



A living landscape

A call to restore the UK's battered ecosystems, for wildlife and people

Adaptation to climate change

Sustainable local economies

Abundant wildlife

Healthy cities and green space for all





“So much of the UK now is packed with development and wildlife is in retreat. There are many fine nature reserves but our future must be to integrate human and natural communities and restore a better balance. This document lays out exciting and important new plans.”

Professor Aubrey Manning OBE *President of The Wildlife Trusts*



Beatrix Fenton/RBC

Where will our water come from? When will our land use become truly sustainable? **How can our environment adapt to climate change?** What would it take to rebuild a wildlife-rich countryside? **Why are so many people disconnected from nature?**

Priestcliffe Lees nature reserve, owned by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust: a treasure chest of local biodiversity. The Wildlife Trusts see such places as nodes from which plants and animals can recolonise a recovering landscape

It's time to think big

To adapt to climate change, the UK's wildlife will need to move along 'climate corridors' up and down the country, or to shadier slopes or cooler valleys. Wildlife has done it all before, after the last ice age, but this time the change is faster and there are unexpected obstacles: cities, motorways and expanses of hostile countryside.

If we don't give our wildlife enough room to manoeuvre, a collapse in biodiversity is inevitable. For decades we have been slowing the decline in biodiversity by protecting small oases of wildlife as an emergency measure. Now, in the face of climate change, it is essential that we link these oases and restore our ecosystems and natural processes at a speed and on a scale that we would once have felt was impossible.

Different parts of the UK will need to take different approaches, depending not only upon natural habitats but upon local social and economic needs. And change on this scale needs deep-rooted support across many constituencies.

Driven by local people and aspirations, The Wildlife Trusts play a leading role not just in developing the vision but in mustering the support that can allow communities to drive their own change. We do this by working closely with community groups, businesses, land managers and local authorities on landscape-scale projects around the UK.

We look to the Government to show leadership also. The Government needs to be brave enough to remove the obstacles preventing our wildlife from adapting; to buy more time by resolving to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions; and to show political will by serious investment in rebuilding biodiversity on a landscape scale. We need to create our Living Landscape now. Our window of opportunity will soon close.

Stephanie Hilborne
Chief Executive, The Wildlife Trusts



Matthew Roberts. Cover picture: S. Lives and the river Great Ouse, Cambridgeshire. Dee Sisson/istockphoto



“All local authorities can play a part in creating a mosaic of habitats which will give our native wildlife a flexible future. Planning policies and strategic land acquisition, often with partners, offer huge opportunities which we must grasp now.”

Peter Raine MD for Environment and Regeneration, Kent County Council



Nature can't exist in a box...

The idea of a modern-day ark in a sea of emptiness is dead. So is the belief that there is no environmental limit to land use. The solution is to work on a landscape scale, harnessing natural processes

The desire for a sustainable world and one rich in wildlife amount to the same thing. The species, habitats and even ecosystems that comprise our wildlife are also the building blocks that make up the healthy, functioning environment on which we all depend. This is why The Wildlife Trusts are leading the way in making nature conservation work on a landscape scale.

How not to do it

This photograph shows an area of farmland in the Cambridgeshire fens, south of Peterborough. It includes some of the most productive land in Britain, but that bounty comes at a price. The peat soil is disappearing. A marker planted (with remarkable foresight) in 1850 shows the soil level has fallen 14 feet, due to shrinkage and wind erosion. In places there are only 18 inches of peat left.

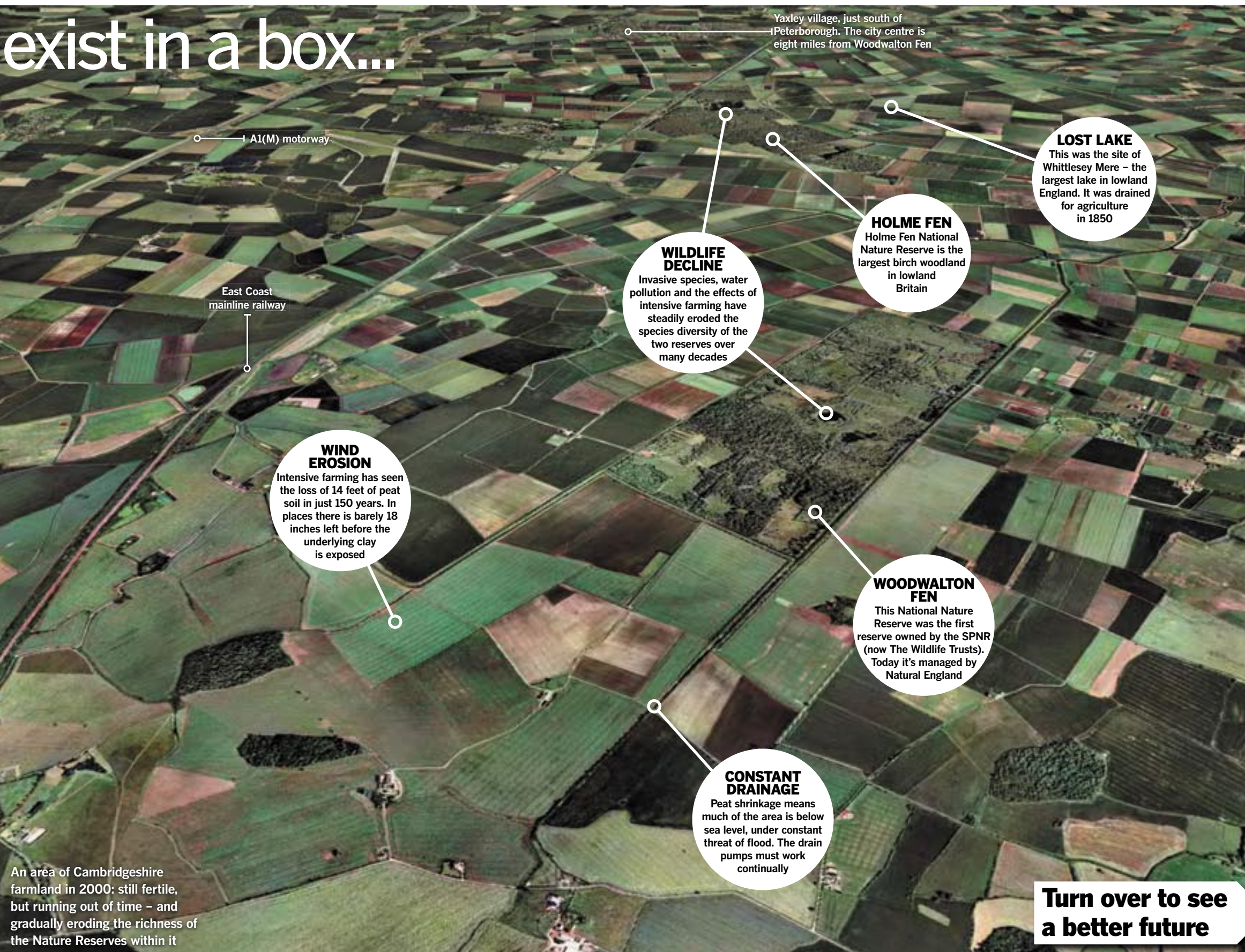
The picture also shows two places which escaped the wholesale drainage of the fens: Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserve (centre), established in 1910, and Holme Fen NNR (centre top). They too are under pressure: crop spraying, uncontrolled water levels and nitrogen pollution are eating away at their treasure stores of species, and the habitats upon which they depend.

Yet this is a rich area

In the past the fens were a vast complex of rivers, streams, wet grassland, woodland, raised bog and reedbed. The land provided plentiful food and natural resources for local people, and an unrivalled habitat for wildlife. The result was one of the most prosperous areas in England, and an example of truly sustainable land use.

Today the area provides few opportunities. The market town of Ramsey, just off the right of the picture, performs poorly on measures such as housing, employment and access to services. There are fewer than half the number of public footpaths per hectare here compared with other landscapes in the county, and few jobs outside farming.

The local Wildlife Trust's Great Fen Project (overleaf) aims to change all that by putting the countryside back into working order, for the benefit of people and wildlife.



A1(M) motorway

East Coast
mainline railway

Yaxley village, just south of
Peterborough. The city centre is
eight miles from Woodwalton Fen

LOST LAKE

This was the site of
Whittlesey Mere – the
largest lake in lowland
England. It was drained
for agriculture
in 1850

HOLME FEN

Holme Fen National
Nature Reserve is the
largest birch woodland
in lowland
Britain

WILDLIFE DECLINE

Invasive species, water
pollution and the effects of
intensive farming have
steadily eroded the
species diversity of the
two reserves over
many decades

WIND EROSION

Intensive farming has seen
the loss of 14 feet of peat
soil in just 150 years. In
places there is barely 18
inches left before the
underlying clay
is exposed

WOODWALTON FEN

This National Nature
Reserve was the first
reserve owned by the SPNR
(now The Wildlife Trusts).
Today it's managed by
Natural England

CONSTANT DRAINAGE

Peat shrinkage means
much of the area is below
sea level, under constant
threat of flood. The drain
pumps must work
continually

An area of Cambridgeshire
farmland in 2000: still fertile,
but running out of time – and
gradually eroding the richness of
the Nature Reserves within it

**Turn over to see
a better future**



“The fens stand as one of the most misunderstood, neglected and extraordinary features of the British landscape. I am very proud to be involved with a new drive to protect, understand and evangelise this unique part of our country.”

Stephen Fry *President, The Great Fen Campaign*



...and we can't exist without nature

By perhaps 2035, a crane's-eye view of a reborn wetland reveals flood protection for surrounding farmland, access by foot, boat and cycle, abundant wildlife and a thriving, diverse, sustainable local economy

To walk all day without retracing your steps, among habitats and species that exist nowhere else on this scale; for lowland England it seems an impossible dream. But it is the vision of the Great Fen Project – to recreate an inspirational landscape not seen since the 17th century. It will take a lifetime to complete, and will leave a living legacy for future generations.

It's all about working together

The project is a partnership between the Environment Agency, Huntingdonshire District Council, Natural England and the local Wildlife Trust. It will restore and recreate 3,700 hectares between Huntingdon and Peterborough; reconnect Woodwalton and Holme Fen, halting the deterioration of both sites; promote natural processes such as grazing and peat generation; and have a positive impact upon the region's land and water management, and rural economy.

With excellent transport links, and Peterborough, Huntingdon and Cambridge all within 20 miles, the Great Fen will power a new local economy. Hotels, B&Bs and restaurants will appear, and there will be more jobs in wildlife-friendly farm products, reed harvesting, and grass and hay production. Management of the reserve itself will provide paid and volunteer work.

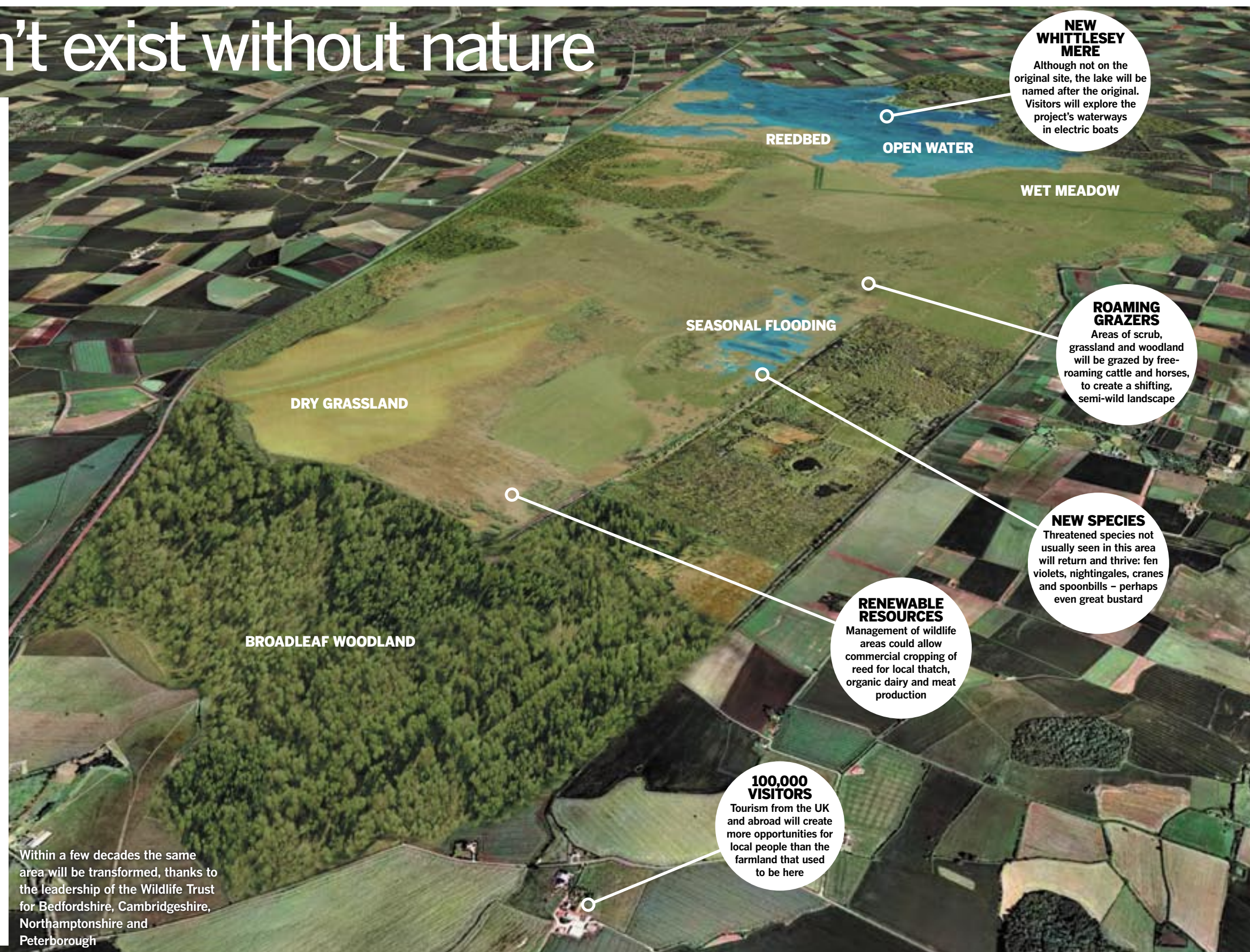
Better ecosystem services

For wildlife, the area will improve so much that new species, such as spoonbill and common crane, could establish. The loss of peat will be arrested, and habitats unique to this resource will return.

Inspired by local Wildlife Trusts across the UK, living landscapes such as the Great Fen are a vision for people as much as for wildlife. They will deliver better ecosystem services such as flood protection, aquifer recharge, soil conservation, nutrient reduction and absorption of carbon dioxide. They are also high-quality environments, that people enjoy visiting or living in, and a major antidote to the urban-centred life most of us have to live.

Above all, they have the capacity to remind us that we too are still part of nature.

Within a few decades the same area will be transformed, thanks to the leadership of the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough



NEW WHITTLESEY MERE

Although not on the original site, the lake will be named after the original. Visitors will explore the project's waterways in electric boats

REEDBED

OPEN WATER

WET MEADOW

SEASONAL FLOODING

DRY GRASSLAND

BROADLEAF WOODLAND

ROAMING GRAZERS

Areas of scrub, grassland and woodland will be grazed by free-roaming cattle and horses, to create a shifting, semi-wild landscape

NEW SPECIES

Threatened species not usually seen in this area will return and thrive: fen violets, nightingales, cranes and spoonbills – perhaps even great bustard

RENEWABLE RESOURCES

Management of wildlife areas could allow commercial cropping of reed for local thatch, organic dairy and meat production

100,000 VISITORS

Tourism from the UK and abroad will create more opportunities for local people than the farmland that used to be here



Restore, recreate, reconnect

To rebuild biodiversity on a landscape scale, you must first identify the best potential areas. This example, from the South West Wildlife Trusts and partners, shows how a region's key habitats can be mapped

Over the last three years the South West Wildlife Trusts have developed a science-based framework to help identify what, where and how much habitat needs to be created to guarantee the long-term survival of the region's biodiversity. The Wildlife Trusts, Natural England and other partners have applied this to create the South West Nature Map (see map).

Focusing on UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitats, the framework defines and selects a set of ecologically viable units of habitat, called Strategic Nature Areas (SNAs). Each SNA is a potential landscape in which wildlife populations and rural communities can thrive in the long-term, and through which habitat fragments can be reconnected to create a self-sustaining whole.

The project uses a practical, evolving methodology which takes account of ecological viability. Critically, it also involves 150 local conservation experts across the region. As a result the South West Wildlife Trusts believe that the SNAs on this map are the places where habitat should be conserved, connected and created. Their development will be crucial in the race to help species, habitats and landscapes adapt to the pressures of climate change.

Wildlife Trusts in other English regions are working together to produce biodiversity maps like this, and the approach is being adopted in principle by regional authorities around England

The map is intended to inform conservation strategies and regional spatial planning. It is recognised by the Regional Assembly, Defra, Natural England and the Regional Development Agency.

The South West Wildlife Trusts themselves have begun landscape-scale projects in each county. All depend on the support of local communities and landowners. The aim is to include large areas of land in conservation programmes, but also to ensure they are compatible with the needs of local people. Farming, recreation, education, and rural infrastructure (roads, houses, businesses) can all exist alongside and within SNAs.



What is a viable size?

Deciding how big a patch of a particular habitat needs to be to survive in the long term is a developing science. Methods used to define the size of Strategic Nature Areas include looking at the population dynamics or area requirements of key species, the penetrating effects of surrounding land use (so-called 'edge effects') and the scale of major disturbance events such as fires.

RUSH GRASSLAND Based on the population dynamics of the marsh fritillary butterfly

170ha

CHALK DOWNLAND Based on the area requirements of the stone curlew

1,500ha

WOODLAND Based on the needs of species sensitive to edge effects

1,650ha

LOWLAND HEATH Based on the pattern of large-scale fires in this habitat

800ha

South West Regional Biodiversity Partnership



A youth project in Rede Wood, Suffolk. The Wildlife Trusts are forging local connections with people across the UK

Matthew Roberts

“To rebuild biodiversity and adapt to climate change we need visionary thinking which takes the whole of the UK's environment into account. Natural England looks forward to working with The Wildlife Trusts and others to champion a landscape-scale revolution.”

Helen Phillips Chief Executive, Natural England



The Wildlife Trusts' unique strengths

Local connections, broad ecological expertise and 2,200 reserves

As the next eight pages show, The Wildlife Trusts play a leading role in landscape-scale projects all over the UK, from city to mountain top to seashore. As well as the wetland example (p6), the next section features five other key landscape types to show the challenges that need to be met and the benefits that can be delivered. These benefits are not just environmental, but social and economic. Government should lead in setting policies and providing incentives (p18-19). In the meantime, The Wildlife Trusts are taking a lead locally.

Leadership

A step-change in our land use practice and policy requires local as well as national leadership. Wildlife Trusts around the UK are giving local authorities, businesses and community leaders the confidence to do what they know is right for their area and their grandchildren – to be optimistic, to make brave decisions and take bold steps towards a better future.

Knowledge

The examples overleaf show how we can work with nature rather than against it. To do this means understanding the local ecology, wildlife, water and soils that make up the landscape, and also local economic, cultural and social needs. The Wildlife Trusts are driven and owned by people with unrivalled knowledge of their local area, past and present. This must inform our future.

Four decades of partnership

Since the 1960s, local people have come together through their Wildlife Trusts to save precious places for wildlife. They have given advice on land management, taken on nature reserves and influenced planning decisions. All this time we have worked with schools, community groups, statutory agencies, local authorities, landowners and businesses to inspire people about wildlife. We are perfectly placed to unite with our partners behind major new initiatives that bring together all this work.



“Having the project working on the Dart is a great opportunity for local farmers to have some financial help to tidy up the environment. The scheme offers great advantages to wildlife, the river, local community and even tourists.”

Group of Devon farmers, *Dart Catchment Project, Devon*



Woodland and forest

Letting hotspots revert to nature – and working to fill in the gaps

Why do woodlands matter?

Ancient woodland is perhaps our richest wildlife habitat. It once cloaked most of Britain, but we now have one of the lowest coverage levels in Europe. Half our ancient woodland has been lost since the 1940s.

Woodland plays a vital role in recycling carbon dioxide and water vapour and, like bogs and wetlands, regulates water flow into rivers. It's also highly valued by local people for recreation.

While we continually hear of the threats to forests worldwide, there are stunning examples of woodland being recreated, or regenerating naturally. Much of North East USA was once farmland, but abandonment in the early 1900s allowed the trees to return. Some of that forest is now protected in national parks.

The main challenges

UK woodland is often heavily modified or managed, and plantations typically lack the structural and species diversity of ancient woodland. Traditional coppicing, pollarding and grazing can be beneficial, but they are now rarely economically viable.

Left naturally, lowland woodland can return quite easily. However, many people see large areas of scrub as untidy. In upland areas, regeneration is slower and often hampered by grazing, impoverished soils and a lack of seed source. Grants like the English Woodland Grant Scheme can help, but there is insufficient funding.

Natural woodland is typically a mosaic of different habitat types, including old stands of high forest, scrub areas, and forest glades. Allowing natural forest landscapes to re-establish means looking differently at the landscape, and the processes at work within it. In upland areas, Wildlife Trusts are working with landowners to restrict or exclude grazing from large areas around remnants of woodland. Meanwhile, in lowland areas, we are supporting landowners and communities to remove fencing around woodland, allow areas to scrub up and encourage grazing animals to roam more freely.

One example of Wildlife Trust action

The Low Weald of West Sussex and south Surrey is a diverse landscape containing some of England's best ancient woodland, as well as other wildlife-rich habitats. Sussex Wildlife Trust is leading a project to enhance, create and reconnect habitat here within an area of 93 square miles. Local communities and farmers have agreed a shared vision for the project area.

The aim is a landscape akin to the original forest, with glades, pastures and wetlands as well as dense woods. Large, free-roaming animals will graze in core woodland areas and the natural processes of decomposition and regeneration will be encouraged. Between these core areas the Trust is working with farmers to encourage them to farm more sensitively for wildlife.



Forests are as useful as they are beautiful. Sussex Wildlife Trust has begun a project to bring back semi-natural woodland cover to a large area of West Sussex and Surrey

Picture by local Wildlife Trust

22 landscape-scale projects to restore, recreate and reconnect

All the projects here and on the following pages include **multiple partners**. Areas quoted are for the finished project area, regardless of who owns the land. A hectare is 10,000 square metres, or 2.5 acres.

- 1 hectare = a football pitch
- 200 hectares = Regent's Park
- 5,500 hectares = Loch Ness
- 38,000 hectares = Isle of Wight

CUMBRIA



Witherslack Large Area 3500ha

Shoreline to mountain-top south of Kendal: mire, limestone pavement, grassland, ancient woodland.
■ Cumbria Wildlife Trust

DERBYSHIRE



The OnTrent Project 96,000ha

Works at a strategic level to influence policy and awareness, and improve the health of the floodplain.
■ Derbys, Notts, Staffs and Lincs Wildlife Trusts

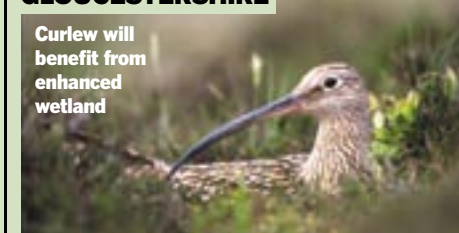
DEVON



Dart Catchment project c.12,000ha

EU-backed business and community project to restore the health of an entire river catchment
■ Devon Wildlife Trust

GLOUCESTERSHIRE



Curlew will benefit from enhanced wetland

Severn/Avon Vales Wetland 10,000ha

Wetland restoration project between three Wildlife Trusts in floodplains of the rivers Severn and Avon
■ Glos, Warks and Worcs Wildlife Trusts

HAMPSHIRE



North Langstone Harbour 1350ha

Salt marsh, grazing marsh, oyster beds, and saline lagoons on an extensive stretch of the Solent coast
■ Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

Picture by local Wildlife Trusts



Good husbandry in the uplands has a huge impact on water management and carbon absorption

Nail Benzie

Uplands: supporting changes in farming

Why does it matter?

Though often degraded by deforestation and overgrazing, uplands contain our greatest variety of habitats, and are vitally important as places to get away from the bustle of everyday life. As well as controlling erosion and regulating water supply, upland forests and peat bogs play a vital role in regulating carbon dioxide. The peaty soils hold huge amounts of carbon in partially decomposed organic material. Drier, thinner soils that have been drained or planted with conifers lose much of this carbon to the atmosphere.

What are the main challenges?

Overgrazing by sheep was the greatest threat, but changes in agricultural payments are reducing this to beneficial levels.

Wildlife Trusts are working with upland communities to reduce cultural and aesthetic concerns about withdrawing farming and restoring upland habitats. Reducing grazing need not mean the end of farming; it simply means farming differently.

However, more needs to be done. Upland farmers and land managers need to be rewarded for flood control benefits felt

downstream, and for the climate benefits of land management that stores more carbon.

One example of Wildlife Trust action

Eigg in Scotland is an outstanding case of landscape-scale conservation driven by local people. With the help of the Scottish Wildlife Trust and others, the island is now owned by the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust. The forest is protected from overgrazing, and the raised bog is recovering from drainage and conifer planting. The islanders themselves, properly trained and equipped, completed this work.

“We probably should not restrict the ‘re-wilding’ approach just to the Highlands. Our river basin management planning should unite conservation, development, transport and sustainable flood management in a single, holistic vision of the future.”

Dr Chris Spray Director of Environmental Science, Scottish Environment Protection Agency



Essex Wildlife Trust's pioneering coastal realignment created a natural coastal defence and a successful farm

Chris Gonnell/npf.com

Coasts: restoring natural defences

Why does it matter?

UK coasts are among the most varied and scenic in the world. The richest parts are lowland mudflats, marshes and estuaries, with their birdlife, wild flowers, and nursery grounds for sea life. They act as floodplains, carbon sinks, and filters for estuaries. Yet vast swathes have been drained, ploughed up, built upon or walled off from the sea. Climate change predictions suggest devastating coastal floods could occur within a few decades. This means these habitats have an increasingly important role to play in absorbing marine floodwaters.

What are the main challenges?

Managed coastal realignment requires difficult, strategic decisions to abandon or dismantle defences. Wildlife Trusts around the UK are working with local communities to achieve a shared vision and sense of purpose. Grants are needed to encourage farmers to leave areas for the sea to reclaim.

One example of Wildlife Trust action

In 2002, Essex Wildlife Trust breached the sea wall at Abbotts Hall farm on the Blackwater estuary to create 81 hectares of salt marsh and grazing marsh. Funded by

the Heritage Lottery Fund, WWF (UK), Environment Agency and English Nature, it was the largest coastal re-alignment in Europe. The new marshes quickly established a wide range of plants used by many invertebrates and coastal birds. They also support three commercial fish species and trial oyster beds. The main farm still grows arable crops where Essex Wildlife Trust demonstrates a wild range of wildlife-friendly farming methods. The marsh-grazed sheep fetch a premium at market, and the habitat supports a greater diversity of wildlife such as lapwings, skylarks and hares.

KENT



Wild service is an ancient woodland indicator

Blean Woods 3,000ha

Acquisition and restoration of ancient and semi-natural woodland complex north of Canterbury.

■ Kent Wildlife Trust

LANCASHIRE



Wigan Flashes should attract breeding bittern

Wigan Flashes 400ha

Linking fragmented mosses, blanket bogs and wetland in the Wigan Flashes river valley.

■ Lancs, Manchester and Merseyside Wildlife Trust

LINCOLNSHIRE

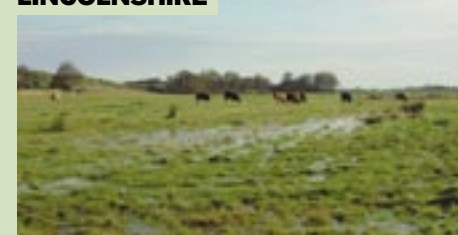


Baston & Thurlby Fen 800ha

Recreation of fenland habitats on arable land and former gravel workings in south Lincolnshire.

■ Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

LINCOLNSHIRE



Coastal and Marsh 116ha

Integrated management and inland expansion of Trust, Natural England and MOD land near Grimsby

■ Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

MONTGOMERYSHIRE

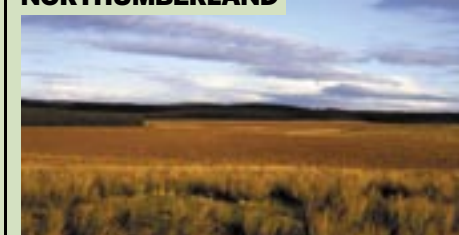


Cambrian Mountains c.39,000ha

Working with landowners to manage moorland, bog and acid grassland in the Cambrian Mountains.

■ Wildlife Trusts Wales

NORTHUMBERLAND



Border Mires c.3,000ha

Working with Forest Enterprise to restore blanket bog sites throughout the southern Kielder Forest.

■ Northumberland Wildlife Trust



“There are definitely more birds now, and we haven't really started. Friends come round and we go out looking for wildlife. I can see nothing but good in it. It helps us financially, makes the place more attractive, and it's something good for the future.”

Bill Reid cattle farmer, Landscapes for Wildlife project, Wiltshire



Lowland grassland

Calling landowners! Help connect up those isolated fragments!

Why does it matter?

Lowland grassland, including chalk downland and hay meadow, includes some of the richest areas for wildlife in the UK. But because these habitats often occur in areas well suited to modern, intensive agriculture, all but the steepest, wettest or most inaccessible sites have been lost – 98 per cent since the 1950s. With a few notable exceptions, such as Salisbury Plain, the surviving sites are small, isolated and fragmented.

Grassland habitats are often associated with culturally important landscapes. The downlands of Wiltshire hold some of the richest concentrations of archaeological sites in Europe. Most of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) of lowland England, from the Cotswolds to the North Downs, are predominantly grasslands, and are among our most treasured and visited landscapes.

What are the key challenges?

The fragmentation of much lowland grassland makes it difficult to manage with modern agricultural equipment and commercial breeds of cattle. Hay meadows and water meadows in particular need precision management on a small scale, which is not feasible for most hard-pressed farmers. In England, the new Environmental Stewardship scheme helps, but increased higher level grants for restoration are needed to restore the areas that can

reconnect the isolated fragments. Fears over the right of access are another difficulty in creating new areas of open downland.

Targeting activity on the ground is essential. Wildlife Trusts are working with others to identify and focus effort on the areas with most potential to reconnect habitat. Agricultural payments and other assistance needs to be directed towards these areas, to help fill key missing pieces in the jigsaw. These schemes need to be backed up by other capital grants and mechanisms to help farmers operate more effectively, such as machinery rings and cooperative grazing systems.

One example of Wildlife Trust action

Working with Natural England, and with funding from the Tubney Charitable Trust, the Somerset and Wiltshire Wildlife Trusts are reconnecting grassland habitats on a landscape scale in the Mendip Hills and the Braydon Forest area respectively. As well as targeting Environmental Stewardship advice, these long-term, multi-partner projects aim to make locally-harvested wild flower seed and green hay available to farmers, alongside helping to source suitable cattle and machinery.

The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust has also set up its own farm with native cattle and introduced traditional haymaking to manage a network of hay meadows in the north of the county.



Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

At Blakehill, a former military airfield, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust is restoring 200ha of grassland to species-rich hay meadow and pasture – the largest project of its kind in the UK

NORTHUMBERLAND



Druridge Bay 400ha

Open water, reedbed, grassland, woodland, sand dunes and foreshore owned by many partners.

■ Northumberland Wildlife Trust

OXFORDSHIRE



Sustainable Wetlands Project 700ha

Wet grassland around Upper Thames tributaries in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

■ Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust

SCOTLAND



Isle of Eigg 2,998ha

Outstanding example of environmental restoration involving the entire community. Small Isles, Hebrides.

■ Scottish Wildlife Trust

SHROPSHIRE



Stiperstones 64,000ha

Six-mile ridge of heathland restoration and recreation in south Shropshire, 15 miles south of Shrewsbury.

■ Shropshire Wildlife Trust

SOMERSET



Mendip Scarp Project c.6,000ha

Habitat management and linkage, regardless of ownership, along the Mendip Scarp above Cheddar.

■ Somerset Wildlife Trust

STAFFORDSHIRE



Staffordshire Washlands 5,000ha

Rivers, streams, marshy grassland and reedbed in floodplains of the rivers Trent, Sow and Penk.

■ Staffordshire Wildlife Trust



A LIVING LANDSCAPE

“We must rebuild the British landscape, in town and countryside. Fragmented habitats need to reconnect, and we need to work with natural systems for environmental protection, recreation, healthy living and sustainable food production. The Wildlife Trusts are ideally placed to weave whole landscapes back together.”

Professor Chris Baines Environmental adviser, author and broadcaster



By the time these children in Walsall are grown up, the surrounding city may be more green and pleasant than their parents could imagine



Matthew Roberts

Urban areas

Encouraging everyone to see the benefits of healthy, green cities

Why do urban areas matter?

The Wildlife Trusts have been working with people in built-up areas for many years because our towns and cities can be havens for wildlife in an increasingly hostile countryside. Gardens, parks, derelict land, veteran trees, canals and rivers welcome a wide variety of species.

Urban areas provide perhaps the best opportunities for people to encounter nature. Wildlife-rich green space, where people can get away from it all, is widely regarded as crucial to a high quality of life. We can also link wildlife with progressive new building styles and tackling climate change. For example, green roofs can help absorb heavy rainfall and regulate the temperature of buildings, as well as providing wildlife habitat.

The key challenges

Huge numbers of houses are expected to be built over the next 25 years, many on urban brownfield sites which can be rich in wildlife. However, developers increasingly see the economic benefits of creating space for nature within new residential areas.

Moreover, in many urban areas there is pressure to remove 'untidy' scrub, mow amenity grasslands extremely short, and remove vegetation on ditch banks and verges. But with proper planning and support from local Wildlife Trusts, carefully designed networks of wildlife-friendly green

space can be included in new development (p18). Developers can perform a vital role, funding habitat creation on the back of development, which in turn enhances the quality and value of new buildings. Local authorities can make a huge contribution to wildlife through more sensitive management of open spaces. Local communities are an even more powerful force in managing these areas.

One example of Wildlife Trust action

While it may conjure images of endless buildings, Birmingham and the Black Country is one of the UK's most diverse areas for wildlife, with more rivers and canals than Venice. Alongside two million people live otters, water voles, peregrines, great crested newts, threatened crayfish, and huge numbers of unusual plants.

Capitalising on this hidden richness, the local Wildlife Trust has been working with local authorities and others to achieve a 'transformation of the environment', with cross-party and central Government support.

The Trust plans to create strategic 'multi-use green corridors', rich in wildlife. These will link the key population centres, key nature reserves and other natural heritage features. Perhaps the most dramatic proposal is a 'green bridge' nature reserve linking Dartmouth Park to West Bromwich town centre, flying over its bypass.

STAFFORDSHIRE



Weaver Hills 3,700ha

Integrated management of acid to alkaline types of species-rich grassland between Leek and Ashbourne.

■ Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

SUFFOLK



Dunwich-Walberswick 1,600ha

Integrated management of a large, multi-landowner stretch of heathland and woodland

■ Suffolk Wildlife Trust

SUSSEX



Lewes Downs 1,000ha

Restoring and improving species-rich chalk downland in east Sussex, regardless of ownership

■ Sussex Wildlife Trust

WILTSHIRE



Landscapes for Wildlife 7,813ha

Working with landowners of woodland and farmland to restore biodiversity in the Braydon Forest area.

■ Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

WORCESTERSHIRE



The brown hairstreak is a key species

Forest of Feckenham 20,000ha

Meadows, pasture, woodland, agricultural land, hedgerows and veteran trees east of Worcester.

■ Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Want to know more?

These are just a few examples. All 47 Wildlife Trusts are on wildlifetrusts.org. Simply click on 47 local Wildlife Trusts to find the contact details, or phone 0870 0367711. Project websites include: Great Fen: greatfen.org River Dart: cycleau.com Isle of Eigg: isleofeigg.org OnTrent Project: ontrent.org Severn/Avon Vales: severnwetlands.org.uk



“The last time the UK’s wildlife faced a challenge on this scale was at the end of the last ice age. We need to find ways to help our wildlife become more resilient to the trials it faces in the 21st century. We must now work on a landscape scale if we are to give wildlife a chance and allow future generations to enjoy nature as we have.”

Sir David Attenborough Vice President of The Wildlife Trusts



Matthew Roberts

What needs to happen now

The natural systems on which our health, resources and wellbeing depend are in urgent need of repair. Here we map out a four-point plan which can transform our environment in a generation

We are at a turning point in the way we manage our environment. Agriculture is beginning to encompass stewardship of the countryside, planning policy is embracing creative conservation, climate change demands sustainable water management solutions, and we are realising how green surroundings improve our economy, health and wellbeing. We must harness these changes.

Transforming our environment is possible when Government, industry and society work towards a common purpose, with a combination of policy change and incentives. Our rivers, for example, have been dramatically transformed in the last 30 years by an improvement in water quality.

We must use such examples to spur us on. With 50 years of conservation legislation to learn from we need to accelerate our

efforts to think bigger and longer term: whole river catchments, robust habitat complexes such as woodland and grassland, entire tracts of upland, and major coastal realignment. We can re-connect the fragmented habitats in our towns and countryside to transform our landscape within a generation.

This is our image of the future; living landscapes that support, provide, inspire and renew. Through them we can halt biodiversity loss, create truly sustainable communities, reconstruct a resilient countryside able to adapt to climate change, and enjoy business that grows as a result of, rather than at the expense of, a healthy environment.

It is a tantalising future that offers a better quality of life for us all. And it is within our grasp if we can embrace the vision, commitment and determination to make it happen.

Cambourne in Cambridgeshire is an example of designing wildlife-rich countryside into the heart of a new community



1 Use the planning system to enhance biodiversity

● Map regional and local opportunities

Regional and local planning authorities should identify and map habitat restoration opportunities as a matter of urgency. All planning documents (such as Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks) should include these maps so they can influence land use decisions. Government should support mapping by facilitating a UK-wide spatial framework for landscape-scale conservation.

● Recognise there is a limit

Make opportunity maps a key mechanism for helping to establish environmental limits, ensuring that development does not deplete natural resources and processes, and does not threaten the integrity of future landscape-scale developments.

● Inspire local people to improve their quality of life

Use mechanisms such as community planning and Local Strategic Partnerships to engage and inspire local people about landscape-scale conservation.

● Use local knowledge

The voluntary sector, Local Record Centres and other experts should help create the opportunity maps. Habitat restoration must be based on the history of local environment, landscapes and wildlife, and significant local social and economic issues.

● Maximise use of the system

Continue to shift planning policy into restoring and creating habitats, and incorporating green infrastructure. Local authorities must enhance biodiversity in development decisions. Proposals that hinder landscape-scale restoration, such as unsustainable housing schemes, should be reviewed.

2 Invest in landscape-scale management and restoration

● Focus fiscal measures

Use incentives such as Planning Gain Supplement and stimulate new measures such as land ‘banking’ schemes or community land trusts to promote habitat restoration.

● Tailor incentive and funding schemes

Use agri-environment and forestry incentives to promote habitat restoration and make low-intensity farming systems economically viable for farmers. Public bodies and other funding organisations must embrace large-scale habitat restoration and reflect these ambitions in their funding programmes.

● Set local authority priorities

Local authority programmes such as Local Area Agreements should set targets for landscape-scale restoration and integrate social and economic spend into this context.

3 Tailor policy and practice for landscape-scale restoration

● Protect our most important sites

Local Wildlife Sites and the statutory sites network provide the catalyst for many landscape restoration schemes. All local authorities should have the resources to ensure that their Local Wildlife Site systems are operating to common standards.

● Manage public and private land

Manage the public estate to enhance biodiversity. Parks, housing, hospitals and schools can contribute to landscape-scale conservation, and also enhance health and wellbeing. Business and industry should use its land holdings in the same way. Public and private organisations should secure The Wildlife Trusts’ Biodiversity Benchmark scheme for land management.

● Integrate policies

Ensure that policies on water, agriculture, planning and regeneration integrate at all levels to promote landscape-scale restoration. Policies should incorporate natural processes to ensure long-term cost effectiveness and sustainability, such as moving away from hard flood defences to more natural solutions. Regeneration projects such as Thames Gateway and The Olympics should make a contribution to delivering living landscapes.

● Build living landscapes into social policy

Promote living landscapes through social policy such as tourism, schools, outdoor learning provision, preventative healthcare, volunteering schemes and youth work.

4 Buy time: address climate change

● Reduce CO₂ emissions by 60 per cent by 2050

Government must keep on track to meet its target set in 2003. If not, the damage could counteract the positive impacts of landscape restoration.

● Develop a UK sustainable energy policy

Focus on reducing demand by improving energy efficiency. Include a shift from large-scale, centralised generation to micro-generation, and renewable technologies.

● Invest in monitoring impacts of climate change on biodiversity

Ensure we maintain a robust, science-based approach to climate change and its impact on UK wildlife. This requires increased investment in recording, research and monitoring, through bodies such as Local Record Centres and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.



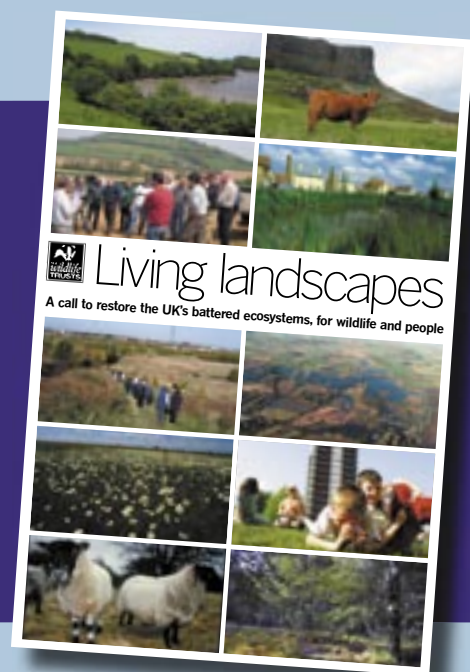
A LIVING LANDSCAPE

Find out more

There is a 50-page extended version of this report. It covers the science behind landscape-scale conservation, its links to Biodiversity Action Planning, and 10 landscape-scale project studies – all of which demonstrate The Wildlife Trusts' unique connection with local communities.

- To download the full report, visit 'publications' on **wildlifetrusts.org**

Or ring **0870 0367711** for a free copy



About The Wildlife Trusts

There are 47 local Wildlife Trusts across the whole of the UK, the Isle of Man and Alderney. We are working for an environment rich in wildlife for everyone.

With 670,000 members, we are the largest UK voluntary organisation dedicated to conserving the full range of the UK's habitats and species whether they be in the countryside, in cities or at sea. 108,000 of our members belong to our junior branch, Wildlife Watch.

We manage 2,200 nature reserves covering more than 80,000 hectares; we stand up for wildlife; we inspire people about the natural world and we foster sustainable living

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust's state-of-the-art low carbon visitor centre at Attenborough is the showpiece of a 147ha reserve championed by local people since 1966. The entire Wildlife Trusts movement is founded on a responsible attitude to the natural world and future generations

