



Annual Review 2012-2013

Annual Report of the Trustees

for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013

From the Chair

This year saw the 10th anniversary of the LOHP. In our personal lives any anniversary with a zero attached to it is often the cue for a large party and a degree of reflection on the achievements of the previous decade. At the LOHP both of the above requirements were met, but we also kept a focus on the future of the project. I suspect few of those who were present at our inaugural meeting in 2002 had any idea of how rapidly the project would develop. At that time we owned no land, and had only short term leases on our original sites. Now we are responsible for 65 hectares of land in the valley, either owned or on longer leases from parish and church charities.

Over the last ten years we have opened up new paths, installed bridges, cleared trees, fenced sites for grazing, dug ponds and installed sculptures and benches. We've mown fens and pulled up ragwort, dug out thistles and cleared rubbish. The wildlife of the area has been observed and recorded. Hundreds of people have been on our guided walks. More recently we have, thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund, branched out into oral and landscape history, work with schools, and creative arts. In addition we're getting our message out to more people with the "News from the Ouse" going to all local households.

All these achievements have resulted from the efforts of an amazing team of volunteers, together with our local contractors and graziers. We should be proud of the success of the project, which has been recognised with a number of local and national awards, most recently the CPRE Norfolk and the inaugural Boldero Awards.

Of course none of this could have been achieved without funding – we have been supported by many charitable trusts, grant awarding bodies and government funding schemes. Despite the difficult economic circumstances of recent years we have continued to be successful in attracting funds for our work – much of this success has been due to the efforts of Sarah Grieveson our Appeal Director, but I think it is also because we represent real value for money for our funders. We don't have office or staff costs, we put thousands of pounds worth of volunteer time into the project each year, and thousands of pounds into the local economy.

I am delighted to see that this investment of enthusiasm, time and money is leading to significant improvements to the varied habitats we are managing, and benefitting the species associated with them. Our task now is to continue this work into the future.

Restoring Habitats

The summer of 2012 was very wet, which led to some issues with the phenomenal growth in vegetation on our wet sites, which was in excess of what could be consumed by our normal stock levels. We were not unduly worried by this, as yearly variation in precipitation levels and resulting plant growth are part and parcel of land management, but it did mean we had to cut and remove vegetation as well as grazing some of the sites.

We continued to develop the sites purchased with Heritage Lottery Fund money. Public access has

been further extended. Two footbridges were installed on Webbs Fen, over the ditches on the east and west sides. This means it is now possible to walk along the river-side from Parkers Piece to Thelnetham Fen. Grazing has also been started at Webbs Fen, with Denis Jenkins' Suffolk Redpoll cows doing an excellent job, although at times they were invisible amongst the tall vegetation!

A replacement fence was installed at Scarfe Meadows to allow the continued grazing of the site by Brian Lambert's cows. Also the old fence along the ditch edge was removed and half of the ditch was re-profiled. At Broomscot Common we used a "weed wipe" to apply herbicide to the ragwort which dominates much of the driest ground – we do not use herbicides often on our sites, but occasionally this is the only effective way to address a major problem. By using a weed wipe rather than spraying the application can be more carefully controlled.

The final large infrastructure project of the year was the replacement of the old boardwalk on Blo' Norton Fen with a wider recycled plastic one, part funded by our Higher Level Stewardship agreement.

We continued with the routine management tasks that help to maintain the unique plants and animals of our other sites, including controlling scrub growth at Blo' Norton and Betty's Fens, and summer mowing of vegetation on all the fen sites. We have continued to graze with sheep on the Frith, and a mixture of sheep and cattle on the Lows and at Parkers Piece and Bleywycks Bank. The vegetation continues to respond well to this management regime, although supplementary cutting is still needed at all the sites.

Another LOHP milestone was reached with the finalising of a set of site management plans. The process of the creation and refining of the plans has been a long one and we would like to thank Mike Harding for all his work on this document. While the management plan is a "living document", and will be subject to revision, it is also essential to help us keep track of our progress and plan future work.

Biological recording, a vital part of monitoring the success of our management work, carried on across many LOHP sites. We held a biological recording weekend in June that attracted naturalists from across Norfolk and Suffolk, and beyond. We also contracted Jonny Stone of OHES to conduct National Vegetation Classification (NVC) surveys of Hinderclay Fen and the Blo'Norton Fens. At Hinderclay, he looked at changes since his last survey to support the case we are making for re-notification of the site as an SSSI. Re-survey of the Blo'Norton Fens was long overdue and an important part of assessment of the condition of these internationally important sites. This work was funded by money raised through the River Link Appeal for biological monitoring of our sites. Arachnologist Alan Thornhill conducted a spider survey of Hinderclay Fen, again building-up our species-lists for this site.

Throughout the year a number of other natural history experts visited our sites and provided us with records of their findings.

As always we are grateful to our volunteers, to our contractors Peter and Tim Frizzell and their team, and our graziers Denis Jenkins and Brian Lambert, for their assistance with the management of our sites.

Involving people

The volunteer input to the project has continued to grow. Our regular work parties have been well attended, we continue to run a midweek group on Wednesday, many thanks to Reg Langston for his ongoing efforts, and a Sunday party once a month. During the year more volunteers were trained in the safe use and maintenance of brushcutters, and in first aid.

The new activities associated with the HLF project resulted in the profile of the LOHP being raised with new groups of people in the local area, and our membership has continued to grow as a result. Work has continued with Garboldisham primary school, where the children have undertaken many activities based on their local site at Broomscot Common.

A significant number of volunteer naturalists, both individually and as members of natural history groups have visited our sites, and provided us with their records. Particular thanks go to Sylviane Moss for entering all of the LOHP's biological records onto a database, and to Stephen Baillie and Helen Smith for making that information available on our website.

Activities

We celebrated our anniversary in some style, with our "Food and Folk on the Frith" event in September combining educational material on past and current land management with games, competitions, local food and produce, music and by the end of the evening some rather unconventional ceilidh dancing. This event was the result of a fantastic effort by many volunteers, and attracted around 450 people, many of who were previously unaware of the LOHP.

The work associated with our HLF grant has encompassed many activities new to the LOHP and as such has reached new people. In June the Creative Group, facilitated by Liz Ballard and Dr Veronica Sekules of the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, started work on the last major activity of the HLF grant. We look forward to the results. Separately our volunteer photographic group have been busy recording our sites through the seasons. Volunteers have also carried out recordings of oral histories with local people, after being trained in interview techniques and the use of recording equipment.

There were a number of smaller events over the course of the year: on the 6th of May 20 people, led by John Hill, went on a dawn chorus walk. The New Year walk was attended by 55 people and in February Professor Tom Williamson from UEA History Department led a landscape history walk along the valley (one of the "heritage walks" for the HLF project). 50 people attended and learned about churches, settlement, the Enclosures and development of Commons. In the afternoon the group visited the mill at Thelnetham.

The AGM was held in the Redgrave Activities Centre and featured a great slide show by Arthur Rivett and an extremely interesting and informative talk by botanist Jonny Stone. Jonny highlighted for us just how important the valley fens are for their floristic biodiversity.

Membership

The total number members at 31 March 2013 was 178. Membership included 119 Friends of the Fens, 53 ordinary and 6 junior.

Funding our work

The largest single source of funding this year has been the ongoing Heritage Lottery Fund grant. We are very grateful to Mike Harding for his expertise in managing this complex grant. Higher and Entry Level Stewardship agreements and the Single Payment Scheme also brought in significant funds for site management. The revenue from the River Link Appeal was significantly lower this year compared to previously, but the primary reason for this was that we were not fund raising for anything specific during the course of the year.

Members of the Board of Trustees

Jo-Anne Pitt (Chair and trustee nominated by Blo'Norton Parish Council)

Reg Langston (Honorary Treasurer and trustee nominated by Hinderclay Parish Council)

Rowena Langston (Vice-chair)

Nigel Clark

Helen Smith

Bob Hayward (trustee nominated by Redgrave Parish Council)

Martin Ward (trustee nominated by Thelnetham Parish Council)

Peter Coster (trustee nominated by South Lopham Parish Council)

Paul Brown

Lindsay Medus (Membership secretary)

Norman Groves

John Sears (trustee nominated by Garboldisham Parish Council_

Peter Fox (Honorary Secretary)

Acknowledgements

The Little Ouse Headwaters Project is a voluntary, charitable organisation whose work is dependent on the commitment, goodwill and financial support of individuals, partner organisations and sponsors. It does not employ any staff and so is entirely dependent on the volunteers who contribute in many different ways to its success. We gratefully acknowledge their hard work and support.

Little Ouse Headwaters Project Summary of Accounts for the period April 1 2012 to March 31 2013

Income	restricted in	unrestricted in	total 2013	total 2012
Riverlink Appeal	£5,550		£5,550	£49,890
LOHP clothing		£157	£157	£349
Donation		£885	£885	£196
Countryside Stewardship grant				£2,879
Heritage Lottery Fund	£53,907		£53,907	£152,389
Higher Level Scheme	£17,669		£17,669	£2,259
Single Payment Scheme		£7,402	£7,402	
Gift Aid		£135	£135	£1302
Subscription		£1,669	£1,669	£1,624
Bank interest		£782	£782	£421
Miscellaneous		£835	£835	£2,025 ★
Total	£77,126	£11,864	£88,990	£213,334
★includes Biffaward prize				
Expenditure	restricted out	unrestricted out	total 2013	total 2012
Access and Education	£15,156		£15,156	£7,018
Riverlink Appeal	£1,730		£1,730	£4,061
Habitat management	£36,487		£36,487	£65,827
Insurance		£598	£598	£545
LOHP clothing		£288	£288	
Miscellaneous	£77		£77	£596
Biological monitoring	£7,500		£7,500	£954
Professional fees	£25,759	£306	£26,065	£57,133
Promotion/volunteer recruitment				£5,636
£3,563	£4,905	£731		
Rent	£1,883		£1,883	£1,884
Small tools/parts	£2,643		£2,643	£1,704
Stationery/stamps/printing	£660	£12	£672	£1,729
Training	£1,025		£1,025	£1,260
Water/drainage		£165	£165	£156
Total	£97,202	£2,723	£99,925	£146,429
Assets				
Land			£199,275	£199,275
Tools and equipment			£3,419	£3,932
Balance brought forward at 1 April 2012			£139,557	
Balance carried forward at 31 March 2013			£130,486	

Reserves and Investment Policy

The Trustees have reviewed the needs for reserves in line with the guidance issued by the Charities Commission. The Trustees seek funding from various sources and are grateful to the many trusts and grant providers who have contributed so far. As most income is generated in this way and varies widely, and regular membership income is insufficient to meet regular ongoing costs, the Trustees will endeavour to set aside sufficient unrestricted funds to enable the Charity to meet its basic commitments for one year. These funds will be kept in an interest bearing account.

These basic commitments include the cost of rent, insurance, health and safety requirements, conservation management obligations on designated sites and basic maintenances such as keeping paths open and safe. The Trustees believe that at 2012/13 prices this reserve should be £5000.

Trustees believe that reserves need to be at this level to ensure that the Charity can continue to function should there be a shortfall in grant revenue. This will be reviewed annually.

The annual accounts were approved by LOHP Board of Directors on 8 November 2013.