



PRESS RELEASE

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Key land purchase unifies historic Thelnetham Fen for wildlife and local community

In a major boost for wildlife and the local community, the Little Ouse Headwaters Project (LOHP) is pleased to announce the purchase of a key parcel of land in the Little Ouse Valley following the award of a grant for £78,600 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Led entirely by volunteers from the local community, the LOHP manages over 70 hectares of land on the Suffolk/Norfolk border for wildlife conservation and public enjoyment. The 1.9 hectare site which lies in the parish of Thelnetham and at the core of the historic Thelnetham Fen will be the final piece of the original Fen to be restored. By linking several reserves in the valley to form a large block, the acquisition allows for a fully integrated approach to the management of the internationally important habitats and wildlife of the valley.

As well as funding much of the purchase cost, the HLF award will allow surveys to be undertaken to assess how best to restore the site for wildlife, provide public access and interpretation, and help local volunteers engage in the restoration through training in new skills.

The new land brings to 14 the number of sites managed by the project; the thirteenth site, a small meadow with magnificent old hedges in Hinderclay, was purchased only two months ago.

Commenting on the award, Peter Coster, chair of the LOHP's board of trustees said "We are most grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for their generous grant, assisting us to purchase this valuable addition to our network of sites. This new acquisition and grant money will enable us to further our objective of developing and extending a living landscape, restoring and re-creating this potentially rich wildlife area for the benefit of our local communities both now and in the future."

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: "We are delighted that, thanks to National Lottery players, we are able to fund this fantastic project to extend and conserve this historic landscape and allow local people and communities to explore the natural heritage on their doorstep. It is a great opportunity for people to volunteer and learn new skills, and we are pleased to be a part of it".

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Notes to editors

About the Little Ouse Headwaters Project

The project is a registered charity, established in 2002 by local residents keen to take practical action to help protect and restore threatened aspects of the local landscape and its wildlife. It is located on the Norfolk/Suffolk border at the headwaters of the Little Ouse River (which forms the county border).

The LOHP is a community-based, volunteer run project – it is managed by a Board of Trustees drawn from the local area. We currently manage over 70 hectares of land adjacent to the river. Our overall aim is to encourage the creation of a continuous corridor of land along the headwaters of the river that is managed in a way that benefits wildlife and people, and helps to preserve the character of the local landscape.

The upper Little Ouse valley contains sites of local, national and international importance for wildlife, most notably the small remaining fragments of valley fen. Some of the sites we manage are protected by conservation designations (national – Site of Special Scientific Interest, or European – Special Area of Conservation)

We are committed to increasing public access and enjoyment of the project area by creating new footpaths, providing guided walks, and encouraging people to become involved in the project as volunteers.

Since 2002 we have raised over £1.5 million to support land acquisition, habitat restoration and management, and public access improvements and interpretation on our sites. We have been funded by a very wide range of charitable trusts and received major grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the EU, Natural England, Biffaward, the Tubney Charitable Trust and Plantlife, as well as funding from Natural England's Environmental Stewardship schemes.

We have been very fortunate to benefit from four Heritage Lottery Fund grants. In addition to our new award, grants in 2003 and 2014 helped us to secure, manage and interpret sites in South Lopham, Blo'Norton and Thelnetham. In 2010 we were awarded a major £370,000 grant that enabled us to complete the purchase of Webbs Fen – another part of the historic Thelnetham Fen. The grant also allowed us to undertake restoration work on two other sites and to engage local people with Little Ouse valley's wildlife and historic landscape. These included work with a local school, heritage walks, newsletters, volunteer training, and collaboration with the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts to establish a Creative Group, drawing artistic inspiration from the valley.

The LOHP has won a number of national and regional awards for its work. Further information about the project can be found on our web site: www.lohp.org.uk

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. www.hlf.org.uk @heritagelottery

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For downloadable images please visit www.lohp.org.uk/press-images