

Briefing on 'New Life on the Old West': A National Lottery-funded project to benefit Cambridgeshire communities and Fenland wildlife [Jan-2018]



Summary:

- Heritage Lottery Fund grants £99,000 to Cambridgeshire ACRE for new project.
- Local communities, green spaces and biodiversity to benefit from funding.
- Project focuses on Old West River and nine Cambridgeshire parishes on either side.
- There are opportunities for more community groups and landowners in the area to get involved.

Background

Cambridgeshire ACRE received fantastic news from the Heritage Lottery Fund that it is supporting its new project, 'New Life on the Old West'. Development funding of £99,000 has been awarded to help Cambridgeshire ACRE develop this project in 2018. This will lead to a second-stage application of £729,900 to deliver the project from 2019 until 2022.

What we aim to do

We aim to improve understanding of the vulnerable biodiversity in the landscape around the Cambridgeshire Fens' Old West River. Key will be the delivery of biodiversity improvements on the area's many community green spaces and the ditch network in the arable landscape. We will also create demonstration sites showcasing innovative, wildlife-friendly ways of working the land and water.

Landscape and Biodiversity

The landscape around the Old West River is recognised as a stronghold for many rare and endangered species such as Turtle doves, water voles, water beetles and aquatic plants such as Water Violet. This is a vital ecological corridor linking the internationally significant wetland reserves of National Trust's Wicken Fen to the east and RSPB Ouse Fen to the west.

Community Benefits

There will be many opportunities for local people to join the citizen science, volunteering, training and events programmes that will be developed, to learn about the diverse fenland natural heritage and to increase people's knowledge of how best to maintain green spaces in their care.



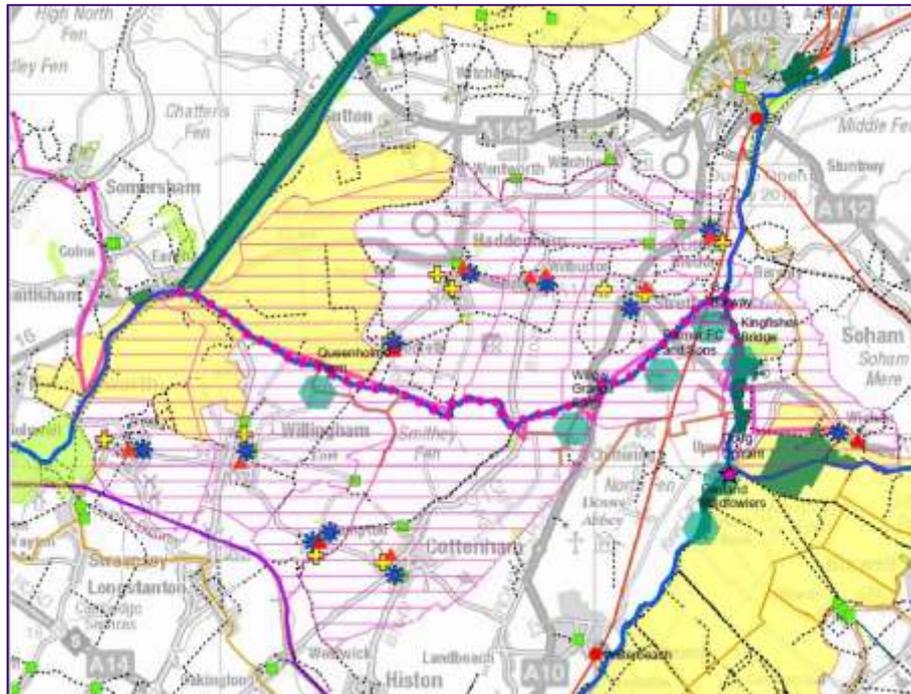
From L to R, photos show Stretham Old Engine on the Ely Ouse; The Old West River as it passes through Hermitage Lock at Earith; and Rampton village pond, one of the community green spaces the project hopes to work with the local community to improve.

**Funding raised by
The National Lottery**
and awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund



Old West Landscape

The map below shows the area, hatched in pink, covered by the New Life on the Old West project, with biodiversity enhancements and events planned in the nine Cambridgeshire parishes of Haddenham & Aldreth, Wilburton, Stretham, Little Thetford, Wicken & Upware, Over, Willingham, Rampton and Cottenham.



What we expect to see as a result of the project

- 140+ habitat improvement areas
- 40 demonstration sites created
- 157 training events and advisory sessions
- 80+ events and talks
- 43 interpretation panels
- 30+ digital resources
- 25+ local community groups supported
- 740+ volunteers involved in citizen science and other work
- 610+ people to gain new skills
- 5,400+ people to benefit from project delivery

Why this new project

The project brings together expertise from 26 organisations working in conservation, land and water management, heritage and visitor economy. The partnership's vision is to counter ongoing biodiversity decline for the area's priority habitats and species, and create resilience in light of climate change challenges. This collaborative approach provides a unique opportunity to test a landscape-scale conservation approach that has not yet been undertaken in the Fens. Local landowners will be able to benefit from wildlife-friendly improvements on their ditches and arable land. Demonstration sites will enable local people to display wildlife-friendly management practices, supporting parishes and community groups in their important work. If you are a local landowner, community group, or school and wish to be involved, please get in touch with us to discuss further.

To find out more about New Life on the Old West

- Visit our website: <http://www.newlifeontheoldwest.wordpress.com>
- Follow us on Twitter: @NewLifeOldWest (or search for hashtags #NewLifeOldWest / #OldWestRiver)
- Find us on Facebook: @newlifeontheoldwest
- Contact us by email: mark.nokkert@camsacre.org.uk or telephone: 01353 865030

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