



# THE LITTLE OUSE HEADWATERS PROJECT

## PRESS RELEASE

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### AWARDS

*Living*

*Wetlands*

*Award 2006*

*Suffolk*

*Greenest*

*Community*

*Award - 2009*

*Norfolk*

*Biodiversity*

*Partnership -*

*Site Award*

*2010*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **MASSIVE AWARD FOR LITTLE OUSE PROJECT**

Precious fenland habitat across the Norfolk or Suffolk border is to be restored thanks to a massive Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £370,400, to the Little Ouse Project (LOHP)

This has firstly enabled the purchase of Webbs Fen, a very important wildlife site in the Little Ouse valley. Named Webbs Fen, after its former owner, Mr John Webb, it will be restored to fen habitat and opened for public access over the next year.

Webbs Fen lies between the two isolated fragments of Thelnetham Fen SSSI which are managed by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and adjoins the LOHP's Bley-swycks Bank site. It is another vital link in the chain of sites that the LOHP has been working to establish since its formation in 2002. This 5.6ha site brings the total of land now under LOHP management to 65 ha.

The HLF funding will also enable the LOHP to restore two sites in Garboldisham (Scarfe Meadows, owned by the LOHP, and Broomscot Common, which is leased from the Garboldisham Parish Charities). Scarfe Meadows was purchased by the project in 2010, with funding from a range of sources, including donations from the group's members.

Commenting on the award, Nigel Clark, chair of the LOHP's board of trustees said.. "The award of this grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund is fantastic news for the project. The purchase and restoration of Webbs Fen will link the existing parcels of land in conservation management making a substantial contribution to the improvement of the valley for the enjoyment of local people and wildlife. The grant will also enable the project to develop and involve many more local people securing the future of the landscape for future generations. However, even with this generous grant we still need to continue to raise funds for the maintenance and development of our existing sites."

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund, East of England, said:



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"The purchase of this small but significant piece of land will have a big impact on the Little Ouse. Not only will this grant help to safeguard an important Fen habitat for the future, but thanks to Lottery players, many more people will be able to get involved, learn about and appreciate the natural heritage that is all around us."

This new grant also enables the LOHP to undertake an exciting new project "**Conservation & Learning in the Upper Little Ouse Valley**", over the next three years. LOHP will be expanding its range of activities, working with other organisations and individuals to increase community involvement in protecting, understanding and celebrating the local landscape heritage. Much of the HLF grant is specifically designated for this work. It will include the production of learning resources for schools, and a project with Garboldisham Primary school run by the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts. The Sainsbury Centre will also lead a project for aspiring creative writers and artists inspired by the valley's heritage. The valley's history is a major theme of the grant. Work on the landscape history will be supported by Suffolk County Council and the University of East Anglia. The University will also work with the Norfolk Sound Archive to help project volunteers record oral histories from local people before their vast store of knowledge about the past use of the valley and its fens is lost. All of the information generated from these activities will be stored in a new archive for the valley, accessible through the LOHP's website.

All this is in addition to the continuation and expansion of current activities, such as volunteer work parties, guided walks and talks, that the group has been running for the past nine years. **The first of a series of Heritage Walks, 'The Little Ouse headwaters: a walk through 400,000 years of environmental history' will be led by local expert Tim Holt-Wilson on 12<sup>th</sup> June (see the LOHP's website for details).**

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### Notes to Editors

1. Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported over 30,000 projects, allocating £4.5 billion across the UK.

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



THE LITTLE OUSE HEADWATERS PROJECT

WWW.LOHP.ORG.UK

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2. The Little Ouse Headwaters Project is a registered charity, established in 2002 by local residents who were 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 remains a community-based project – it is managed by a Board of Trustees drawn from the local area, and is entirely run by volunteers. We currently manage 65 hectares of land adjacent to the river. Our overall aim is to create, over time, 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.

3. The upper Little Ouse valley contains a number of 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)

4. As well as managing sites for the benefit of wildlife, 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 practical conservation work as volunteers.

5. In 2006 the LOHP won the RSPB/Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management “Living Wetlands” Award, the first entirely voluntary organisation to gain this national recognition. In 2008 we were awarded 'Greenest Community' for 'outstanding work to protect the landscape and biodiversity', from the Suffolk Strategic Partnership's Greenest County initiative. In 2010 we were awarded the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership's Sites Award for our work to conserve, restore and manage the valley fens and associated habitats of the Little Ouse.

6. The LOHP very much welcomes anyone who would like to help make a practical contribution to this exciting restoration project by coming along to one of our work parties on the second Sunday each month. We provide tools, gloves and refreshments: volunteers just need old clothes and enthusiasm. Over 150 volunteers have worked with the project to date.

7. Further information about the project, other volunteering opportunities, and all forthcoming events can be found on our web site.

