a key contributor in the development of the soon-to-be-published Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The key habitats and species identified for conservation priority in the LNRS have been incorporated into the newly drafted IDB Biodiversity Action Plans, which will be published over the next few months. These detail the habitats and species that could be influenced by the activities of the IDB and define the actions that the IDB will take to conserve and enhance them.

IDBs have a statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity whilst exercising all of their functions, one of which is consenting the work of others in and around IDB channels. We use BNG principles to guide developers to deliver biodiversity 'enhancement' through their projects. To complement the efforts that IDBs make to supporting biodiversity, the suite of advice and guidance for consent applicants has been updated and published on the our website, along with a range of other information around how many of the species that are commonly associated with IDB channels should be considered during works. This has helped to create harmony through all biodiversity conservation and enhancement activities across the Middle Level IDB network. We have assessed a huge number of consent applications against this framework to ensure that outcomes for biodiversity are maximised through local development. These combined refreshed approaches mean that IDBs can help to provide fenland wildlife with high-quality, connected corridors of refuge across the Middle Level fens.

Reed warbler nest found on the banks of the Pigwater channel near Peterborough.

Credit: Sofi Lloyd

The ditches and drains under the management of Internal Drainage Boards are a characteristic of the Fenland landscape, and their management will be critical to the area's future, both for biodiversity, agriculture and climate change resilience.

Credit: Sofi Lloyd

The **National Farmers Union** (NFU) represents the majority of farmers and growers in Cambridgeshire. The county is a powerhouse of British agricultural production while also being host to so much biodiversity and natural beauty. The county produces over £0.5bn worth of agricultural production which is over 3.0% of England's total production and includes over 20% of the country's vegetable, horticultural and sugar beet production.

The NFU has promoted sustainable intensification of agricultural production whereby farmers can deliver the dual goals of a safe and reliable food supply for the nation while also protecting and enhancing wildlife, biodiversity and landscapes.

Cambridgeshire's 2000 or so farm holdings have been at the heart of nature conservation both through voluntary initiatives and through participation in government schemes. The NFU has led Industry-wide initiatives like Championing the Farmed Environment, Tried & Tested, the Greenhouse Gas Action Plan, the Voluntary Initiative and Open Farm Sunday, which have played, and will continue to play, a role in promoting good environmental practice on farm and sharing that with the wider public.

The NFU has embraced successive governments' vision of providing 'public money for public goods' and has led the co-design process of the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme with Defra adopting much of our proposed 'Sustainable Food and Farming Scheme' in their 'Sustainable Farming Incentive' (SFI) scheme. The early closure by government of SFI had put the brakes on what had been a promising start to getting more land into environmental schemes.

Many farmers in Cambridgeshire have adopted nature-friendly farming practices to enhance their fields and support wildlife. Here farmer, Tom Clarke, has established species rich field margins on his land. Tom is a member of the RSPB Ely Nature Friendly Farming Zone, a farming cluster in Cambridgeshire which aims to be an exemplar of a profitable, sustainable, farming landscape demonstrating increasing levels of Fenland biodiversity. The Zone is supported by the RSPB and focuses on inspiring, developing and sharing best practice in nature-friendly farming.

Credit: NFU/Tom Clarke

The simplified Countryside Stewardship can create the bridge for higher environmental ambition and delivery alongside the further roll-out of the Landscape Recovery scheme. However, it remains to be seen if government will put sufficient budget behind these programmes including SFI to keep farmers engaged.

The NFU is an active partner in the Combined Authority's work on peatland issues through Fenland SOIL, spearheading farmer engagement to tackle the combined goals of peatland preservation and enhancement and reducing carbon emissions. The current Defra position on devoting a larger budget to

lowland peat in the new spending year should create opportunities for farmers to seriously engage with this agenda.

The NFU sees farmers as part of the solution to climate change and nature recovery and Cambridgeshire farmers are playing their part in locking up carbon through effective soil management, hedgerow and tree planting, and ditch management amongst other things. We have a stated and achievable ambition to reach net zero by 2040 and are
engaged in the development of Cambridgeshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

The **National Trust**'s Wicken Fen in 2025 reached some of its most encouraging milestones yet. Namely the completion of a major peatland restoration project covering 590 acres of lowland peat, a significant step in its efforts to reverse biodiversity loss and mitigate climate change.

Peatlands like those at Wicken are vital – when wet and healthy they store vast amounts of carbon, more than all the world's forests combined. But when drained or degraded, they become a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, while the habitats that depend on them deteriorate.

By re-wetting and restoring the peat, installing waterproof liners, managing water levels, and removing encroaching scrub, the project at Wicken Fen has returned this ancient landscape to a wetter, more nature-rich condition, locking in carbon, boosting flood resilience, reducing wildfire risk and safeguarding water supply, while giving rare fen species a chance to thrive.

Already, the transformation is having powerfully visible effects. On the newly re-wetted areas on both Burwell Fen and Tubney Fen, rare wetland birds – including cranes and great egrets – were seen within hours of water levels rising, along with wading species such as curlew and spoonbill. These early returns show just how quickly nature can respond, if given space and the right conditions.

Looking forward, Wicken Fen is set to build on this momentum, with further peatland restoration embedded in the long-term framework of the Wilder Wicken Vision. This 100-year ambition, now 26 years old, aims to restore habitats at a landscape scale, weaving together wetland, meadow, fen and wet-woodland to create resilience for wildlife, climate and local communities alike.

In 2025, Wicken Fen also reached another major milestone: surpassing 10,000 recorded species across the reserve. The rare six-belted clearwing, a moth that mimics the stripes of a wasp to deter predators, was logged as the 10,000th species. Experts believe Wicken Fen is the first UK nature reserve of its kind to reach such a total, underscoring its remarkable biodiversity.

This milestone reflects not just the care taken over decades, but the impact of expansion, habitat restoration, and improved monitoring. Since 1999,

the reserve has more than tripled in size, from a small patch of fen to over 820 hectares. As the National Trust's North Cambridgeshire manager, Emma Ormond-Bones, put it: *"if you give nature the opportunity and the space, it will do remarkable things."*

For a second year running, a crane chick fully fledged from the reserve. The Wilder Wicken Vision remains a vital mechanism through which the Trust will deliver for nature, climate and local communities. This Vision is a 100-year ambition, now 26 years old, through which the Trust works in partnership to restore habitats on a landscape-scale, creating connectivity for wildlife and local communities from Wicken Fen to the edge of Cambridge.

Natural England is the government's adviser on the natural environment. This year we have launched our new organisational strategy: Recovering Nature for Growth, Health and Security. This strategy recognises both the need to move beyond nature protection to nature recovery, and the pivotal role nature plays as a foundation for economic growth.

Across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough we have carried out our regulatory duties with regard to protected sites and species, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). We have provided advice to local authorities and other statutory decision-makers on measures to address impacts and opportunities to enhance nature recovery. Alongside these we have provided advice to a range of farming, developer and partner organisations around opportunities for nature recovery.

The Fens remains a major focus of our work. We continue to provide advice on the Fens Reservoir so that it can deliver strong benefits for nature. We have undertaken condition monitoring of the Ouse Washes protected site and are working on developing a Protected Sites Strategy that aims to address a range of offsite impacts. Alongside our on-going management of core nature sites on the three National Nature Reserves, we work closely with partners at Great Fen including through the Nature for Climate funding to undertake changes to water management structures and systems that will support improvements to biodiversity features at Holme Fen NNR and other sites. We continue to support species recovery of fen violet and milk parsley at our Woodwalton and Chippenham Fen NNRs respectively, with fen violet plugs planted out on adjoining land.

We are supporting farmers and land managers in bringing forward applications for Higher Tier stewardship schemes that will support nature recovery across the county. In addition, we have provided advice on grant requests for capital funds to reduce environmental impacts from farms.

We have provided advice on several local plans across the county to encourage policies that avoid damage to protected sites and encourage nature recovery, including through more green infrastructure within new developments.

Finally, we have worked alongside partners to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which will be published by the end of 2025.

Nene Park Trust has been busy following on from last year with the restoration of yet more wetland habitat sites. With funding from the National Lottery (as part of the Your Community Greenspace project) and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, some long overdue restoration work has been carried out on the area known as Ham Mere. Contractors were on site for six weeks between August and September 2025, using their machinery to clear a large amount of willow and scrub from the site, with 640m of existing perimeter bank being cleared and levelled. Much of the excess soil was used to create a new 290m perimeter bank around another section of the Mere. This work has given all year access around the entire perimeter of the Mere which will allow yet more work to continue in future and more effective management of the site.

The contractors have also been restoring wetland features on Ham Mere, creating a number of pools, channels and scrapes that will provide both shallow and deeper wet areas that will benefit a range of wildlife. It is estimated that around 2,500m^3 of material has been removed from the site to restore large parts of the wetland, with much of the excess wet soil being used to bury a large proportion of the cleared willow along the inside edge of the new banks, locking in the carbon.

Making the most of the dry conditions in Autumn, a total of 551 volunteer hours were spent on the site alongside Trust staff once the contractors had finished, clearing more willow and opening up yet more of the wetland. Early signs are very positive, with the new wetland features already full of water and species such as teal, widgeon and shoveler being recorded in good numbers. Species such as snipe and yellow wagtail
were also recorded. There are plans to install stock fencing in Spring 2026 which will allow the area to be managed much more effectively in future through livestock grazing.

The Trust has also purchased more land to ensure sites are protected for the future and managed for the benefit of nature. Around 15 ha of land (8.82 ha being SSSI) neighbouring some of the Trust's existing land at the bottom of Splash Lane in Castor was purchased earlier this year. The Trust is already exploring ways in which it can improve the management of this land, including the potential to create new habitats where appropriate. The recent purchase of 12.7 ha of land at Norman Cross was primarily to protect the significant historical and archaeological interest of the site but it also provides opportunities to improve the site for nature in the future.

Other work continues across the Trust's landholdings on fish habitat improvements, specifically marginal hinging and pinning of trees, and the creation of living willow islands to provide fish refuges. After the success of the bee bank last year, another bee bank has been created in Ferry Meadows and a new viewing platform installed overlooking the new reedbed area on Gunwade Lake.

There have also been improvements made to the Trust's coppicing and pollarding regimes, bringing a number of areas back into appropriate management, which will improve age, structure and ultimately biodiversity. The Trust is also about to enter into a new Woodland Grant scheme which will support woodland management across the Trust's land.

Newmarket Chalk Streams Trust (NCST) was formed by ecologist Kevin Hand and artist Louise Eatock in 2024. Newmarket's lost rivers had been the subject of research by the Newmarket Historical Society and proved to be a fascinating subject. Louise, who is chair of Newmarket Community Arts, had taken a keen interest in social media posts that artist Penny Sobr had made about walking with Kevin along chalk streams in Cambridge. Penny put Louise in touch with Kevin to investigate the possibility that the Newmarket Brook could also be a chalk stream.

It was quickly proved that the two streams that run through Newmarket do indeed rise from chalk springs in the Dullingham and Cheveley area and are in fact two of only 250 chalk streams in the world! They are now known as the Newmarket Brook and Cheveley Brook. Their pure clean waters were a key reason for the origins of Newmarket and its surrounding villages.

NCST is now working to bring everyone together to focus on the community and environmental opportunities provided by this rare chalk stream network. In 2025 we became a Community Interest Company (CIC) and received National Lottery Community Fund funding to employ a Project Officer, which is very exciting. Their first priorities will be to raise awareness of the two brooks and the project, and begin monitoring the biodiversity and water quality, prior to beginning work to improve the streams. We will work with local schools and community groups so that everyone can be involved. 60% of the chalk streams we work on are in Cambridgeshire.

NCST has developed good connections with experts in many fields, and many other chalk stream organisations, including the Cam, Ely and Ouse Rivers Trust, of which we are now a member.

Newmarket Community Arts has organised the Rivers of Light lantern parade beside the Newmarket Brook for the past three years. Next year the event is being co-organised with NCST and will be on 21 February 2026.

The Rivers of Light parades became the subject of a film called 'Rivers of Light' by film-maker James Murray-White. The filmed premiered in Newmarket in December 2024 and was shown at many events, including a special Rivers of Light film festival in Cambridge.

Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT) is a Peterborough-based charity with a mission to protect and enhance the natural environment. It manages and improves green spaces for the benefit of wildlife and people. Over the past year it has supported nature recovery and engaged with diverse communities through ongoing projects across Cambridgeshire.

Notably, this year saw the creation of three wood-meadow 'mini forests' at open spaces in Longthorpe, Woodston and Werrington. Created in partnership with Peterborough City Council, with the help of nearly 150 local volunteers, these sites are each about the size of a tennis court (about 10 m x 20 m), blending wildflower meadow and native woodland species to form rich, overlapping ecosystems. By June, these 'mini forests' were in full bloom, with a vibrant mix of flowers attracting bees and other pollinators, along with birds and small mammals. Feedback from human residents has been overwhelmingly positive; locals love their 'mini forests' and want to see more. This year alone, PECT has created more than 1,000 m^2 of wildflower areas.

At each 'mini forest' site, a bee hotel was installed as part of a pilot project to investigate the relationship between native mason and leaf-cutter bees and honeybees. The project is also examining the impact losses of wildflower-rich habitats have had on wild bee populations. PECT has worked with entomologist Dr Michael Ramsey to install 50 bee hotels in and around Peterborough and Stamford: 25 near wildflower-enriched sites and areas with established pollinator-friendly flora, and 25 near honeybee apiaries. Each 'hotel' comprises a wooden box, with a sheltered opening on one side, in which recyclable card tubes are stacked horizontally. Tubes with bee eggs found inside have been taken away for the winter, to keep them safe from predators, and will be returned in spring, along with additional mason bee cocoons, when the eggs are ready to hatch. With more support, PECT hopes to expand the project and grow its city-wide 'living laboratory'.

At Castor, to the west of Peterborough, where PECT is developing a tree nursery at a four-acre site known as Tweentowns, groundwork is ongoing. Together with John Clare Countryside partners and volunteers, our natural environment lead, Tony Cook, is creating a pond and wildflower meadow and has begun enhancing existing hedgerows. He has also established a 'holding area' for native tree species, where whips are kept in readiness for the planting season and grown on to a larger size over one to three years to establish their root systems, increase resilience, and reduce failure rates upon planting. There are already 1,000 young trees onsite.

Excitingly, 2025 saw the first 100 metres of native wildflowers for seed

collection sown at Tweentowns. Seeds gathered from this strip of mixed wildflowers will be used locally in meadow creation projects.

The tree nursery at Castor will, in the longer term, support PECT's tree-planting initiatives, such as the Forest for Peterborough project. Launched in 2010, the project aims to plant 230,000 trees by 2030. This year, 1,800 trees were planted. Tweentowns will eventually become a place for teaching traditional rural skills, such as hedge laying and scything, and demonstrating nature-

Here are some of Peterborough's recipients of the Royal Forestry Society's Junior Forester Awards for 2025.
Credit: PECT

friendly land management. PECT has ambitions to establish a small orchard as well, grafting heritage apple varieties from local stocks.

PECT continues to deliver outreach programmes to children and adults, including the Royal Forestry Society's Junior Forester Award, which educates students about the value of trees and woodland. To date, 83 young people have taken part, with 64 passing the award so far. Through its Climate Education programme, PECT also works with schools to create school site development plans, zoning outdoor space for nature, play, teaching and learning. In Peterborough alone, six schools have made plans with PECT's support, including Braybrook Primary Academy in Orton Goldhay and Heltwate School in Bretton.

Working in partnership with Nene Valley Hodgson Medical Practice, PECT continues to deliver the Healthy Green Orton initiative, which refers individuals living with frailty and chronic health conditions to a Green Social Prescriber for tailored, community-based support. Green social prescribing complements conventional medical treatments, boosting physical and mental wellbeing

through outdoor activities such as gardening, sport, and nature conservation. To date, 108 patients have been referred.

The **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds** (RSPB) is a significant nature conservation landowner in Cambridgeshire and manages 4,200 ha of land for nature in the county, including substantial wetland reserves at the Ouse Washes, Nene Washes, Fen Drayton Lakes, an expanding area at Ouse Fen (the Brice Aggregates/RSPB Wetland Project) and mixed wetland and woodland at Fowlmere. The former four reserves sit at the core of the Natural Cambridgeshire Connected Fens priority landscape and form the backbone of our RSPB Fens Priority Landscape work up to 2030.

2025 has been a busy surveying year for work outside of our reserves. As part of the 10-year strategy with the Ely Nature-Friendly Farming Zone, a Priority Species Baselining Project was developed to carry out surveys across 2025 and 2026 for farmland birds, pollinators and water voles. From June until November, we carried out breeding bird surveys through the RSPB's Volunteer Monitoring of Farm Wildlife Project, water vole ditch habitat surveys, and trialled a new farmland-based pollinator habitat suitability assessment. We are now in the process of carrying out wintering bird surveys too. This is all possible thanks to funding from the Betty Lawes Foundation and the Jack Patston Charitable Trust, and support from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, the People's Trust for Endangered Species and 49 great volunteers! Excitingly, we've also been able to open the surveying offer, as originally intended as a longer-term aim of the project, to a new, small group of farmers in the Ramsey area where we are investigating the potential of a close-knit cluster group there.

Through Operation Turtle Dove, we are continuing to increase the number of stakeholders we engage, with 54 sites across Cambridgeshire now part of this initiative. These sites are either actively providing supplementary feeding and/or habitat maintenance and enhancements to provide the three key requirements for turtle doves (nesting habitat, foraging habitat and accessible water). We fully rolled out our Trail Camera Project this year and have six volunteers deploying cameras on our supplementary feeding and foraging sites in hopes of capturing images of turtle doves; and if we're lucky, juveniles too. Across the twelve different stakeholder sites with cameras deployed, we recorded a total of 128 birds belonging to a priority species (red and amber-listed), turtle dove included. This project provides a great opportunity to showcase the benefits of supplementary feeding or foraging sites for turtle doves, but also for a multitude of other farmland birds. Next year we will have a team of seven volunteers and hopefully some new cameras.

Our work outside of reserves would not be possible without the generous support of volunteers, so a special thanks goes out to our Volunteer Administrator, our Volunteer Coordinators, our placement student, our GIS volunteers and all of our surveying volunteers.

The RSPB continued to be lead partner in the Ouse Washes Landscape Recovery Project in 2025. Our team has been working hard to bring together the draft documents required by Defra when the two-year Development Phase finishes in early 2026. The project partners will then go into a negotiation with Defra over whether the project should go ahead, and if so, the level of financial support the government will provide over the next 20 years.

In the summers of 2018 and 2019 our RSPB Fowlmere Reserve dried up. Since then, we have developed a multi-year plan to mitigate this by making the site more resilient to climate change. This has included deepening and extending ditches, installing a new sluice and improving water flow in the River Shep (an SSSI chalk stream with trout). This year work continued with the installation of a culvert, continuing work on the ditch network and connecting sections that have been worked on in previous years. Attempts were made to work on the mere but, sadly, ground conditions were too wet and we will devise another plan of action for this in coming years. Marsh harriers bred once again on site and are a great draw for visitors along with the water voles and brown trout readily visible in the Shep chalk stream.

RSPB Ouse Fen recorded 13 booming bitterns with plenty of sightings as they carried food to their young, alongside a remarkable 10 breeding pairs of marsh harriers. The Great reed warbler returned to sing near Cell 8 – still, unfortunately, without a mate. Work for the next phase of the Path Scheme is underway, creating new linked loops. A permissive path between Cells 5 and 7 with raised viewing mounds is also planned.

The main work this season has focused on clearing out ditches and ponds, with willow encroaching into the reedbeds removed by the warden team and weekly volunteer work parties. RSPB Fen Drayton Lakes recorded a record-equalling six purring turtle doves around the site, along with our usual two booming bitterns; a single singing nightingale was also present.

The **Wildfowl and Wetland Trust** (WWT) are running a project in the Great Ouse Valley called 'Great Ouse Blue Connections'. This project aims to develop a pipeline of wetland restoration projects across the Great Ouse catchment – initially the Roxton, to Earith and Alconbury and Brampton Brooks waterbodies. The plan is to extend this to cover the whole Great Ouse Lower Operational Catchment in future years. In this, the first year, the project has been funded by the Water Restoration Fund.

The project aims to secure significant benefits for the water environment, including water quality, flood mitigation and biodiversity, both within the project area and downstream. It has already undertaken comprehensive spatial mapping across the area to inform the development and location of wetland restoration projects. The project has also produced an app to allow simple sharing of information about projects.

The project is led by WWT who are working with a wide range of stakeholders including FWAG East, other local environmental charities, landowners, local councils and parish councils, and members of the community.

The **Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire** (WT BCN) continues to take a landscape approach to nature conservation and is actively involved in all six of Natural Cambridgeshire's priority landscapes. This approach spans all aspects of the Trust's work, including managing and acquiring nature reserves, providing land advice to farmers, landowners and businesses, engaging with communities through family events, education activities and supporting local communities and individuals to take action for wildlife on their own patch. A nature recovery network requires that the best core nature sites that support many of our iconic and rarest or declining species continue to be well-managed. WT BCN therefore continues to invest in the management of its nature reserves including restoration of habitats where required. We manage over 40 nature reserves in Cambridgeshire, including over 20 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, covering over 2,000 ha.

In the Great Fen we have started construction work to create a new visitor hub at New Decoy Farm. We have also started the preparatory work to create a large wetland at Speechley's Farm and on part of Middle Farm to the north and west of Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserve.

In the Cambridge Nature Network the Trust's new chalk grassland has been created on 7 ha of land adjacent to Fleam Dyke SSSI. This is in addition to the 3 ha of meadow creation two fields away adjacent to Fulbourn Fen. We continue to support the East Cambridge and Granta Farmer Cluster.

In John Clare Countryside the Wildlife Trust continues to work with several landowners to plan for a landscape recovery scheme and we have also supported the two Cambridgeshire landowners in the Ouse Washes Landscape Recovery project with designing their farm-wide nature restoration plans.

The Wildlife Trust has supported preparation of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough LNRS. We have also helped support six landowners with their plans to develop habitat banks on their farms.

As a charity, we rely on volunteers to undertake much of our work whether it is managing nature reserves, recording and monitoring wildlife or supporting community engagement activities. We have over 1200 active volunteers, but also support many community groups undertaking valuable nature conservation within their own communities.

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