

TRANSNATIONAL ECOLOGICAL NETWORK PROJECT  
NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLANS



# Vision for Wetlands towards Biodiversity-rich Floodplains

THE WAVENEY & LITTLE OUSE



# VISION FOR WETLANDS

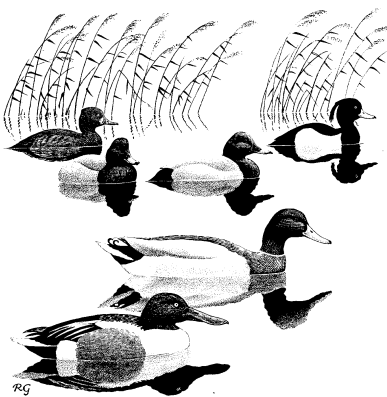
## TOWARDS BIODIVERSITY-RICH FLOODPLAINS

### THE WAVENEY AND LITTLE OUSE

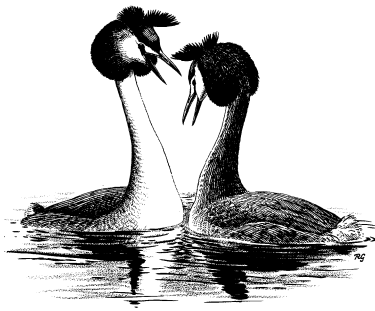
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The long established wetland habitats of Britain and Western Europe were home to a great richness of native species of plants and animals. These continued to exist side by side with the needs of local people, who used these areas as part of their local economy over long periods of time as grazing land, or to produce thatching materials and other useful products. However, wetland areas in much of Britain and Western Europe have seen great changes in the past century. Many rivers and streams have been straightened, deepened and otherwise realigned. Water quality has declined. Extraction of water from boreholes and improved land drainage and flood protection have led to the drying out of parts of the floodplains. Much of the land beside the rivers, in their flood plains, has been drained and ploughed instead of the fens, reedbeds and marsh grassland that had existed for centuries previously. Whilst these changes were brought about to satisfy the perceived need to change land uses, reduce flooding and otherwise 'improve' agricultural production, the concomitant decline of the wildlife value and hydrological functioning of these former wetland habitats, and of the species they harboured, has been severe.

There is now a great wish on the part of public and voluntary organisations with responsibilities for wildlife, landscape and the environment to seek to work in partnership with local people and the owners of wetlands, and former wetlands, to regain some of the benefits for biodiversity that these areas used to offer in abundance. Biodiversity is considered as the variety of life in all its forms. As one contribution to this effort, partners in the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and the UK (Suffolk and Norfolk County Councils) have formed a partnership to promote initiatives in their areas which will provide benefits for wetland habitats through a project called the Transnational Ecological Network (TEN). These initiatives are to be seen as demonstrations for other similar initiatives elsewhere in the partner countries and beyond.



Assorted ducks



Great crested grebe

The Waveney and Little Ouse rivers form the county boundary between the two UK partners in this project, and accordingly, these two floodplains have been selected as the UK's pilot project. A composite 'vision' for the possible biodiversity future of these two rivers' floodplains has been prepared under the auspices of the organisations listed below. The major principles of this are that:

## VISION

The following should be improved to their maximum possible potential in order to restore or enhance habitat and landscape throughout the valley systems for the benefit of wetland wildlife and people:

- Water quantity
- Water quality
- Sense of place
- Community involvement with environmental initiatives
- Public access and amenity which does not degrade the environmental resource, including unnecessary disturbance to species.

The strategic objectives of the vision are to:

- Develop sustainable flood defences which provide appropriate standards to people and built property and contribute to the benefit of biodiversity
- Raise water levels wherever appropriate, particularly in the adjacent marsh and fen areas
- Return rivers to more natural channel systems
- Raise the river beds, particularly where they have been over deepened in the past
- Create buffer zones to core wetlands and corridors to link them
- Actively promote land use change to wetter habitats and characteristic landscape
- Achieve integrated catchment management
- Prevent urban development in the flood plain
- Create large scale, near naturally functioning wetlands
- Create a mosaic of wetland habitats that complements the existing resource, where possible driven by the demands of important species and the nature of existing soils. Typically, peatland will support fen/alder carr mosaic, while clay land will support grazing marsh or reed
- Remove or modify bridges, weirs, sluices and other riverside structures where possible
- Involve community groups and all stakeholders.

This is shown in some more detail on the maps attached.

## Key



Wet grazing marsh



Reed/washland



Rond



Reedbed



Fen mosaic



Fen/wet woodland mosaic



Wet woodland



Water areas



Heath



Current built-up areas

**Projects to begin to implement the vision for the Waveney and Little Ouse Approved and part funded by the EU's Interreg North Sea Region Interreg III Programme, May 2003**

### Projects relating to the whole area

An **advisory service** for wetland conservation will be provided to all interested landowners and land managers in the parishes which bound the rivers.

A **water vole research project** will collect data, promote local improvements and inform on-going management for all transnational partners.

**All projects** will demonstrate the techniques used to all international and local partners and will exchange with them the results achieved.

### Leader

**Norfolk and Suffolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Groups**

**Upper Waveney Valley Project**

**Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils' Countryside Services**

**Norfolk Wildlife Trust**

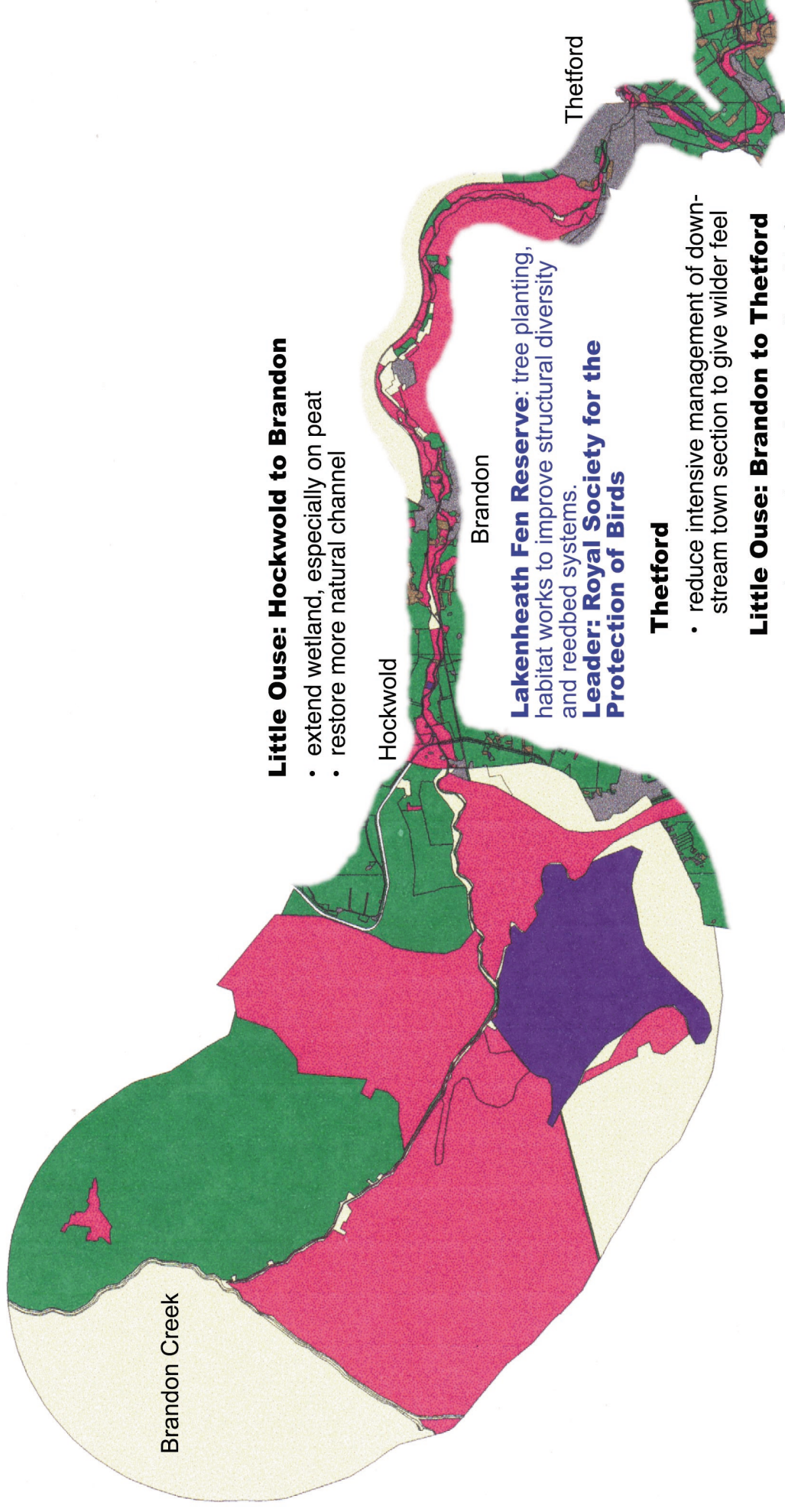
**All partners**



## Little Ouse: confluence with Great Ouse (Brandon Creek) to Wilton Bridge (Hockwold)

In collaboration with the Wet Fens for the Future Project:

- recreate fen habitat on peat deposits
- create wet grassland or reed on clay areas, offering major winter wash lands
- consider wetland restoration in area of two extinct meres



### Little Ouse: Hockwold to Brandon

- extend wetland, especially on peat
- restore more natural channel

**Lakenheath Fen Reserve:** tree planting, habitat works to improve structural diversity and reedbed systems.

**Leader: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds**

### Thetford

- reduce intensive management of downstream section to give wilder feel

### Little Ouse: Brandon to Thetford

- reduce poplar and some valley side forestry
- restore damp valley side heathland, fen meadow and natural channel

## MAP 1 Brandon Creek to Thetford



## Little Ouse: Thetford to Hopton and Garboldisham

## MAP 2 Thetford to Diss

- create good wet grassland immediately N of Barnham
- improve interface between dry heath of Barnham Cross Common SSSI and river's edge
- implement conservation measures for heronry on R bank of Black Bourn at confluence with Little Ouse
- protect and extend alder carr on L bank of Lt Ouse below Gt Furze Hill
- replace intrusive arable between Rushford Heath and river with wetland/heath
- convert large and intrusive arable fields on R bank of Lt Ouse opposite Knettishall Heath CP into wet meadow/wood, and restore wet grassland within CP
- restore lake in grounds of Riddlesworth Hall School
- increase buffer area on both sides of Hopton and Market Weston Fens replacing immediately adjacent arable

**Nunnery Reserve, Thetford:** create scrape, improve grazing marshes for snipe and redshank, monitor bird populations to evaluate work.

**Leader: British Trust for Ornithology**

Thetford

**Garboldisham, Frogshall Carr:** clearance of scrub and planting of ash and alder to create Biodiversity Action Plan habitats.

**Leader: Forest Enterprise**

Garboldisham

Hopton

**Knettishall Heath Country Park:** restore flood meadows and establish traditional rare breed Suffolk Redpoll cattle grazing.

**Leader: Suffolk County Council**

**Little Ouse Headwaters:** habitat enhancement; ground water catchment land purchase to link existing detached mix of Special Area of Conservation, Site of Special Scientific Interest, County Wildlife Site and National Nature Reserve. Significant extension to current size of land in appropriate management, create open reed, sedge, wet heath, fringing carr woodland. Excellent for Biodiversity Action Plan targets (heath, fen, woodland and stream).

**Leader: Little Ouse Headwaters Project**

Diss

## Headwaters between Garboldisham and Diss

- clear wood and manage overgrown fens
- improve water quality of entire catchment including headwaters of Lt Ouse at Rickinghall and Botesdale.
- replace arable and improved grass along valley bottom with wet habitat
- replace arable valley sides with birch wood/heath
- facilitate the relocation of poultry and pig units
- remove/proper treatment of slurry pit at SE end of Hinderclay Fen
- institute all other appropriate pollution control measures to upgrade water quality on Lt Ouse and Waveney
- restore meanders and create natural channel, especially below Blo'Norton Hall, alongside Hinderclay Fen and immediately upstream of Diss
- replace section of B1113 with causeway where it bisects potential link between Lt Ouse and Waveney



## MAP 3 Diss to St Olaves

### Waveney between Harleston and Downstream End of Project Area at St Olaves

- recreate some fen on peats above Bungay, and increase wetness of grassland
- convert clay areas to wet grazing marsh/reedbed, possibly managed as washlands (Somerleyton, Blundeston, Peto's and Barsham Marshes and Short Dam Level)
- extend alder carr on peat area SE of Aldeby
- create mosaic of fen, fen meadow and alder wood on peat of Beccles, Gillingham, and Geldeston Marshes, Beccles Common, SE corner of Share Marsh, both sides of Boundary Dyke and along S edges of floodplain near Barnby
- create extensive grazing marsh on remaining N area of flood plain (Long Dam Level, Castle Marsh, Barnby and parts of Carlton Colville, Oulton Marshes not on peat)
- set back river banks to create more natural river corridor

### River Waveney in-channel habitat enhancements

**(Scole to Brockdish):** install 6 riffles and re-profile banks. Stream works will enhance fish spawning habitat and allow better access for water vole and birds.

**Leader: Environment Agency**

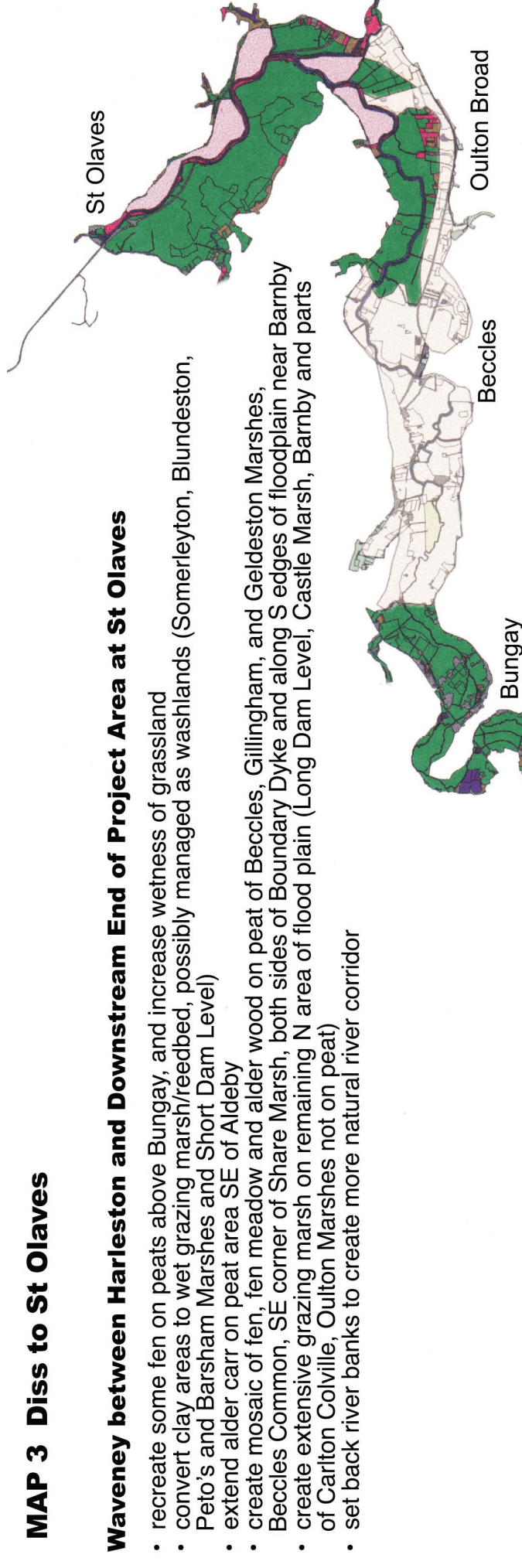
Harleston

### Waveney between Diss and Harleston

- restore natural channel
- resolve management of mill structures
- establish new and extend existing alder carr wood especially on deep peat
- raise water levels by holding up ditch systems and raising bed of main channel
- restore all tier 1 ESA grassland to tiers 2 and 3
- reduce weed cutting and re-establish stands of true bulrush
- manage and increase pollards

**Frenze Beck:** washland creation with reedbeds, pond and riverbank work.

**Leader: South Norfolk District Council**

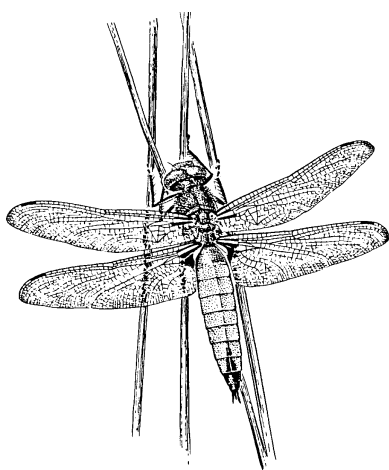




Otter

It is envisaged that this vision should provide a foundation for the various public agencies, landowners and local people with legitimate interests for managing this area and making their living from it, to work together on a voluntary basis to recreate something of what has been lost. Its implementation over time will lead to significant benefits for biodiversity in this part of Norfolk and Suffolk. Benefits will accrue to nationally targeted biodiversity habitats such as floodplain grazing marsh, reedbed, fen, wet woodland, standing waters and small areas of lowland heath, and to a number of species such as otter, water vole and molluscs such as Desmoulin's snail.

It is not expected that the vision will become reality in a short time. There is too much to achieve. Rather, if just a small part of the vision could be realised over the next ten to twenty years, that would represent considerable success. Working collaboratively in partnership with all interests should bring real benefits for all. Long-term programmes of work funded by public agencies could be integrated to deliver parts of the vision, bringing benefits for biodiversity and for the enjoyment of local people. There will be a redirection of agricultural support systems in the course of time, and this could contribute to this aim. This is already occurring, for example, through the Rural Development Programme, which represents a significant redistribution of money for rural community enhancement.



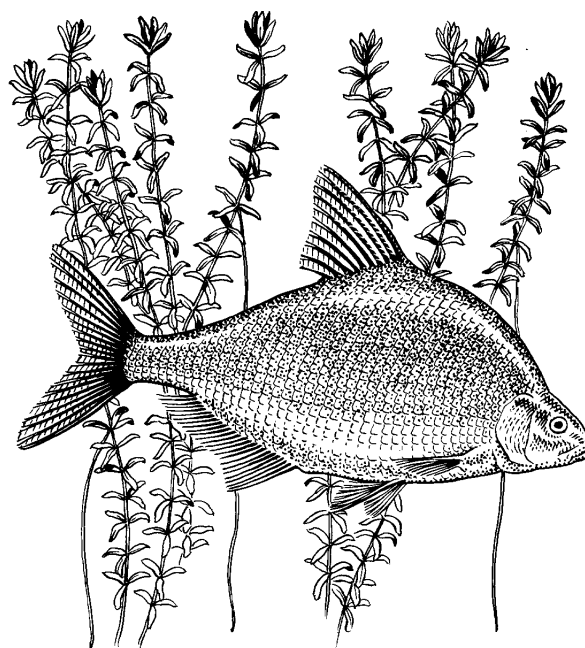
Scarce chaser dragonfly

We hope that local people, and especially those who own the land, will be interested in some of the ideas contained in this vision. It would not be necessary for everyone to 'come on board' at once, but some enthusiastic partners will be needed to get the task of restoration started. Others can join later. Works cannot go ahead that would not be supported by those affected by them. We should like to know what potential 'stakeholders' think about the vision, and whether they may wish to contribute to its realisation in future years. If there is some enthusiasm for realising the vision, then the responsible organisations will seek funding from European and national sources to help to implement it.

This vision has been prepared by Jeremy Purseglove of Mott MacDonald on behalf of the Waveney and Little Ouse Partnership under the auspices of the Transnational Ecological Network Project, and it has been accepted by both the Norfolk and Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Groups.

The Waveney and Little Ouse Partnership is made up of representatives of the organisations set out below:

- Norfolk County Council
- Suffolk County Council
- English Nature - Norfolk and Suffolk Teams
- Environment Agency - Eastern and Central Areas of the Anglian Region
- Anglian Otters and Rivers Project
- Blo' Norton and Thelnetham Conservation Volunteers
- South Norfolk District Council
- Broads Authority
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs - Rural Development Services
- Forest Enterprise
- Norfolk Wildlife Trust
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Suffolk Wildlife Trust



Bream

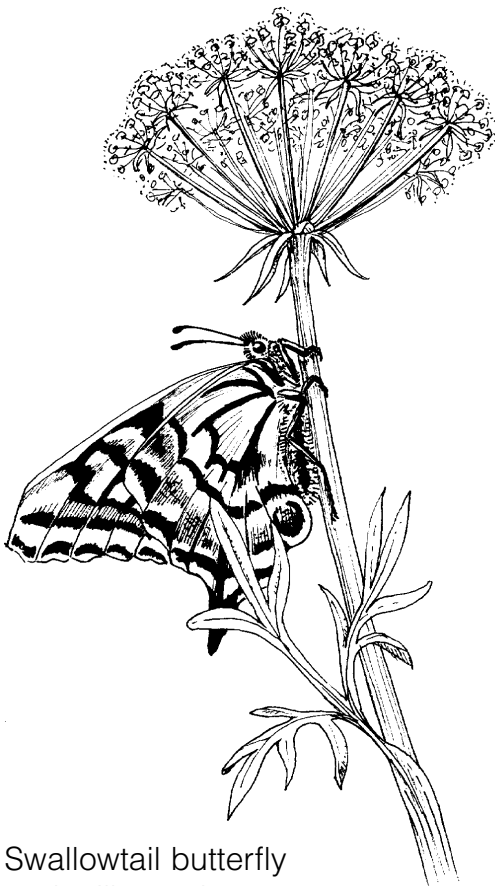
A longer report is available on request setting out a little more of the background to the TEN (*Transnational Ecological Network*) project and the preparation of this vision.

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Swallowtail butterfly  
and milk parsley



