Water Care Catchment Partnership

Catchment Management Plan

November 2023

Activity Record last update: July 25

DELIVERED BY

CAMBRIDGESHIRE ACRE COMMUNITY ACTION

Contents

Increasing engagement with the natural environment is one of the key goals in the 25 Year Environment Plan

An introduction to catchment partnerships

A catchment partnership is a group of partners and community members (led by a host organisation) who collaborate to improve the water environment in a catchment area. Partnerships are funded by the Environment Agency (EA). The Water Care Partnership is concerned with the Old Bedford including Middle Level catchment (as defined by the EA, see map).

Catchment Partnerships are found across England, some are hosted by a Rivers Trust, but the Water Care Partnership has been hosted by Cambridgeshire ACRE since its beginning in 2014. The Water Care Partnership is not a legal entity in its own right and cannot hold funds, but Cambridgeshire ACRE can do so on behalf of the partners.

The Water Care Partnership meets quarterly with additional working groups meeting outside of these main meetings as required.

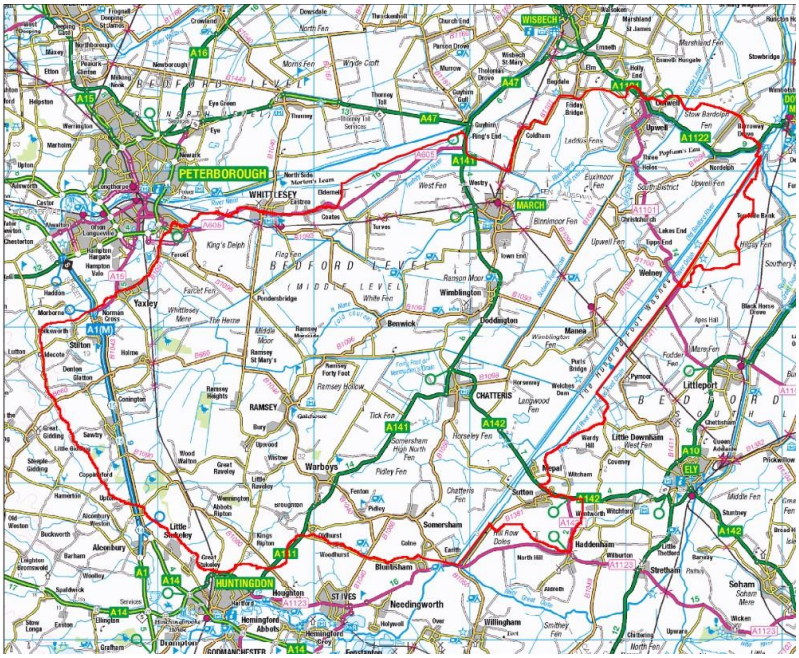

Figure 1: Water Care Catchment Partnership boundary (in red)

The Catchment Based Approach (CaBA)

Catchment Partnerships aim to improve the water environment using a catchment-based approach (CaBA). This means working collaboratively with the communities and organisations in a catchment area to identify the issues facing the water bodies and developing work streams or projects to address them. Partnerships are supported in their work by a national support body called CaBA, consisting of the Rivers Trust and other relevant organisations.

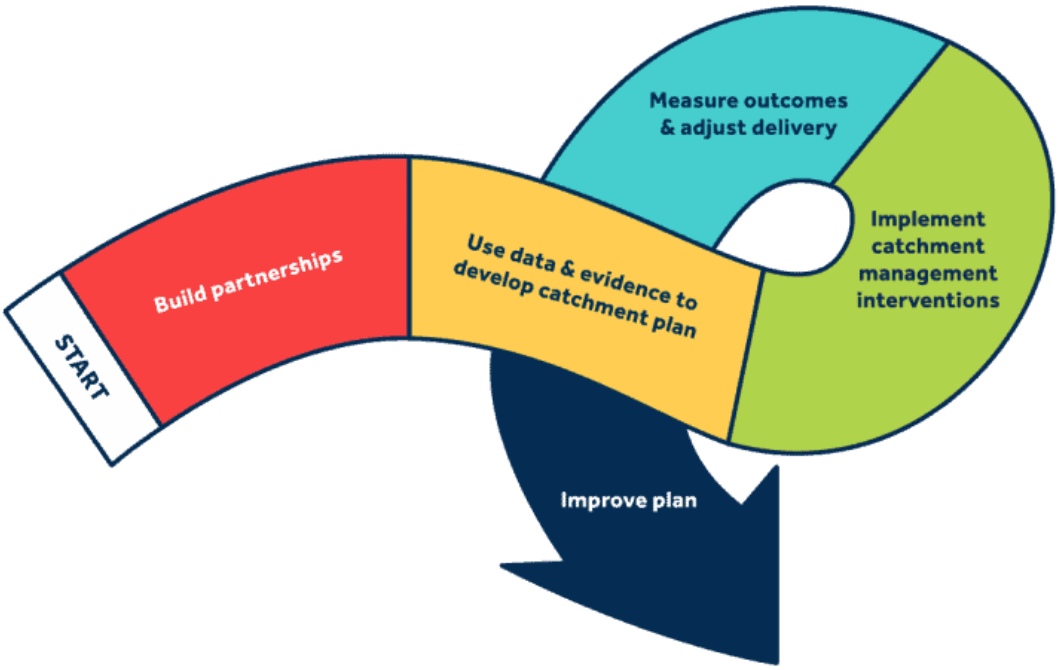

Figure 2: CaBA partnership development

Why have a Water Care Partnership?

1. **It connects people to the environment:** the partnership encourages voluntary action, citizen science and education which raises awareness of the environment and builds local ownership. Local decision-making leads to more effective, cost-efficient, and sustainable solutions.

2. **It increases access to funding:** collaboration across a range of partners and community members means a more diverse range of funds can be accessed, enabling partnerships to 'get more for less'.

3. **It is ideally placed to deliver current strategies:** partners are experts drawn from all aspects of the water environment and so the partnership is ideally placed to deliver on the Government's 25-year Environment Plan, the Plan for Water, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, carbon reduction and climate change resilience.

4. **It provides a balanced viewpoint:** the partnership host is a 'neutral' presence in a partnership which contains a wide range of viewpoints. The partnership works towards developing consensus and collaboration and can be seen as a 'trusted' source of information. Partners are experts in their fields of knowledge.

Figure 3: Middle Level Commissioners Conservation Officer collecting elvers at the St Germans Pumping Station eel pass for the Eels in the Classroom project. This partnership project enabled 60 children to care for elvers in tanks in their classrooms. They gained a greater understanding of the endangered species status of the European Eel, the challenge this species faces for survival and the importance of providing a suitable aquatic environment for wildlife. For more information click here.

Water Care partners

Figure 4 below shows the core partners who meet on a regular basis.

Figure 4: Water Care Partners

Water Care also works with many other partners each year. For example, in 2022-23, the Partnership directly worked with:

- Ramsey Town Council
- Ramsey Neighbourhood Trust
- Swavesey Parish Council
- Fenland & Huntingdonshire District Councils
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Over & Little Thetford Primary Schools
- The Association of Drainage Authorities
- Community groups x 4
- Fens for the Future
- The Fens Water Partnership (reservoir stakeholder group)

- RiverCare
- Ramsey IDB
- Ely Aquatics

Building partnerships is a theme running through the 25 Year Environment Plan, with strengthening partnerships one of the key steps in 'Putting the Plan into Practice'

An introduction to the Water Care catchment

The Water Care Partnership is concerned with the Old Bedford including Middle Level catchment (as defined by the EA) and lies within Cambridgeshire and West Norfolk, including the market towns of Whittlesey, March, Ramsey and Chatteris. The catchment area is home to over 113,000 people (Nomis, 2011 census) and covers an area of approximately 921km^2. It is predominantly a rural catchment with a long history of land drainage and forms part of the fenland region of East Anglia.

Water Level Management
Virtually all of the fenland in the catchment is below sea level and forms part of an inland basin. A complex water level management system is in place to maintain the drainage of the land and pump water out to sea to prevent flooding and drain the land for agriculture. This system is the responsibility of individual Internal Drainage Boards and the Middle Level Commissioners (district and major drains) working with the Environment Agency (main rivers). There are also many much smaller ditches and watercourses maintained on private land by landowners and some which are maintained by local authorities. All of the Middle Level is dependent on artificially pumped drainage to remove water from the land. The conveyance of water in these ditches and drains is crucial to prevent mass flooding in the catchment.

Waterbody Status
The Environment Agency (EA) assesses water bodies in England and Wales to determine their ecological status and water quality. There are five grades: High, Good, Moderate, Poor, and Bad. Only water bodies reaching 'Good' status or above are said to be meeting the required Water Framework Directive (WFD) standards.

The EA has classified the Old Bedford and Middle Level Catchment into six waterbodies. A summary of the monitoring results (2002) and waterbody status follows:

Water body	Overall status	Any "Bad" status in 2022	Other issues	Known source
Bury Brook	Moderate	Dissolved Oxygen Phosphate	Point source pollution: ammonia, phosphate, invertebrates	Sewage
			Diffuse pollution	Agriculture: soil & nutrient management
			Physical modification	Land drainage and flood relief structures
			Flow	Land drainage
Old Bedford/R Delph incl. Hundred-Foot Washes	Moderate		Dissolved oxygen (moved from poor in 2019 to moderate 2022)	
			Macrophytes & Phyto benthos (aquatic plants, mosses, some algae)	
Middle Level	Moderate	Dissolved Oxygen	Physical modification	Land drainage
			Diffuse pollution	Agriculture: soil management
			Point source	Sewage

Water body	Overall status	Any "Bad" status in 2022	Other issues	Known source
Counter Drain (Upwell & Outwell IDB)	Moderate	Biochemical Oxygen Demand (more information here)	Physical modification	
			Dissolved oxygen	
Counter Drain (Manea & Welney IDB)	Moderate	Dissolved Oxygen	Physical modification	
Counter Drain (Sutton & Mepal IDB incl. Cranbrook Drain)	Moderate		Diffuse pollution: ammonia	Agricultural: nutrient management
			Point Source pollution: ammonia, phosphate	Sewage
			Physical modification	Land drainage

Wildlife
The Old Bedford and Middle Level catchment supports diverse wildlife including several rare wetland and aquatic species such as the European Eel, Water Voles and Water Parsnip as well as a wide variety of birdlife and other important wetland and ditch invertebrate and plant species. There are several nationally designated water-dependent sites in the catchment including the Ouse Washes Ramsar, SAC, SPA and SSSI, Woodwalton Fen SSSI which is part of the Fenland SAC, Holme Fen SSSI and Upwood Meadows SSSI.

Peat
In 1987 lowland peat soils were estimated to cover 24,000 ha of the fenlands (Burton and Hodgson, 1987) but much has eroded since, releasing carbon dioxide in the process. Arable agriculture is mostly responsible for this degradation. New work is underway to determine the depth of the remaining peat, the potential for rewetted land for holding water and carbon dioxide and to identify new crops and cropping regimes.

The Fens Reservoir
Lack of water has been identified as a major barrier to growth in this region, in particular in the high growth areas of South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge city. To address this Anglian Water and Cambridge Water are proposing to build a 55 million cubic metre reservoir in the catchment area, slightly to the north of Chatteris. The aim is to bring this online by mid to late 2030s.

Agriculture
The Fens produces more than a third of England's fresh vegetables and a fifth of England's potatoes. Half of England's Grade 1 soils are in the fens. Farmers in the fens are inextricably linked with water level management to maintain workable fields and water for crops. The area receives a third of the rainfall of other areas in the UK and there is no ground water abstraction in the catchment. Farm drains and ditches have been likened to the hedgerows in other areas as valuable wildlife habitats.

Our vision, aims and objectives

Our vision is to to create a catchment with healthy, clean water which supports wildlife, provides an amenity for people to enjoy and is resilient to the challenges of climate change.

The aims which underpin this vision are:

1. To improve water quality and aquatic habitats.
2. To manage the challenge climate change and growth presents to water level management, agriculture, water resources and wildlife.
3. To make better connections between local people and their water environment and support the creation of opportunities for recreation.
4. To ensure the catchment is properly understood and appropriate decisions are made about its future at a national and local level.

Figure 5: Clearing litter from the High Lode in Ramsey. The partnership runs the Ramsey RiverCare group with over 30 volunteers who regularly clear the rivers and ditches in Ramsey of litter. One volunteer also undertakes water quality monitoring. For more information visit the Ramsey RiverCare Facebook page

The best way to manage supply and pollution pressures is by taking an integrated approach across a whole catchment.

Plan for Water, UK Gov 2023

Aim 1: to improve water quality and aquatic habitats

	Objective	Actions
1.	Work with partners to resolve low dissolved oxygen (DO) and slow flow issues across the catchment.	• Re-assess R Delph to address conveyance issues. • Develop a partnership project to achieve Good Ecological Potential (GEP) on the R Delph. • Partnership support for EA improvements to Bury Brook flow projects - for natural flood management and DO levels. • Develop a trial individual Bury Brook catchment plan, develop a "pathway to good" for the river and identify all the deliverable options. • Develop a partnership project to achieve Good Ecological Potential (GEP) on Bury Brook.
2.	Reduce pollution from the water industry, agriculture, and other sources across the catchment.	• Support water companies to develop nature-based solutions to tackle discharge from wastewater treatment centres and combined sewer overflows. • Support Midde Level Commissioners to identify and investigate point source pollution from the water industry. • Develop citizen science monitoring of CSO flow frequencies at Ramsey and Wistow. • Deliver partnership workshops for farmers around available funding and best practice land/water management on farms, using local examples. • Develop better communication with growers/landowners/supply chain around water quality. • Provide information to partners/collect evidence about the impact of microplastic and highway run off.
3.	Collect data about the impact of winter water level management practices.	• Partnership work to investigate and address the impact of pumping water into main drains at the start of winter on water quality.
4.	Trial solutions for the control of relevant non-native invasive species.	• Collaborative work to identify and test any known controls for Chinese Mitten crabs and Signal Crayfish. • Work towards cross catchment resolutions with CamEO/UBO catchment partnerships.

Aim 2: to manage the challenge climate change and growth presents to water level management, agriculture, water resources and wildlife

	Objective	Actions
1.	Support measures to address the increasing lack of drinking water and water for agriculture.	• Continue partnership input into the development of the Fens reservoir. • Work with the water companies to promote water saving activities in communities. • Work with partners to investigate funding opportunities for water saving on farms via local funding streams (Combined Authority, Natural Cambridgeshire, the Rural Prosperity funds). • Make Water Resources East aware of activities.
2.	Develop alternative ways to manage sudden rainfall events and associated localised surface water flooding.	• Promote the use of SuDs; make communities more aware of their potential in new developments, identify retro fitting opportunities. • Work with Parishes and Water companies to solve localised surface water flooding issues via use of SuDs & promote biodiversity benefits. • Work with RFCC/RMAs to identify locations most at risk - develop Parish/Town list, upskill Parish/Town councils. • Investigate the use of SuDs to manage CSO overflows. • Develop citizen science monitoring of frequency of CSO outflows. • Support partnership work into the development of wetlands to increase the capacity for flood risk management, and biodiversity enhancement.
3.	Support measures to develop greater understanding of the complexity of water level management in the Fens.	• Partnership support for Fens 2100+: support workshops, consultations, outreach to communities. • Partnership support, where requested, for IDB network activities. • Support development of FFI.
4.	Alignment of project / programmes aimed at developing climate resilience for agriculture and nature.	• Identify, contact, and provide regular updates on peatland projects, re-wilding projects, and wetland projects. • Map out projects and add to website – upgrade website to enable this.

Aim 3: to make better connections between local people and their water environment and create more opportunities for recreation

	Objective	Actions
1.	Provide opportunities for communities to connect with nature, and "blue space" to improve their physical and mental health.	• Continue Ramsey and March RiverCare groups. • Develop more citizen science, particularly water quality monitoring. Learn from UBO Catchment Partnership CaSTCo piloting. • Connect community groups with relevant partnership projects and opportunities. • Look for potential commercial leisure or educational opportunities linked to water use and management. • Look for opportunities to broaden the scope of partners involved e.g. archaeology.
2.	Empower communities and develop social action through a better understanding the complexity of water management in the catchment.	• Promote relevant local funding schemes to communities and partners. • Map and contact community groups which use the water ways e.g., wild swimming/paddle sport/local nature groups to establish interest in monitoring/reporting on water quality. • Host a Parish Council event about managing the water environment. • Work with local action groups and communities to provide clear, unbiased information about water-based problems.
3.	Increase the use of the catchment waterways by boaters and paddle sport users, anglers, and walkers.	• Develop projects to increase public use of the waterways by craft including increasing moorings, turning points, pump out stations, canoe/paddle sport access & portage. Look for ways to encourage better links between towns/villages and their waterways. • Address the inconsistency of responsibility for moorings maintenance across the area. • Promote the development of better navigational links, in particular circular routes. • Promote navigational opportunities and open water transfer as part of the fens reservoir development, consider increasing lock length at Welches Dam & Horseway Lock. • Address poor bank access to the Old Nene for anglers in March town centre.

Aim 4: to ensure the catchment is properly understood and appropriate decisions are made about its future at a national and local level

	Objective	Actions
1.	Provide evidence and data to influence decision makers.	• Gather evidence and data (to be sourced from the EA, water industry, CaBA, local authorities and partners) about water quality issues in the catchment. Make available to all partners. • Establish more active monitoring of phosphate, nitrogen, and flow levels in all water bodies – by partners and citizen science. • Ensure decision makers are aware of the catchment management plan and the catchment action plan. • Ensure the partnership replies both as individual partners and with a collective view to consultations.
2.	Raise awareness of the Water Care Catchment Partnership, partnership expertise and the unique nature of the catchment.	• Identify key missing partners and invite to attend a partnership meeting/ become a partner. Add to newsletter circulation list. • Map out partner representation in other water related partnerships and relevant work streams, identify any missing and how best to feedback information to other partners. • Develop better communication materials for partner use. • Improve website presence.

Healthy and naturally functioning catchments hold more water in soils, filter pollutants, and provide essential habitats. This improves water quality, reduces drought, supports wildlife, and increases flood resilience.

Plan for Water, UK Gov 2023

Partnership delivery

The partnership is managed by the Water Care host according to the Water Care Terms of Reference.

Delivery consists of:

- Developing a shared Catchment Management Plan (this document), which is updated every 5 years. This identifies the key challenges in the catchment and sets out methods of addressing them.

  How: the Water Care host will create a draft based on previous partnership discussions, partners will be consulted, amendments made, and priorities identified.

- Project and programme development and delivery to address the challenges identified in the Catchment Management Plan.

  How: this is usually collaboratively undertaken by partners, but the host may do direct delivery of some small-scale projects.

- Maintaining a "live" Catchment Action Plan, derived from the Catchment Management Plan, which lists the partners projects/programmes and is updated twice a year.

  How: the host maintains this, and partners provide progress updates.

- Holding four partnership meetings/year to discuss project progress, identify new challenges and encourage collaboration.

  How: the host facilitates this, partners participate.

- Strategic influencing through responding to consultations and attending meetings.

  How: representing the partnership is undertaken by the host, partners often attend the same meetings on behalf of their own organisations/interests.

- Promoting the partnership, responding to community queries, recruiting new partners, engaging with other partnerships and support organisations.

  How: the host produces email updates, news bulletins, attends events, engages with Rivers Trusts/CaBA/ and other catchment partnerships.

Figure 6: The Duke of Gloucester at the launch of the Guide to Guide to Good Ecological Potential in Fenland Waterbodies- a partnership project.

The Water Care Catchment Partnership

Partnership Activity Record

Last update: July 2025

Partnership Activity Record (latest amendment: July 2025)

Project categories

Although the Water Care Partnership may not be able to influence all of the projects taking place in the catchment it is an important role of the partnership to understand what work is going on in the area which directly/indirectly affects the water environment in order to facilitate collaborative working across the catchment.

- **Water Care Partnership Project (WCP)**
  This is a project which the Water Care Partnership has either instigated, found funds for, facilitates, manages or has pledged support for. The project is usually delivered by a Water Care Partner, but the Catchment Partnership can influence its delivery/direction.

- **Partner Project (PP)**
  One which a Water Care Partner is delivering (singly or in partnership), the project lead partner may update the Catchment Partnership, but the Catchment Partnership has little influence over project delivery/direction.

Other Related Project (ORP)

- These are projects which benefit the water environment but are not delivered by a Catchment Partner. This also includes projects which indirectly benefit the water environment.

Project Status

Proceeding: funding and partners are in place, the project is planned and being delivered. Fully confident of delivery.

Developing: the steps needed to solve the issue have been identified, funding and/or partners are required. Some confidence of delivery.

Aspirational: the steps needed to how to resolve the issue are not clear have not been identified. Low confidence in delivery.

Fens Reservoir

At present the decisions are still to be made about the infrastructure, water supply and design of the reservoir. Such a significant project will inevitably impact on current water-based plans/projects and also bring opportunities to the area, the issues most likely (at this point in time) to be affected by the reservoir have been highlighted in pink. Projects which will be completed very soon have not been highlighted as they will be finished before any decisions about the reservoir could affect them.

Project List

Project & category	Issue/aim	Related Aim	Lead partner (s) & funding	Project status	Progress to date	Updated
Ouse Washes						
Low Dissolved Oxygen in Old Bedford/R Delph (Earith Sluice project) **WCP** Fens Res	Low DO	1	Funding: EA	Proceeding	EA intending to apply for a water transfer licence for the totality of the operation of Earith Sluice, will include a separate Habitats Regulation Assessment. Need to develop Old Bedford Catchment plan 2040 (see WLMP section) plan which will detail the function & management of Earith Sluice for the future. Unlikely to be a rapid process, need to unpick legal situation.	MN Jul 25
Block Fen **PP to be WCP** Fens Res	A need to develop wide ranging strategy for area around Block Fen/Langwood Fen gravel extraction sites - including flood risk, navigation, biodiversity. To be merged with Cambs CC Waste and Minerals masterplan.	1,2,3	EA & Cambs CC	Proceeding	External briefing on progress/plans due 2025. Current extractors don't want land ownership after extraction, public purchase possible. Possible extension to extraction time an option depending on amount of minerals. Primary uses of water storage and habitat creation still in place, many other benefits identified by Mott McDonald report, needs tying in with Fens Res and Old Bedford Catchment Plan. Minerals & Waste Plan has restoration 40 Foot Drain plus habitat creation embedded in it. 2025/6 focus will be water storage proposals in Block & Langwood Fen.	MN Jul 25

Project & category	Issue/aim	Related Aim	Lead partner (s) & funding	Project status	Progress to date	Updated
Water Level Management Plan **PP**	Set the WLMP for the Ouse Washes going forward.	1,2,3	EA Funding: EA	Proceeding	Cover note to be released by EA (Autumn 25) with objectives, stakeholder comments, log habitats regs assessment, recommendations, and delivery methods. Has triggered need to develop a protected site strategy with NE for the Washes plus overarching Old Bedford catchment plan to deal with factors influencing water management on the Washes from the wider catchment.	MN Mar 25
Ouse Washes R Delph study **PP**	Improving conditions for the Ouse Washes breeding birds, especially mitigating against minor spring flood events.	1	Lead: RSPB Funding: EA	Proceeding	Initial project work completed in March 2020. Further work identified has been delayed and Project is currently awaiting funding development by Middle Level Commissioners.	JT Feb 205
Old Bedford/ Counter Drain **PP**	Sediment build up, slow flow, deoxygenation.	1	EA	Developing	Mitigation measures not in place and no assessment made recently. Integrated plan to improve conveyance and pumping required to improve conditions. Possible plans to create water storage areas between Cranbrook Drain and Well Creek would result in less pumping. Possible transfer of Welches Dam Pumping station to Anglian Water - may be needed to pump water to reservoir. Capital programme: Cranbrook and Counter Drain modelling and morphology studies, Old Bedford sluice improvement, investment in Mepal pumping station, Welches Dam transfer.	MN Jul 25
Ouse Washes habitat creation project **PP**	To mitigate against the decline of suitable habitat for wetland birds	1	EA	Proceeding	Final phase of 200Ha Creation at Coveney to be delivered in 2025/26 - Successful colonisation of target wader species on the	JT Feb 25

Project & category	Issue/aim	Related Aim	Lead partner (s) & funding	Project status	Progress to date	Updated
Fens Res	on the Washes and secure good grazing for Washes cattle.				150Ha of Wet Grassland developed since 2015. Second site near Sutton site - delivery programmed for 2027, unlikely to be on stream until 2030.	
Project Godwit **PP**	Secure the future of breeding in Fens.	1,3	WWT Welney, RSPB Funding: EU LIFE Nature Programme, HSBC 150th Anniversary Fund, Natural England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Leica and Montague-Panton Animal Welfare Trust.	Completed	Undertook a wide array of elements: head starting, translocation, engagement work, science, monitoring, habitat creation.	JTh Jun 25
Godwit Futures **PP**	Support breeding in the fens and establish new breeding populations outside of the Fens.	1	Natural England Species Recovery Programme Capital Grant Scheme	Proceeding until 2028	Undertook a year of head starting in 2024, established a captive breeding population, now assessing sites outside the Fens that could be suitable to host breeding.	JTh Jun25
Water level management & flooding						
Middle Level Bank Raising Project **PP**	Strengthen and raise bank crest across system, accompanied with desilting.	2	MLC Funding: Defra/EA	Part Complete	Main Drain de-silting complete. Remaining project funding from EA withdrawn from this spending review. Re-application will be made in next spending review.	SL July 25
Water storage at Wood Walton Fen **PP** Fens Res?	Storage of excess flood water on Great Fen to alleviate local flooding/pumping needs	2	MLC Funding EA	Proceeding	Final report from feasibility study received and is being reviewed alongside other developing catchment strategies. Stakeholder engagement activities now being planned and preferred option will be	SL July 25

Project & category	Issue/aim	Related Aim	Lead partner (s) & funding	Project status	Progress to date	Updated
					developed and aligned with overall Bevills Pond catchment strategy.	
Winter water level management in drains **WCP**	Pump up of water into main drains at start of winter adversely affecting water quality.	1	EA/MLC	Aspirational	Complex issue and complicated by Fens Res in discussion with EA/AW/MLC. Possible new investigation needed for water quality for RBMP 4.	MN Mar 25
March & other locations: surface Water Flooding **PP**	Wet spots in March, install SuDs in areas highest impact, encourage cohesive approach with stakeholders and greater community understanding/action.	2,3	CCC Funding: EA/RFCC, CCC and AW	Proceeding	March: CambsCC/AW/RFCC funding SuDs in Green Street/Morton Ave area March. Construction has started and is due to be completed this spring. Other sites under consideration in March: Hostmoor Avenue, sites north town centre. AW and CCC are due to revisit these schemes once AW new AMP period begins. Other location: Programme of work developed over the last 12 months and investigating options in a number of priority locations. This will vary from engagement through to civil works, much of that may be beyond the interest of the partnership but locations being explored include Broughton, Chatteris, Colne, March, Ramsey, Sawtry and Wimblington. Bury Brook forms a part of that.	RWh Feb 25
Catchwater Drain NFM **WCP**	Slow the flow of water off "highlands" (Sawtry/Glatton) into Catchwater drain.	2	MLC /EA Funding: possibly EA /MLC/Development in Sawtry/National Highways Designated Environment Fund	Developing	MN met with Glatton PC in March, keen to do NFM in upper catchment, discussion with local IDBs plus MLC to be carried forward. Meeting planned for Sept, organised by MLC to collate all available data to inform overall catchment strategy.	MN Mar 25
Fens 2100+ **ORP**	Developing a Fens-wide flood resilience	2,3,4	EA FCRM	Proceeding	To be published in autumn 2025: x5 catchment baseline evidence reports, plus a	AC Mar 25

Project & category	Issue/aim	Related Aim	Lead partner (s) & funding	Project status	Progress to date	Updated
	investment strategy that achieves long-term value for money and generates regional and national benefits				Partnership Investment Plan setting out the case for transforming our approach to investing in flood and coastal resilience in the future Fens. Also in development: a system-wide Asset Management Strategy to address the medium-term investment need.	
Future Fens Integrated Adaptation project ORP	Future Fens: Integrated Adaptation is a strategic partnership initiative, with the aim of working together across sectors to determine the actions that partners involved in managing water across the landscape can jointly take to secure a vibrant future for the Fens	2,3,4	Environment Agency. WRE, Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority, Lincolnshire County Council, Norfolk County Council £1.3m in terms of funding secured to date	Proceeding	Enhanced Climate Awareness: Launch of the comprehensive Fens Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) has significantly improved regional understanding of climate vulnerabilities specific to Fens region Regional and national press coverage the Fens CCRA . Transition Lab: Delivered in partnership with North Star Transition, this pioneering initiative explored pathways for the Fens to adapt effectively to climate change, while also identifying socio-economic opportunities for the region. Strategic Direction for Adaptation: Identified potential pathways to transition the Fens towards a climate-resilient, economically vibrant, and environmentally regenerative future. Strengthened Stakeholder Network: Developed a proactive Taskforce and regular stakeholder engagement activities,	KTW Mar 25

Project & category	Issue/aim	Related Aim	Lead partner (s) & funding	Project status	Progress to date	Updated
					increasing trust, collaboration, and collective commitment to adaptation initiatives.	
Biodiversity						
St Germans Eel pass refurbishment PP	Pass is out of date, opportunity to build in mitten crab monitoring and greater accessibility, look for volunteer help with monitoring.	1, 3	Possibly AW Invasives fund/Get River Positive, match from EA and MLC. Possibly CLR.	In progress	Supplier issues preventing operation. EA is aware and is providing support. Solution hoped for before the end of 2025.	SL Jul 25
IDB Annual Biodiversity Surveys PP	To develop a benchmark of biodiversity in and around IDB channels		IDBs & MLC	In progress	First report published on MLC website Aug 2025	SL Jul 25
IDB Biodiversity Action Plan update PP	Update IDB BAPS to include		IDB-funded but will seek external funding for individual IDB projects	In progress	First drafts being issued for approval	SL Jul 25
Refreshed IDB SOPS for biodiversity conservation and enhancement PP	Ensure regular IDB channel maintenance maximises positive outcomes for biodiversity		IDBs & MLC	Complete	New SOPs published in Jul 2025 on refreshed MLC website	SL Jul 25
WWT Fens Waterscape PP	Identify and develop Partnership opportunities to create new and restored wetlands	1	WWT and other external	Progressing	Opportunity mapping, landowner engagement, partnership projects including OWLR and project development. To Deliver biodiversity uplift and often extra Ecosystem services.	JTh June 2025
Duck nest monitoring PP	Install and monitor mallard breeding success using artificial nesting structures	1,3	Fenland Wildfowlers Assoc.	Progressing	Duck nest tubes and snipe scrape improvements along the Washes been successful: duck nest tubes increased hatching success by up to 90%. Associated citizen science monitoring of nests.	CB June 25

Project & category	Issue/aim	Related Aim	Lead partner (s) & funding	Project status	Progress to date	Updated
Invasive Non-native Species **WCP** Fens Res	Main threats: Mitten Crabs, Signal Crayfish, Zebra mussels and Himalayan Balsam.	1	None	Developing	Mitten crab & Signal Crayfish identified as main threats. Increased monitoring of crabs with refurbishment of eel pass at St Germans. Fens Res: Fen Res team in discussion with EA over transfer between catchments . Will result in a decision on the connectedness between the Middle Level and Gt Ouse. Room for partnership work group.	MN Mar 25
Middle Level Meadows (reseeding banks) **PP**	Opportunity to reseed MLC banks with wildflower mixes as part of bank raising project. MLC trialling reseeding now, need new machinery for future successful management of banks.	1	MLC have some potential funds, from resale equipment, looking for further costs	Developing	Main drain due to be reseeded following works in Autumn 25	SL Jul 25
Eels in the classroom **WCP**	Increase public awareness and engagement with unique fens species.	1,3	RB/EA/ CLR	Completed	Two schools participating; Lionel Walden (Doddington) and Alderman Payne (Parson Drove), EA supplied eels from Brownshill eel pass, eels in classroom for 5 weeks then released at Godmanchester Mill Steps.	RB Mar 25
Fens GEP **WCP**	Improved overall biodiversity and achieve GEP on drains/ditches. Ties in with MLC biodiversity work.	1	EA	Aspirational	MN keen to trial on a waterway, possibly Delph or Bury Brook. Walk over for R Delph is due. Need to include in RBMP 4.	MN mar 25
Doubling Nature **ORP**	LNP - aim to double amount of wildlife habitats and natural	1,2,3	Natural Cambridgeshire (LNP)	Proceeding	One landscape project funded from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fund for Nature which leveraged £200k of green financing; 29 small community projects	HD Mar 25

Project & category	Issue/aim	Related Aim	Lead partner (s) & funding	Project status	Progress to date	Updated
	greenspace in the County by 2050.				funded. A second call for large projects launched Feb 2025. Natural Cambridgeshire continues its role as Co-chair and expert member of LNRS Steering group through 2025, including leading on farmer and public engagement in 2024. Facilitated engagement with LAs and statutory bodies via convening the Natural Environment Policy & Planning Forum, addressing BNG implementation, Local Plan cycles, major infrastructure projects and water quality and availability issues. Looking ahead in 2025/26, activities include: the development of a platform list of sites with potential to offer Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) units, so that local authorities, landowners and developers can access a shared and independent resource to signpost to land with the greatest potential for nature; and the scoping of a State of Nature in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough report that will establish a clear baseline, set ambitions, and align with LNRS, strategic health priorities and CPCA State of the Region. Water continues to be a distinct theme Natural Cambridgeshire, particularly relating to non-public water supply including for agriculture and nature conservation and restoration.	
Local Nature Recovery Strategy **PP**	Set priorities for nature recovery in the county.	1,2,3	Cambs CC (on behalf CPCA))	Proceeding	Biodiversity map produced, 142 species of significance identified plus management plans being considered, looking to identify habitats to create, enhance or buffer, final strategy document likely to be ready for LA	RB Mar 25

Project & category	Issue/aim	Related Aim	Lead partner (s) & funding	Project status	Progress to date	Updated
					sign off June 25, out for public consultation Jul 25, published either Christmas 25 or March 26 (depends on length of public consultation required). Consultation commenced	
Great Ouse Rivers Trust **PP**	Protecting the Great Ouse and its tributaries, lakes, wetlands and wider catchment for the benefit of people and nature.	1,2,3,4	Registered CIO	Proceeding	Recruited Development Manager to develop funded projects, working application for chalk streams.	HB June 25
Bury Brook						
Bury Brook Catchment Management Plan **WCP**	Co-ordinated approach to dealing with issues of low DO, flooding, diffuse pollution (agricultural, litter) and point source (CSO, Secret Garden party)	1,2, 3	EA, CACRE, AW, CCC, Parish Councils	Aspirational	Ramsey Rivercare group Broughton & Wistow Flood Action groups RB undertook site investigation/possible NBS for CSO's in Ramsey & Wistow for Anglian Water. Wistow been shortlisted	RB Mar 25
Agriculture						
Catchment sensitive Farming/agriculture in general **PP**	Reduce rural diffuse pollution, understanding what the future holds for farmers now re. funding.	1	NE	Proceeding	Update needed	
Development of local abstractor groups **ORP**	Need to secure water for agriculture	1,2	WRE?	N/A	Block Fen being considered as source of irrigation water for MLC.	RB/MN Mar 25

Project & category	Issue/aim	Related Aim	Lead partner (s) & funding	Project status	Progress to date	Updated
					Contact Lyndsay Hargreaves/NE/NFU/WRE to see if abstractor group likely to be created in this catchment.	
Recreational use of water						
Project Hereward **PP** Fens Res	Restore the navigation link between the Middle Level and the Great Ouse; Restoration of Horseways Channel and Welches Dam.	3	IWA	Developing	Seeking support from Fens Res for restoration of Forty Foot. Links with Fens Res team to be re- established after death of Chair to discuss his work.	RS Jun 25
Angling Platforms on Old Nene/March **WCP**	Increased and safer access to river for anglers. Reduce riverbank damage	3	FDC/EA	Progressing	Platforms at MLC. Lease drawn up by FDC for March & District Angling assoc. to take over management riverbank in town centre and enable charging for angling. This will help pay for maintenance platforms. Issues around installation – local resident's objections , wildlife surveys. Ecology surveys completed & consent app received.	RB Mar 25/SL Jul 25
Landscape Regeneration						
Peatland Progress **ORP**	Carbon sequestration, new crops, news ways of farming and water use.	2	WTBCN 8 million National Lottery Heritage Fund	Proceeding	Purchase of Speechly's Farm to unite Wood Walton and Holme Fen. Build on paludiculture trials. Update needed	
Centre for Landscape Regeneration **ORP**	The CLR is an ongoing research project working to provide	1,2,3,4	Led by the University of Cambridge, with	Proceeding	Extensive fieldwork in summer 2023 and 2024 across South Levels and in some parts of the Middle Levels, including green house	HD Mar 25

Project & category	Issue/aim	Related Aim	Lead partner (s) & funding	Project status	Progress to date	Updated
	knowledge and tools necessary to regenerate the British countryside using cost-effective nature-based solutions. By harnessing the power of ecosystems, we strive to deliver broad societal benefits, alongside biodiversity recovery, climate mitigation and adaptation, all the while recognising that the Fens are important to food security. The Centre is focussed on the Fens, but also on Cairngorms and Cumbria.		NIAB, RSPB and CEH. Funded by UKRI NERC as part of their Changing the Environment Programme.		gas emissions, socioeconomics, eDNA, biodiversity surveys, hydrology, soils and ditch flora and fauna. We also have a hydrologist who is working in the region to understand Fens hydrology and how this can be optimised. Over the coming 2 years we will be sharing the outputs of our research with the Fens stakeholder community. Recent example is our work that showed that UK solar farms managed for nature could benefit birds. Working in Fenland schools in partnership with Cambridge Science Centre in Wisbech, with the Museum of Zoology and also with Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination.	
Ouse Washes Landscape Recovery **PP**	Landscape scale project to demonstrate that growing food is compatible with nature. Underlines the value of healthy, connected natural landscapes for managing flood risk, absorbing CO2, creating accessible green space.	1,2	RSPB, Defra funding	Development phase Proceeding from April 2024 to March 2026. Implementation starts once DEFFRA agree financing models. 30yr lifespan for	A vision for a farmer-led approach to landscape recovery, where partners from the conservation, farming, business, drainage board, academic, local government, and community sectors act together to support the recovery of nature and contribute to climate change mitigation. Through project partners securing private investment in ecosystem services to maximise the benefits of public investment, we will ensure that environmental outcomes and farm businesses will be sustained in tandem in the long-term.	JT Feb 25

Project & category	Issue/aim	Related Aim	Lead partner (s) & funding	Project status	Progress to date	Updated
				sites entering schemes	Habitats will be created and improved to a consistently high standard; peat-soils will be safeguarded for future generations, and farms financed for delivering restorative land management. This will enable the Ouse Washes and the species that rely on it to be better protected and insulated against ecological challenges through at least 1,000ha of targeted habitat creation in the landscape area and will reduce carbon emissions through changing practices, raising water levels and safeguarding soils.	
Water resources						
Water Resource East Regional Plan **ORP**	Developing a collaborative approach to water resource planning	2	Independent Funding from EA & AW	Proceeding	Regional Water Resource plan published Dec 23 Funding from EA to ensure agricultural representation on Board, to provide detailed technical input and advice for agriculture-related studies, and to co-fund with water companies detailed 'Environmental Destination' investigations. Agricultural water resources planning studies started Price Review 2024 (PR24) concluded very positively Regional Water Resources Plan, including development funding for three strategic reservoirs and two desalination plants, full rollout of smart metering by 2035. Commissioned NBS opportunity mapping See also FFIA	RB Mar 25

Project & category	Issue/aim	Related Aim	Lead partner (s) & funding	Project status	Progress to date	Updated
Fens Reservoir (Fens Water Partnership) **ORP**	Build a new reservoir in Fens to secure water resources for area	1,2,3,4	AW/Cambridge Water	Proceeding	Phase two consultation completed: design, infrastructure/water sourcing, mitigation (results on website). Phase three consultation Autumn 2025. Increase in site surveys summer 2025. Walking, Cycling and Horse-Riding Assessment and Review underway Transport/traffic options underway. Catchment advisor to be recruited for the area covered by Water Care as part of the Fens Reservoir development; the role will primarily focus on improving water quality with landowners. No final decisions have been made regarding the method of water transfer (open channel or pipeline) or the number of abstraction points required to date. Some preferred options have been identified.	AW team June 25
Increased understanding of catchment challenges						
Evidence gathering **WCP**	Need to gather WFD and other EA evidence about waterbody status/issues	1, 4	EA	Proceeding	Part of RBMP4 delivery	MN Mar 25
Engaging with Parishes and local groups to understand issues. **WCP**	Need to gather more anecdotal evidence of problems, establish contact with waterways users' groups with the aim of promoting citizen science monitoring.	1,4	RB Funding: partnership	Proceeding	Quarterly news bulletin & blog aimed at Parish Councils /Community groups. No. of support requests.	RB Mar 25

Project & category	Issue/aim	Related Aim	Lead partner (s) & funding	Project status	Progress to date	Updated
Understanding point source pollution from water industry better WCP	Suspected point source pollution from various WRCs and CSOs.	1, 4	RB Funding: partnership	Proceeding	RB met with AW catchment engagement manager from AW plus attended to June 25 partner meeting.	RB Mar 25

Partner abbreviations

Initial	Name	Representing
AC	Amy Capon	Environment Agency
AL	Abigail Leach	Middle Level Commissioners
CB	Chris Barker	Fenland Wildfowlers Association
CW	Catherine Weightman	Natural England
HB	Helen Boothman	Great Ouse Rivers Trust
HD	Helen Dye	Natural Cambridgeshire
JT	Jonathan Taylor	RSPB
JTh	Jo Thomas	WWT Welney
KA	Kelvin Allen	Angling Trust
KTW	Katie Teesdale-Ward	Anglian Water
MN	Mike Nunns	Environment Agency
RW	Richard Whelan	Cambridgeshire County Council
RB	Rachael Brown	Cambridgeshire ACRE (Water Care Partnership host)
SB	Stacey Branson	Natural England
SL	Sofi Lloyd	Middle Level Commissioners

Other Abbreviations

Abbreviation	In full
ADA	Association Drainage Authorities

AW	Anglian Water Services
CACRE	Cambridgeshire ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England)
Cambs CC	Cambridgeshire County Council
CLR	Centre for Landscape Regeneration
CP	Catchment Plan
CPCA	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
CSO	Combined Sewer Overflow
Defra	Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
DO	Dissolved Oxygen
EA	Environment Agency
FCRM	Flood and Coastal Risk Management (EA)
FDC	Fenland District Council
Fens GEP	Fens Good Ecological Potential
Fens Res	Fens Reservoir
IDB	Internal Drainage board
IWA	Inland Waterways Association
LA	Local Authority
LNP	Local Nature Partnership
LNS	Local Nature Strategy
MLC	Middle Level Commissioners
NBS	Nature Based Solutions
NE	Natural England
NFM	Natural Flood Management
P	Phosphate
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SuDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
UBO	Upper Bedford Ouse Catchment Partnership
WLMP	Water Level Management Plan
WRC	Water Recycling Centre (sewage works)
WRE	Water Resources east
WTBCN	Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Northampton shire
WWT Welney	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Welney