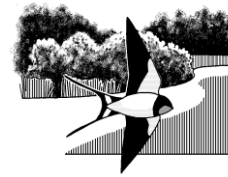


Little Ouse Headwaters Project



Winners -

Living Wetlands Award 2006

Suffolk Greenest County Award - "Greenest Community 2008"

Landscape and Biodiversity Award Winner 2009

PRESS RELEASE - 24th November 2009

Building Bridges

The trustees of the Little Ouse Headwaters Project have been building their second bridge across the Little Ouse, yet another Suffolk/Norfolk link up.

The new footbridge will link two important wetland sites managed by the trust, Betty's and Blo'Norton fens on the Norfolk side and in Suffolk the trust Project's new sites at Bleswycks Bank and Parkers Piece, which are in the process of being restored to wet fen and grazing meadow. This bridge is an important link in the expanding network of footpaths giving increased public access along the Little Ouse valley.

The construction of the bridge is being undertaken entirely by volunteers. The initial works of providing concrete foundations and anchor points had been carried out prior to the erection of the main trusses, which took place during the first autumn gale and heavy rain on Sunday 1st November. The construction team consisted of six volunteers led by LOHP trustee Bob Hayward (Bob the builder) ably assisted by Julian Van Beveren.

The work entailed the laying of a pontoon bridge across the river to provide access and a platform to launch the initial spans across the water. (Photos provided, alternatives are available).

Technical Details

The bridge was provided in kit form by ABC Bridges of Cirencester.

The foot bridge is 12 metres long by 1.5 metres wide and will have disabled ramps and steps on both North and South sides of the river.

It is of steel lattice construction, hot dip galvanised to give a very long life. Its treads are recycled plastic and it is clad in sustainably sourced oak to conceal the lattice

construction. The bridge is remote from the road and bringing foundation materials to the river side was done in multiple trips using a narrow, low ground pressure dumper. A previous bridge (Swallow Bridge) built for the LOHP had to be placed by helicopter due to its remote location but this one uses new technology which means that it has been put into place by 6 people with no cranes required.

Work started on erecting the bridge at 8 am and the steelwork was built over the river and completed by 5.30 pm. By the time you read this article the plastic deck treading will be in place along with handrails and wood cladding. The whole project is a wonderful example of teamwork and what can be achieved by enthusiastic volunteers at an affordable price.

Funding for the construction of the bridge has been provided by the H B Allen Charitable Trust and the Simon Gibson Charitable Trust for which LOHP is very grateful.

The bridge will not be completely finished and open to the public until all the access works and safety measures are in place in a few weeks time. A walk for members of the public to inspect the bridge will be held on Sunday 3rd January starting at Thelnetham Windmill at 10.30 a.m. Progress can be followed on the website at www.lohp.org.uk

Further information can be obtained from:-

P L Coster 01379 688 018 (Publicity)



1 The Pontoon



2 Manhandling the first truss across the river



3 The bridge takes shape



4 Here you can see the large amount of heavy metal that had to be handled.



5 Fixing the bridge to it's anchor points



Nearly done, Bob making some quality checks.

6



The finishing touches – decking and handrails

7

Notes for editors: Little Ouse Headwaters Project

1. The project is a registered charity, established in 2002 by local residents who were keen to take practical action to help protect and restore threatened aspects of the local landscape and its wildlife. It is located on the Norfolk/Suffolk border at the headwaters of the Little Ouse River (which forms the county border). The LOHP remains a community-based project – it is managed by a Board of Trustees drawn from the local area, and is entirely run by volunteers.

2. We currently manage about 45 hectares of land adjacent to the river. Our overall aim is to create, over time, a continuous corridor of land along the headwaters of the river that is managed in a way that benefits wildlife and people, and helps to preserve the character of the local landscape.

3. The upper Little Ouse valley contains a number of sites of local, national and international importance for wildlife, most notably the small remaining fragments of valley fen. Some of the sites we manage are protected by conservation designations (national – Site of Special Scientific Interest, or European – Special Area of Conservation)

4. As well as managing sites for the benefit of wildlife, we are committed to increasing public access and enjoyment of the project area by creating new footpaths, providing guided walks, and encouraging people to become involvement in practical conservation work as volunteers.

5. In 2006 the LOHP won the RSPB/Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management “Living Wetlands” Award, the first entirely voluntary organisation to gain this national recognition. In 2008 we were awarded 'Greenest Community' for 'outstanding work to protect the landscape and biodiversity', from the Suffolk Strategic Partnership's Greenest County initiative.

6. The LOHP very much welcomes anyone who would like to help make a practical contribution to this exciting restoration project, by coming along to one of our work parties on the second Sunday each month. We provide tools, gloves and refreshments: volunteers just need old clothes and enthusiasm. Over 150 volunteers have worked with the project to date.

Further information about the project, volunteering opportunities, and all forthcoming events can be found on our web site at www.lohp.org.uk

Notes for Editors: Parkers Piece and Bleyswycks Bank

Named after their former owners, these adjoining sites were purchased by the LOHP in 2007. Bleyswycks Bank was then an abandoned and overgrown tree nursery. Parkers Piece, an area of former fenland, had also been abandoned after conversion to arable agriculture, and later use for free-range pigs. These sites form a very important link in the chain of fens along the Little Ouse Headwaters. They link Blo'Norton Fen and Thelnetham Fens, both of which are still internationally important for their wildlife.

The LOHP is restoring fen habitats on both sites. The tree nursery has been cleared and the ground surface over much of the area lowered to remove nutrient-enriched soil and expose wetter, peat soils more suitable for the re-establishment of fen flowers. The area has been fenced to allow grazing by cattle and sheep - another important element in allowing a diversity of rarer to species to establish.

New paths are being established around the site to encourage public access and to create circular walks around the valley. These will be opened as soon as they are completed, early in the new year.

Funding for the purchase and restoration of these sites has come from many sources. The LOHP is grateful to all of its funders and particularly to Biffaward, Natural England and the Tubney Trust for their major contributions.

Notes for Editors: Biffaward

In 1997 Biffa Waste Services agreed to donate landfill tax credits to the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) to administer under the fund name **Biffaward**. Grants made from the fund currently amount to over £96 million, supporting many worthwhile projects.

Biffa Waste Services Limited is a part of the Biffa Limited Group of Companies. Biffa Limited is owned by Waste Acquisition Co Ltd, an entity formed by Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP), Montagu Private Equity & UCIL (Uberior Co-Investments Limited).

Biffa Limited is one of the largest single suppliers of waste management services in the UK. It collects, treats, recovers and disposes of municipal, commercial and industrial waste nationwide.

The **landfill tax** came into operation in 1996. Its purpose is to reflect the impact of landfill on the environment and also to help achieve the targets for more sustainable waste management. The tax, levied on the tonnage of all material disposed of in landfill sites and collected by Biffa on behalf of HM Revenue and Customs, aims to encourage recycling and reduce waste by raising the cost of disposal.

The regulations allow landfill site operators to direct approximately 6% of the tax they have collected towards approved environmental projects. However, any approved project can only receive 90% of its desired funding from the landfill tax. The remainder must come direct from the landfill site operator or from a third party organisation or company. www.biffaward.org

