

THE LITTLE OUSE HEADWATERS PROJECT



*Winners of the Living Wetlands Award 2006
Suffolk Greenest Community Award 2009*

PRESS RELEASE April 2010

ADVANCE NOTICE

Official Opening of new a conservation area.

The new lands acquired by the LOHP and known as Parkers Piece & Bleyswycks Bank, Thelnetham, Suffolk, will be officially opened on Friday 7th May at 3.00 p.m. This will also incorporate the opening of the new footbridge over the Little Ouse, further linking Norfolk & Suffolk.

The official opening will be performed by the Right Reverend Nigel Stock, Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, and the Right Reverend Graham James, Bishop of Norwich.

Invitations to the official ceremony have been issued to sponsors, members of the LOHP and supporters. **If you wish to send a reporter/photographer please advise us and we will issue a formal invitation.**

To celebrate the opening of these sites the LOHP will be serving drinks and conducting guided walks at 6.30 p.m. in the same evening and this event will be open to all.

Notes for editors: Little Ouse Headwaters Project

The 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 about 45 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.

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)

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 involvement in practical conservation work as volunteers.

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.

The LOHP very much welcomes anyone who would like to help make a practical contribution to this exciting project. Volunteers are needed both to help run the project and to manage our wildlife sites. Our work parties are held on the second Sunday each month and on most Wednesday mornings. We provide tools, gloves and refreshments: volunteers just need old clothes and enthusiasm.

Notes for Editors: Parkers Piece and Bleyswycks Bank

Named after their former owners, these adjoining sites were purchased by the LOHP in 2007. Bleyswycks Bank was then an abandoned and overgrown tree nursery. Parkers Piece, an area of former fenland, had also been abandoned after conversion to arable agriculture, and later use for free-range pigs. These sites form a very important link in the chain of fens along the Little Ouse Headwaters. They re-unite Blo'Norton Fen and Thelnetham Fen, both of which are still internationally important for their wildlife.

The LOHP is restoring fen habitats on both sites. The tree nursery has been cleared and the ground surface over much of the area lowered to remove nutrient-enriched soil and expose wetter, peat soils more suitable for the re-establishment of fen flowers. The area has been fenced to allow grazing by cattle and sheep - another important element in allowing a diversity of rarer to species to establish.

New paths are being established around the site to encourage public access and to create circular walks around the valley. These will be opened as soon as they are completed, early in the new year.

Funding for the purchase and restoration of these sites has come from many sources. The LOHP is grateful to all of its funders and particularly to Biffaward, Natural England, Plantlife and the Tubney Trust for their support

Notes to Editors for Biffaward-aided projects

In 1997 Biffa Waste Services agreed to donate landfill tax credits to the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) to administer under the fund name **Biffaward**. Grants made from the fund currently amount to over £100 million, supporting many worthwhile projects.

Biffa Waste Services Limited is one of the largest single suppliers of waste management services in the UK. It collects, treats, recovers and disposes of municipal, commercial and industrial waste nationwide. It is ultimately owned by a private equity consortium comprising Montagu Private Equity, Global Infrastructure Partners, Uberior Co-Investments Limited and other co-investors.

The **landfill tax** came into operation in 1996. Its purpose is to reflect the impact of landfill on the environment and also to help achieve the targets for more sustainable waste management. The tax, levied on the tonnage of all material disposed of in landfill sites and collected by Biffa on behalf of HM Revenue and Customs, aims to encourage recycling and reduce waste by raising the cost of disposal.

The regulations allow landfill site operators to direct approximately 6% of the tax they have collected towards approved environmental projects. However, any approved project can only receive 90% of its desired funding from the landfill tax. The remainder must come direct from the landfill site operator or from a third party organisation or company.

www.biffaward.org

More information including pictures about the restoration and the construction of the bridge entirely by volunteers can be obtained from plc1934@aol.com, 01379 688 018 or www.lohp.org.uk