



Annual Review 2010-2011

Annual Report of the Trustees for the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011

From the Chair

Young charities like the LOHP often go through periods of rapid change, and this has certainly been the case over the last year. Having completed the initial restoration work for Parkers Piece and Blesywycks Bank we celebrated with the formal opening of these sites in May, and remarkably 200 people came to join in on a disappointingly cold, damp day. The enthusiasm for restoring the valley gave the trustees and volunteers new inspiration to look for the next challenge and it was not long in coming! Moving out of our "core" area, we had already been negotiating an agreement to take on the management of Broomscot Common in Garboldisham with the trustees of the Garboldisham Parish Charity, when a parcel of flood meadows came up for sale in the same parish. We had no hesitation in making the purchase of this land a high priority, allocating all our free reserves towards the purchase. Our members and a number of charitable trusts helped us raise the rest. No sooner were we committed to the purchase of what we now call Scarfe Meadows than another vital piece of land in Thelnetham was offered to us. This purchase, together with the restoration of all three new sites would require a whole new level of funding, which has been secured through a major Heritage Lottery Fund grant.

The LOHP is, though, about much more than the restoration of land - we want to re-engage local people with their environment so that they and future generations will enjoy and nurture this unique part of East Anglia. The HLF grant has enabled us to start to do much more, and particularly pleasing has been the opportunity to work with Garboldisham School on a range of activities based on our sites. To see the amazement on young children's faces as they dig peat from the fens and are told that when it is dry they will be able to burn it and boil a kettle over the fire makes us sure that future generations will be keen to continue the work that we have started.

Restoring Habitats

The restoration of wildlife habitats and development of public access on our three new sites (Scarfe Meadows and Broomscot Common in Garboldisham, and Webbs Fen in Thelnetham) began this year, funded primarily by our Heritage Lottery Fund grant. A three year programme is in place for the initial restoration of these sites, and the creation or improvement of public access. Although each site has its own history and characteristics, there are some common elements, such as the establishment or continuation of grazing as our main means of creating appropriate vegetation communities in the long term.

On our other sites we continued with the routine management tasks that help to maintain their unique plants and animals, including controlling scrub growth at Blo' Norton and Betty's Fens, and summer mowing of fen 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.

We are grateful to our volunteers, to our contractors Peter and Tim Frizzell and their team, and our graziers Denis Jenkins, his daughter Caitlin, and Paul Claxton for all their help with our site management work.

In order to track the success of our site management, it is essential that we continue to monitor the results, in terms of changes to the vegetation and the presence of other species. Many local naturalists contribute their records from visits to our sites, and this year we were also able to commission some specialist surveys. Geoff Nobes found a total of 67 species of water beetles on our sites, including 37 at

the newly created pond on Parkers Piece, demonstrating how quickly these creatures can find and colonise new areas of habitat. Dr Nick Stewart carried out a survey of stoneworts that revealed we have sufficient species to be considered a nationally important area for these large, complex algae.

Involving people

Our practical work parties continue to be well attended, and attract people of all ages. We ran work parties on the second Sunday of every month during the year, except in May and July, when work parties were replaced with training courses. In March we had our largest turnout to date, with 30 people clearing litter and cutting gorse at Broomscot Common. In addition to the Sunday events, work parties were held on most Wednesday mornings, with this group also seeing a significant increase in numbers attending. The mowing of our footpaths on Betty's and Blo' Norton Fens has again been undertaken by local resident John Dixon, keeping these paths in excellent condition for walkers.

There is also regular bird ringing by volunteers at Hinderclay Fen which provides valuable evidence of the breeding bird populations in the valley.

During the year, volunteers contributed over 1000 hours of their time to practical tasks on the LOHP sites.

Our HLF grant includes a substantial programme of new activities, including local history and creative writing and art, and the production of a newsletter three times a year which we are able to deliver free to all households in the parishes we serve. We hope that this broadening of our remit will help to bring the project to the attention of a much wider local audience and provide a wider range of volunteer opportunities.

Activities

This year's major event was the official opening of Parkers Piece and Bleyswycks Bank, along with Bob's Bridge, in May. The opening was performed jointly by the Bishop of Norwich and the Bishop of Bury St Edmunds & Ipswich. Over 200 people attended either the opening or the guided walks and hog roast later in the day. These sites also have two new oak sculptures in place with site interpretation information attached, as on our other pieces of land.

2010 was the International Year of Biodiversity, and to mark this we ran two training courses in the summer. Dr John Baker led a day of learning about amphibians and reptiles on LOHP sites in May, and Arthur Copping ran a course in July on the identification of grasses.

The AGM was held at Garboldisham Village Hall and attended by 46 members and additional guests, despite some travel problems due to closure of local roads on the night. Paul Read gave an informative and entertaining talk on Orchards in the Little Ouse and Waveney Valleys..

We were delighted that the hard work of our volunteers and the success of the project were recognised by the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership, who gave us their "Site Award" for 2010.

Membership

Membership numbers have increased over the previous year. At the end of March 2011 there were 141 paid up members, of which 87 were Friends of the Fens.

Members of the Board of Trustees

There were no changes to the Board of Trustees during the year. At the end of the year the composition of the Board was as follows:

Nigel Clark (Chair)

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

Rowena Langston (Vice-chair)

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

Helen Smith

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)

Paul Brown

Lindsay Medus (Membership secretary)

Norman Groves

Funding our work

During the year the LOHP was successful in obtaining a significant award from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which will contribute £370,400 towards a total project cost of £474,880 over three years. This substantial award helped to secure the purchase of Webbs Fen, and will enable the LOHP to develop new activities in the local area, reaching new audiences. A specific appeal to members for help with the purchase of Scarfe Meadows raised £2,760, a significant sum from such a small membership. The trustees are grateful to those members who contributed so generously. We are also grateful to Mike Harding for his assistance with the successful HLF funding bid.

The River Link Appeal

Despite the difficult economic situation our Riverlink Appeal continues to provide significant income, contributing a total of £62,000 during the year. Most of this income comes from small charitable trusts and is the result of many letters of application throughout the year. We are grateful to Sarah Grieveson, our Appeal Director. Sarah is supported by the appeal's Honorary Vice-patrons, The Most Hon the Marquess of Cholmondeley, 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 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.

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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 Accounts
for the period April 1 2010 to March 31 2011**

Income	restricted in	unrestricted in	total 2011	total 2010
Riverlink Appeal	£62,100.00		£62,100.00	£2,7375.00
Bonus sale		£41.60	£41.60	£103.06
Donation		£331.46	£331.46	£420.58
Countryside Stewardship grant	£3,769.35		£3,769.35	£2,623.70
Biffaward funding	£8,932.71		£8,932.71	£21,816.52
Scarfe Appeal	£2,760.00		£2,760.00	
Other grants	£1,000		£1,000.00	£44488.75
Rural Payments Agency		£4,106.81	£4,106.81	£3819.39
Gift Aid		£209.06	£209.06	
Subscription		£1,597.75	£1,597.75	£742.75
Bank interest		£383.73	£383.73	£831.32
Total	£78,562.06	£6,670.41	£85,232.47	£102229.05
Expenditure	restricted out	unrestricted out	total 2011	total 2010
Access and Education	£9,107.52		£9,107.52	£30.00
Riverlink Appeal	£6,387.11		£6,387.11	£2,917.65
Habitat management	£16,708.17		£16,708.17	£44,051.90
Insurance	£490.38		£490.38	£490.35
Miscellaneous	£51.47		£51.47	£100.70
Monitoring	£3,802.15		£3,802.15	£2,299.30
Professional fees/wages	£4,203.70	£1062.31	£5,266.01	£7,000.19
Bridge costs				£13,583.66
Land purchase	£88,900.00		£88,900.00	
Promotion/volunteer recruitment	£2,308.24	£42.75	£2350.99	£937.97
Rent	£1,861.33	£12,630.00	£14,491.33	£1,958.00
Small tools/parts	£978.14		£978.14	£2,064.83
Stationery/stamps/printing	£398.63		£398.63	£583.50
Training	£312.50		£312.50	£2,001.52
Water/drainage	£167.11		£167.11	£124.41
Total	£135,676.45	£13,735.06	£149,411.51	£78,143.98
Assets				
Land			£199,275.00	£61,275.00
Tools and equipment			£3,567.00	£3,844.00
Balance brought forward at 31 March 2010				£134,534.40
Balance carried forward at 31 March 2011			£68,631.00	