July 2024

John Clare Countryside

Our joint vision for a heritage landscape with nature at its heart

Mission

To create, launch and deliver an ambitious and accessible nature recovery area, famous for nature thriving alongside sustainable farming across the landscape areas west of Peterborough to the A1, south to the River Nene and north to the River Welland, designed, led and supported by residents, landowners, farmers, businesses and parish councils of the area.



Introduction

As residents, businesses, parish councils, landowners, farmers and visitors we want the countryside around us to be an area where nature is at the heart of our lives. Where swifts and swallows are a central feature of our summer evenings, where otters continue to enthral people as they play in the Maxey Cut, where bees and other insects thrive, not decline, and where there are far more, not less, ponds, meadows, wild flowers, hedgerows and trees. And where people can walk or cycle out in safety and tranquillity across this thriving countryside, enjoying the sights and sounds and even the silence of the natural world; enjoying dark skies and cherishing the heritage – both natural and man-made- around them.



We also want to ensure that our farms and farming communities continue to thrive in this landscape, finding space for nature, but also producing food of the highest quality, preserving and enhancing our soils and remaining profitable and sustainable businesses.

Working collaboratively the project partners now want to ensure that we conserve the beauty of our landscape and conserve its rich local heritage and establish an area characterised by

- Outstanding natural biodiversity through major habitat restoration connected through a mosaic of smaller wildlife havens and corridors
- Prosperous and successful farming, profiting from a combination of environmentally friendly farming practice, sustainable tourism and recreational activities.
- Well-kept heritage sites, linked through the figure head of John Clare, accessible to all and working together to involve and attract visitors and to support literary and artistic work and literacy.
- An unspoilt landscape that is enjoyed sustainably by local people and the people of an expanding Peterborough, providing them with a large area of unspoilt countryside on their doorstep, rich with places to visit, cycle paths, footways and 'quiet roads' – a green transport infrastructure – where priority is given to walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

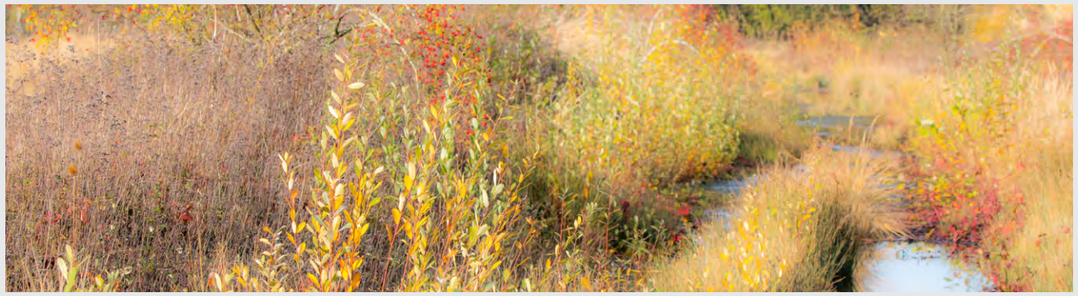
[1] The landscape west of Peterborough and including the parishes west of the A1 and within Peterborough City Council's administrative area, south of the Welland and north of the river Nene (but extending south to include the land of Nene Park Trust and the site of the Roman town of Durobrivae), extending east to include the villages of Glinton, Peakirk and Northborough.

Project Aims

Building on the substantial work of the partners to date and on the heritage and legacy of the work of the poet John Clare this project aims to:

1. Deliver significant increases in key wildlife species and habitats, particularly those of limestone grassland, wetland and arable farmland
2. Help landowners and tenant farmers in the landscape area to prosper, setting an example of how sustainable farming and rural diversification can not only co-exist but also benefit from the opportunities provided through nature recovery programmes
3. Protect and enhance our water courses, reducing pollution and improving water quality, from our streams and ponds, through to our major waterways of the Welland and Nene.
4. Raise levels of local pride, aspiration and community cohesion by helping local communities to understand, appreciate and enjoy their local natural and built heritage
5. Pilot and champion best practice sustainable development in all aspects of future development within the area including sustainable techniques of land management both on and off the existing nature reserves
6. Promote public health and wellbeing, providing large areas of accessible green open space for the people of Peterborough, Stamford and surrounding villages.
7. Create new jobs and economic opportunities within the area, allied to the delivery of these objectives, particularly in tourism, visitor attractions and farming and nature conservation.





Community Nature Recovery Plans

Every parish in the John Clare Countryside has a nature recovery plan and the communities are now taking this forward both individually and as part of parish clusters, each supported by one of the key partners in the JCC project. The clusters meet quarterly, and the cluster leads also meet to discuss how we can work together, share best practice and identify funding opportunities.

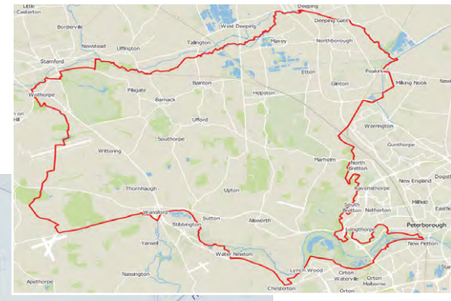
Area	Lead Organisation	Parishes
Nene	Nene Park Trust	Sutton, Ailsworth, Castor, Marholm
North	Langdyke Countryside Trust	Deeping Gate, Deeping St James, Etton, Helpston, Maxey, Uffington
East	PECT	Glinton, Northborough, Peakirk
Welland and Whitewater	BCN Wildlife Trusts	Bainton, Barnack, Ufford, Southorpe
West	Natural England	Wittering, Thornhaugh, Wansford, Wothorpe

Working with Landowners and Farmers – Nature Recovery Projects

The project is actively supported by the major local landowners and also involves individual farmers and smaller landowners. Several hedges have been put in this year on private land, including along Heath Road, Helpston and south of Top Lodge Farm, near Upton.

Local landowners are actively working together to see how more nature rich habitats can be created on their land. The new agricultural subsidy regime and other government initiatives to foster nature recovery is actively encouraging them plans for woodland planting, wetland creation and the restoration of nature rich grasslands. Already plans are being discussed for wetland creation projects and potentially for creating new habitats to link up the key wildlife sites at Barnack Hills and Holes, Castor Hanglands and Swaddywell Pit.

The landowners have commissioned a study to create a Masterplan of how the area might look like as a result of this nature recovery programme. The ambition is to create flourishing nature rich countryside alongside profitable, sustainable farming.



The John Clare Countryside project area



Proposed current extent of the nature recovery area

Other projects

The Langdyke Countryside Trust has entered into a partnership with the Environment Agency looking to the long-term development of natural habitats in the area around the Maxey Cut. The partners are focusing initially on creating an online trail that will help visitors understand not only the natural richness of the area, but also the management of the Cut itself and the rich heritage of the landscape, from the Bronze Age through to Westings Meadow, and the beautiful churches that can be seen from the Cut.

Langdyke also completed the purchase of a new 22-acre reserve at Christ's College Pits in April 2024, creating a new community nature reserve along the Maxey Cut. It is also creating a new visitor viewing platform with disabled access at its Vergette Wood Meadow reserve later this year and three new ponds on its Etton High Meadow reserve.

Celebrating Community and Nature with the PECT 30 for 30 Grant Fund

Spring is in the air, and the Parish's are abuzz with excitement in part thanks to funding as part of the PECT 30 for 30 Fund. As part of the 30th anniversary celebrations, the fund is empowering local initiatives within a 30-mile radius of Peterborough, with grants ranging from £250 to £1000.

Five projects across the JCC area obtained funding, which includes:

1. CASTOR PARISH COUNCIL

Pollinators and Passerines:

- Planting 2,250 English Bluebell, Winter Aconite, and Snowdrop bulbs.
- Sowing a mix of twenty native low-growing wildflowers in grass verges.
- Nesting boxes for Passerines family of birds

2. PEAKIRK PARISH COUNCIL

Understanding Our Village Environment:

- Conducting a ecological baseline survey of various village areas.
- Planning future maintenance, improvements, and securing funding.

3. MAXEY PARISH COUNCIL

Maxey Village Enhancements:

- Installing planters at village entrances.
- Enhancing signage for the Village Field and a map of the paths around the field and information about the variety of nature which can be seen

4. DEEPING GATE PARISH COUNCIL

Enhancing the 'Mini Forest':

- Installing a bench and interpretation signage along the River Welland.

5. UFFINGTON VILLAGE HALL

Engaging People with Nature and Local Food:

- Improving a wildlife area for bees.
- Enhancing an existing pond's value for wildlife.
- Planting additional fruit trees.

Total funding of around £4k. **For more information, visit the PECT 30 for 30 Fund page.**



Road Verges Group

This group aims to improve the numbers of wild flowers on road verges in our area and help them spread along the road system. It's last meeting in March 2024 focused on looking at the appropriate cutting regime for protected verges and trials in Bainton and Barnack to encourage new areas of wild flowers. Peterborough City Council has recently secured funding to increase the number of cuts on these areas through a Biodiversity Net Gain payment from a local brownfield site.

JOHN CLARE COUNTRYSIDE PROJECT

CONTACT

For further information on how to get involved, contact:
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Or visit our website **www.johnclarecountryside.co.uk**