

Annual Review 2006-2007

Annual Report of the Trustees for the period 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007

From the Chair

The year started on an international note for the LOHP, with the final conference of the European TEN (Transnational Ecological Network) project being held in Thetford. Participants visited our sites to witness the official opening of the footbridge over the Little Ouse on a wonderfully sunny April day. With the ending of the TEN project and the completion of the major restoration works associated with it, we returned to what might be described as “business as usual”. For most of the year we have concentrated on the routine management work that is essential to the continued improvement of the conservation value of our sites. We did not acquire any new land during the year, but we have added Hinderclay Fen to the group of sites we lease. We had previously managed this site by agreement with the parish council, but the new lease gives us more control over other activities on the land. Securing funding for the payment of rents, and all our other activities, continues to be a priority for the Trustees. Because we lease most of our land from local Pools Trusts and Church charities, our fundraising is indirectly providing a source of income for these other local charities, as well as enabling us to improve wildlife habitats. Our fundraising success during the year was certainly boosted by our RSPB/CIWEM “Living Wetlands Award”. As always, support from our members and volunteers remains critical to the success of the LOHP, and on behalf of the Board of Trustees I would like to thank all those who have supported and encouraged us during the year.

Restoring Habitats

We have continued to work on the restoration of our sites – in most cases the major works are now complete and the routine management we have applied over the last few years is having a noticeable impact. On the Frith and the Lows we continue to manage the vegetation by a mixture of grazing and cutting – Dennis Jenkins has again grazed these sites for us with sheep on the Frith, and sheep and cows on the Lows. The animals have made a major impact on the vegetation with the sward on each site becoming more diverse, but there is still a need to supplement this grazing with cutting to remove nettle and thistle growth because of the previous enrichment of the fields.

On the wet fen sites we have a well established rotational cutting regime, with reed and sedge being cut and raked off areas within each fen on a 4 to 6 year cycle. We have also regularly mown the road edge at Blo Norton Fen. At Betty’s Fen restoration work is at an earlier stage, but the rapid growth of vegetation, and re-appearance of many fen species, both plants and invertebrates, is very encouraging.

The pools on Betty’s Fen provided a popular spawning site for frogs and toads in the spring, but the sustained dry weather meant that most of the water was lost from them by the summer – this is inevitable in particularly dry conditions and the sites soon recovered once there was enough rainfall. On the Frith we re-created a field pond on the site of a previous pond (visible on old aerial photographs), and this was rapidly colonized by aquatic plants. We expect this pond to dry out on occasion, but it will provide more diversity of habitat within this mostly dry site.

As part of the Countryside Stewardship restoration work on the Frith we cleared an area of ground and reseeded it using heather harvested from Knettishall Heath. This is an experimental attempt to re-establish heathland species on the site, and will be monitored over the coming years.

Involving people

Thanks to the enthusiasm of many regular volunteers we have continued to hold monthly work parties, undertaking a range of practical tasks throughout the year. This year the work has included a further

attack on the thistles on the Frith (a now annual event which is having a real impact), scrub and small tree removal at Hinderclay and Blo Norton Fens during the winter months, footpath maintenance and raking off of cut fen vegetation in the summer. Nearly 100 people have participated in LOHP work parties to date. In addition to work parties, many volunteers were involved in helping to run events and activities and in administering the project.

Activities

During the year we organized a number of events with the aim of increasing the number of people who are aware of the project and the sites we manage. We held a dawn chorus walk in May, which suffered slightly from poor weather in the preceding days but was nevertheless enjoyed by 15 early risers. As part of the HLF project we organized an open day and picnic in blazing sunshine on the Frith in June, and we also held a well attended open day, when 40 people joined guided walks on the Blo' Norton Fens in August. Thirty-five people joined the bat walk in September and thirty worked off the Christmas excess on a brisk walk around the project area on New Year's Eve. Hinderclay Village Hall was filled for the annual talk by Professor Richard West FRS, on the origins of the Waveney/Little Ouse valley and its fens, following our AGM in December. In February we combined a work party on Hinderclay Fen in February with an open invitation to a baked potato lunch and guided walk, as a way of showing people the work that is done by volunteers.

Biological Recording

A series of visits by the Suffolk moth group were the biological recording highlight of year, with 250 species recorded including uncommon species such as Poplar Lutestring, Lobster Moth, Garden Tiger, Reed Dagger, Mere Wainscot, Silky Wainscot, Cream-bordered Green Pea, Pinion-streaked Snout and Blackneck. Our bat walk in September with local experts Arthur Rivett and Nick Woods revealed Soprano and Common Pipistrels, Brown long-eared, Serotine and Barbastelle bats. The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society made a series of visits to the project area: they will continue these in 2007 as part of a thorough survey of the wildlife of the valley. This will be a very valuable and exciting contribution to our knowledge of valley's wildlife resources and form a base-line against we can measure the future success of our restoration work. The results of this will be available by early in 2008.

Membership

Our membership has increased to 111 with many members becoming Friends of the Fens and signing the Gift Aid declaration, which allows us to reclaim tax at no expense to the member. These funds continue to be an important component of our unrestricted funds. The Board is grateful to Lindsay Medus for her work as membership secretary during the year.

Members of the Board of Trustees

The Honorary Officer posts remained unchanged during 2006/07. During the year two Trustees, Mike Wraight and Rob Webb, resigned from the Board due to other commitments. We are grateful to them both for their support during the early years of the charity. At the end of the year the composition of the Board was as follows:

Jo-Anne Pitt (Chair and trustee nominated by Blo'Norton Parish Council)
Reg Langston (Honorary Treasurer and trustee nominated by Hinderclay Parish Council)
Nigel Clark (Vice-chair)
Helen Smith (Honorary Secretary)
Rowena Langston
Bob Hayward (trustee nominated by Redgrave Parish Council)
Dan Haskin (trustee nominated by Thelnetham Parish Council)
Peter Coster (trustee nominated by South Lopham Parish Council)

Funding our work

Grants

Our grant from the European Union for the TEN Project ended in December 2005 although the final, retrospective payment was not made until April. Our Heritage Lottery Fund 'Your Heritage' grant, now in its fourth year (of five), and our Countryside Stewardship Agreement, continued to provide funding for much of the restoration management on the Frith and the Lows. The Single Payment scheme also provided a small income for some of our sites.

The River Link Appeal

The appeal has continued to be successful and provides an important source of income for the charity. We have therefore decided to continue to run the appeal, and entered into a new 2 year contract with our Appeal Manager, Sarah Grieveson. Sarah is supported by the Trustees, and in particular Reg Langston and Bob Hayward. The Board is indebted to the Appeal team and particularly to Sarah. The success of the Appeal this year resulted primarily from her extremely hard work, dedication and expertise in finding appropriate trusts and charities to which to apply. Sarah's work is supported by the appeal's Honorary Vice-patrons, The Most Hon the Marquess of Cholmondeley, Peter Frost, Esq, Her Grace the Duchess of Grafton, GCVO and Dr Frederick Ratcliffe, CBE, JP, to whom we are also indebted.

Acknowledgements

The Little Ouse Headwaters Project is a voluntary, charitable organisation whose work is dependent on 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.

We are also grateful to the following for their substantial financial support in 2006-2007: the Heritage Lottery Fund, DEFRA, Major Bernard Mills CBE, Linley Shaw Foundation, Peter Moores Foundation, Marchig Animal Welfare Trust, Barbara Barlow Charitable Trust, Rainford Trust, HDH Wills 1965 Charitable Trust, N Smith Charitable Trust, D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, Mary Webb Trust, John Spedan Lewis Foundation, Mr & Mrs J P Marland's Charitable Settlement, Rowan Bentall Charitable Trust, Fitzmaurice Charitable Trust, Jack Patson Charitable Trust, Paul Bassham Charitable Trust, WF Southall Trust, John Porteous, Esq, Hamamelis Trust, Mackintosh Foundation, Woodroffe Benton Foundation, Dennis Buxton Trust, Alfred Williams Charitable Trust and the Roger Vere Foundation

The Little Ouse Headwaters Project- (LOHP) is a company Limited by guarantee and is governed under company law by Memorandum and Articles of Association. The Company's registered number is 4684054 and its charity registration number is 1098232. Its registered office is Waveney Cottage, Redgrave Road, South Lopham, Diss, Norfolk IP22 2JN

**LITTLE OUSE HEADWATERS PROJECT
SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2007**

	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	Total Funds 2007 £	Total Funds 2006 £
Incoming resources				
Donations	904	-	904	7,682
Appeals	-	31,555	31,555	29,300
Grants	-	-	-	468
Norfolk County Council grant	120	53,276	53,396	20,000
RPA G&S grant	1,936	3,225	5,161	2,624
Suffolk County Council grant	-	-	-	11,773
Subscriptions	696	-	696	478
Bank Interest	735	-	735	530
Bonus Sale	-	-	-	44
Rent	-	-	-	75
	4,391	88,055	92,446	72,974
Resources expended				
Appeal costs	-	4,901	4,901	-
Habitat management, access & monitoring	331	40,811	41,142	80,221
Rent, rates & water	854	1,878	2,732	2,307
Small tools	4	371	375	515
Insurance	-	483	483	418
Promotion & recruitment	12	101	113	75
Legal & professional	828	30	858	1,854
Stationery & postage	117	128	245	306
Sundry expenses	223	-	223	169
Depreciation	493	-	493	325
	2,863	48,703	51,566	86,190
Net movement in funds before transfers	1,528	39,352	40,880	(13,216)
Transfers	997	(997)	-	-
	2,525	38,355	40,880	(13,216)
Net movement in funds after transfers	2,525	38,355	40,880	(13,216)
Balances brought forward	21,594	1,535	23,129	36,345
	24,119	39,890	64,009	23,129

ACTIVITIES

The Charity's activities maintain and enhance the fragmented fen habitats along the headwaters' of the Little Ouse River and take measures to join up these fragments to create a continuous corridor of rich conservation value with access for public enjoyment.

OBJECTIVES

The charity promotes, for the public benefit, the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the Upper Little Ouse Valley and environs in the parishes of Redgrave, Hinderclay and Thelnetham in Suffolk and the parishes

of South Lopham and Blo'Norton in Norfolk, collectively known as the "Area of Benefit".

RESERVES AND INVESTMENTS POLICY

Total funds of the Charity as at 31 March 2007 amounted to £63,979 (2006 - £23,129). 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 from grant providers 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 and basic maintenances such as keeping paths open and safe. The Trustees believe that at 2006/07 prices this reserve should be £4,300.

ACCOUNTANTS

These summarised accounts are an extract from the accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2007 which have been examined by Newman & Co who reported them on the 16th October 2007. The examiners have confirmed to the Trustees that the summarised accounts are consistent with the annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2007. The annual accounts were approved on the 16th October 2007. These summarised accounts may not contain sufficient information to gain a complete understanding of the financial affairs of the charity. The full accounts may be obtained from the Honorary or Company secretary on request.