THE WICKEN FEN VISION – THE NATIONAL TRUST: PROGRESS REPORT

Committee: Strategic Development Committee
Date: 21 April 2009
Author: Executive Director Development Services

1.0 ISSUE

1.1 To note, consider and comment on the actions taken so far by the National Trust (NT) in response to the Committee’s resolution on the 11 November 2008 as follows:

“To reserve this Council’s support for the development of the Wicken Fen Vision subject to further detailed consultation of interested parties, including local residents, the farming community and countryside user groups and continuing community engagement and involvement in shaping this Vision, together with any detailed comments members make in the context of the outcome of the recent consultation by the National Trust.”

1.2 Attached appendices explain what has happened to date together with a draft statement of continuing community involvement capturing the Council’s request for a presentation to an inter-neighbourhood panel meeting of the Soham and East and the South neighbourhood panels. This will be in the form of a multi agency approach from the National Trust and those organisations involved in progressing the scheme.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 To note the position and progress so far with the National Trust and continue working with the NT to resolve the local concerns expressed to local members and report back to this Committee following the outcome of the inter-neighbourhood panel meeting to be arranged early in July.

3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

3.1 The National Trust has developed an ambitious plan to create a new nature reserve covering around 56 square kilometres (22 square miles) between Wicken Fen and Cambridge and creating a huge and accessible area of countryside for people to enjoy is one of the main objectives of the Wicken Fen Vision. The 100-year Vision was first set out in the early 1990’s and in 1993 the National Trust completed their first land acquisition. This Council supported this visionary project from the outset and gave financial assistance to the first land purchase. Since then the National Trust has made further land acquisitions and developed the Vision.
The majority of the Vision area is set within our District and impacts on local residents and the farming community. In the context of the growth agenda this is a vital strategic green infrastructure project, which has the potential to enrich the lives of the people of Cambridgeshire. This is captured in the following key strategic documents:

- The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS 14) East of England Plan (page 51 policy ENV1)
- The Council’s Corporate Plan (page 9 last paragraph)
- The Council’s Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document. (pages 43/44 paragraph 2.4.6.4 Policy CS6)
- The Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy developed by Cambridgeshire Horizons (letter dated 15 Jan 2009 CE to Cllr Peter Moakes, then Board member refers)

However, and most recently it became increasingly apparent to locally elected members that there is significant local concern in the area envisaged for the Vision. This Council has a duty to consider that concern on behalf of local people. From our discussions so far these focus on the following 3 key issues:

- access issues for local residents and visitors,
- engagement with existing countryside users and the local farming community.
- realising the impact of a water cycle strategy on the local community in the way that this area and the drainage system including The Lodes are managed – an issue which engages the Environment Agency and the local Internal Drainage Boards.

3.2 Members are advised of the following options for consideration in response to work in progress with the NT which are:

- to work closely with the National Trust to resolve the local concerns expressed to local members and to note the position and progress so far with the NT and report back to this Committee following the outcome of the inter-neighbourhood panel meeting to be arranged early in July

- or to reaffirm support for the Wicken Fen Vision in principle on the basis of the National Trust’s actions in response to the Committee’s November resolution as set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 and to note the position and progress so far with the NT and continue to work closely with the Trust to resolve the local concerns expressed to local members and report back to this Committee following the outcome of the inter-neighbourhood panel meeting to be arranged early in July.

- Or to object to the continuing development of the Wicken Fen Vision.
4.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The Wicken Fen Vision Project has been supported by this Council in the past by financial assistance with the National Trust’s land acquisition at the start of this significant strategic project 10 years ago. This includes developing a public access strategy that aims to open up non-vehicular access routes and a circular network of paths from a "spine route" through the centre of the Vision land stretching from Wicken to Cambridge. This access strategy provides the very real opportunity for the 5000+ hectare Wicken Vision becoming the "Green Lung" between Ely and Cambridge and its rapidly expanding population. This is a major element contained within the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy developed by Cambridgeshire Horizons the Local Delivery Vehicle for this sub-region and the NT has received funding from the Growth Areas Fund for land purchase, habitat restoration and path surfacing together with the construction of a new bridge over the Swaffham Bulbeck Lode. The path improvements include the creation of a cycleway link from the National Nature Reserve crossing 5 Lodes and the river Cam and once completed will provide the missing link in Sustrans NCN Route 11 linking Cambridge to Ely. Most recently the Wicken Fen Vision spine route has received a £600k grant from Sustrans which when complete will link Anglesey Abbey to Wicken and Ely delivering a positive boost for leisure, recreational use and tourism.

4.2 The Wicken Fen Vision now finds expression in several strategic policy documents and is important in the context of the Council’s response to the issue of climate change and biodiversity as well as making a significant contribution to the tourism economy.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Member and officer time involved in this project.

6.0 APPENDICES

6.1 Appendix 1 : Wicken Fen Vision – Community Engagement and Consultation
6.2 Appendix 2 : Wicken Fen Vision – Actions delivered on ground in response to community requests 2008 - 2009
6.3 Appendix 3 : Meeting notes
6.4 Appendix 4 : Cambridgeshire Horizons (letter dated 15 Jan 2009 CE to Cllr Peter Moakes
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Background Documents</strong></th>
<th><strong>Location</strong></th>
<th><strong>Contact Officer</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As quoted in this and previous reports</td>
<td>Room 007 The Grange Ely</td>
<td>David Archer Executive Director Development Services (01353) 616225 E-mail: <a href="mailto:david.archer@eastcambs.gov.uk">david.archer@eastcambs.gov.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Link to the NT’s website for more detailed information:</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.wicken.org.uk/vision.htm">http://www.wicken.org.uk/vision.htm</a></td>
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The Wicken Fen Vision is an ambitious nature conservation and public access project and a key element of the spatial strategy for Cambridgeshire and the East of England. Since the inception of the Vision in 1999, the National Trust have invested significant resources in developing and maintaining communication with the local community and partners which reflects the overall strategic importance of the project.

On a local level the Trust places significant emphasis on developing and maintaining communication with all sections of the local community, local Government, statutory bodies and interest groups within and bordering the Vision area.

The aim of the communication process is to:-

- Inform and educate individuals, communities, Local Government, statutory authorities and, interest groups on the aims, objectives, benefits and implementation of the Wicken Fen Vision.
- To establish open and regular communication.
- To generate community involvement and ownership of the Vision

Communications Undertaken since November 2008

The Trust conducts a robust pro-active communication programme and has done successfully for a numbers of years since the launch of the Vision in 1999. Detailed below are communication activities undertaken by the Trust between November 2008 and March 2009. It must be emphasised that these items are part of the ongoing communication process and provide a clear picture of the widespread and targeted community engagement and consultation process undertaken by the Trust: -

- **Parish Council Liaison Committee**
  A meeting with Parish Councils within and neighbouring the Vision lands was held on 26 February '09 – subjects discussed included Wicken Fen User Forum, Spine Route, Burwell Fen habitat restoration, re-wetting of Sedge Fen, new bird watching hide on Tubney Fen, Visitor Travel plan, Community engagement and Wicken Fen Vision 10th anniversary celebrations, (see attached minutes for action points).
• **Wicken Fen User Forum**
The Wicken Fen User Forum was formally established in December '08, and is an advisory group of regular users of Wicken Fen and the Vision lands, including walkers, cyclists, horse riders, anglers, naturalists and boaters. The role of the forum is to look at plans and proposals from the users' perspective to help ensure that new infrastructure and facilities meet the needs and requirements of as many users as possible. The inaugural meeting was held on 11 December 08 with a second meeting on 5 March '09, (see attached minutes for action points).

• **Wicken Fen Local Committee**
The Wicken Local Committee, a body with over 100 years standing comprising local community representatives and experts in ecology and conservation providing guidance to the Trust in the conservation and management of the Fen. Meetings of the Local Committee were held in December 08 and March 09.

• **Spine Route Steering Group**
The Spine route Steering Committee is charged with overseeing the development and implementation of the HGF 1 / Connect2 grant aided Cambridge to Wicken Fen Spine Route. The Steering Group includes representatives from Burwell, Lode, Swaffham Bulbeck, Swaffham Prior Parish Councils, National Trust, Cambridge County Council, Environment Agency, Natural England, Cambridge Cycling Campaign and Fenland Bridleways Association. Meetings of the Steering Group were held on 12 November '08 and 24 March '09, (see attached minutes for action points).

• **Wicken Fen Community Newsletter**
The Wicken Fen Community Newsletter is published quarterly with a print run of 20,000 copies distributed to all households and communities in and bordering the Vision area plus Ely, Soham and Milton. The newsletter is also distributed by post to key stakeholders and partners including MPs, County and District Councillors, local, regional and national media.

The Newsletter contains articles and news relating to implementation of the Vision, general interest articles and details of events at Wicken Fen. Recent editions were published in November '08 and February '09.

• **Wicken Fen Website**
The Wicken website ([www.wicken.org.uk](http://www.wicken.org.uk)) provides a one stop regularly updated information source on Wicken Fen and the Vision. The site carries full details of the Vision, including short video films, Frequently Asked Questions and Answers, press releases and contact e-mail address for further information / comments. The website has received over 5200 hits since December '08.
- **Media Relations**
  Extensive pro-active media relations campaign resulting in significant, local coverage of the Vision in local / regional newspapers, local radio and both regional television networks.

- **Parish Magazines**
  Regular contributions on the implementation of the Vision / events at Wicken Fen to Parish Magazines published by communities in and around the Vision lands.

- **Fenland Bridleway Association**
  A meeting with representatives of the Fenland Bridleway Association was held on 16 January ‘09 to discuss various issues regarding access for horse riders and carriages, (see attached minutes for action points).

- **Visitor Travel Plan Workshop**
  A half-day workshop to assist in the preparation of a sustainable Travel Plan for the Wicken Fen Vision was held on 11 February ‘09. The workshop was attended by 36 delegates representing ECDC, local communities and key stakeholders. The Travel Plan is being developed following concerns expressed by local communities over the potential adverse impacts of additional visitor traffic.

- **Wicken Fen Visitor Centre**
  A permanent display on the Wicken Fen Vision, including inter-active elements is housed in the Wicken Fen Visitor Centre. Staff are always available to brief Visitors and answer questions on the Vision.

Participation in external forums / events:-

- **Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Forum**
  Participation in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Forum organised by Cambridge County Council and Cambridge Horizons on 15 December.

- **Local Access Forum**
  Co-ordinated by Cambridge County Council, the Local Access Forum considers all matters relating to non-motorised rights of way across Cambridgeshire. Meetings attended by National Trust representative in November, January and March.

- **Swaffham Internal Drainage Board**
  Attendance as a member of the Board by Chris Soans, Wicken Fen Property Manager at the Annual General Meeting (25 Nov ‘08) and Budget Meeting (10 Feb ‘09)

- **Cambridge Science Festival**
  Wicken Fen staff spoke about the Vision at the Museum of Zoology as part of the National Trust participation in the Cambridge Science Festival on Saturday 14 March ‘09 with over 2,000 attendees.
Communication Initiatives - Spring 2009 Onwards

The Wicken Fen Vision celebrates its 10\textsuperscript{th} anniversary in 2009. In addition to on-going communication initiatives, further events and activities planned for spring / summer 09 include:-

- **Wicken Fen Vision 10\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary Celebrations**
  A day of celebration is planned for 1 May 09, to formally mark the 10\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the Wicken Fen Vision. Admission to the Fen will be free and there will be a range of free activities and evening celebration for the local community. A special anniversary edition of the community newsletter is being produced and distributed to local communities.

- **Information Roadshows**
  A series of information roadshows are to be held in local communities on Saturdays throughout May 2009. The roadshows will consist of displays on the Vision including development of the Spine Route, Reach Lode crossing, Burwell Fen habitat restoration project and new bird hide facilities on Tubney Fen. An experienced team of National Trust staff will be available to brief and answer questions on the Vision.

  Roadshow schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 May</td>
<td>Wicken / Burwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 May</td>
<td>Swaffham Prior / Lode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 May</td>
<td>Fen Ditton / Waterbeach</td>
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- **Wicken Fen Vision Strategy Document**
  The Wicken Fen Strategy document is to be updated to reflect progress with the implementation of the Wicken Fen Vision since 1999. Publication is to co-inside with the anniversary celebrations in May

- **Participation in Community Events**
  Wicken Fen will be mounting exhibitions at the following community events:-
  Reach Fair (4 May), Wicken Fete (27 June) and Fenland Fair, Quy (30/31 August)

- **Community Warden**
  A Community Warden has been appointed effective 1 May 09. The role of the Warden will be to continue links with local communities and organisations to enhance understanding and community involvement in the Wicken Fen Vision.

- **Farming Community – Open Day**
  Local farmers have been invited to an Open Day at Wicken Fen on 23 April ’09 to see the Vision area and the Trust’s on-going phased development of the Vision.
• **Cambridge Horizons Conference**  
  Trust representatives will be attending and mounting an exhibition of the Wicken Fen Vision at the Cambridge Horizons Annual Conference on 17 June 2009.

• **Joint Neighbourhood Panel**  
  In conjunction with ECDC/Cambridgeshire Horizons/NT and SCDC there will be a Joint Neighbourhood Panel meeting in the summer at Anglesey Abbey to explain the strategic elements of the Green Infrastructure provision in Cambridgeshire and how the Wicken Fen Vision fits in with the wider delivery.

• **Ongoing NT/ECDC Communication**  
  - 6 monthly meetings with Councillors, Officers and NT and copying in Cllr. David Brown with minutes and action points from community meetings.
    - meeting with Cambridgeshire Horizons/ECDC/SCDC/NT planned for April ’09 to agree planning framework for delivery of Green Infrastructure, potentially within Supplementary Planning Documents.
Wicken Fen Vision

Actions delivered on ground in response to community requests 2008 – 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Request</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tr>
<td>Users Forum and Fenland Bridleways Assoc.</td>
<td>11/12/2009</td>
<td>Additional entrance/exit gates with mounting blocks and horse friendly furniture, to provide alternatives to avoid tenants cattle on Tubney Fen</td>
<td>2 extra gates and 7 mounting blocks installed March 2009.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parish Liaison Group</td>
<td>21/04/2008</td>
<td>Investigation into future traffic demand on Fen roads and avoiding visitor parking in villages.</td>
<td>Visitor Travel Plan commissioned from consultants JMP and Colin Speakman, looking at national trends and delivering actions to encourage less car use by visitors. Due for completion Summer ‘09.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Users Forum</td>
<td>11/12/2009</td>
<td>Investigate how to maintain free movement of grazing livestock whilst trying to find ways to allow some RoW to be animal free.</td>
<td>Additional element added on to EA Burwell crossing feasibility study, looking at realistic potential of various crossing designs. To be completed Autumn ‘09.</td>
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User Forum Meeting
Thursday 11 December 2008

Present:  
Andrew Powell  Chairman
Joy Fuller  Horserider
Barry Garwood  Cyclist
Francis Reeks  Walker
Mike Causer  Cyclist
Martin O’Leary  Naturalist
Neil Larnar  Naturalist

National Trust Staff  
Chris Soans
David Dench
Jon Megginson

Apologies:  
Tom Leggett  Angler
John Colville  Horserider

Notes and Action Points from the Meeting

Andrew Powell welcomed everyone to the meeting and set out the purpose of the group, that it was a place to share ideas and solve problems and that it was an advisory group. He would be reporting outcomes back to the Local Committee and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

Spine Route

Jon Megginson presented a talk on the Wicken Fen Vision Spine Route. The route is a link through the Vision area from the edge of Cambridge to Anglesey Abbey and Wicken Fen. The route from Waterbeach station to Bottisham Lock is due to be surfaced in the near future, tenders for this work are going out soon. The Bridge at Bottisham Lock is being improved to allow cycles and pushchairs better access across the River Cam.

Barry asked why it wasn’t being made up to a standard usable by horse riders? There were thought to be various reasons for this.

Action: Jon to look in detail at whether the bridge can be upgraded for horse use. This will include costs, whether the Environment Agency (EA) will approve this and whether Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) has a view.

Jon informed the group that the White Fen track was now in place. He was asked where the bridleway would go and whether the bollard at the bridge would be removable?

The intention is that the bollard will be removable but this required approval from CCC they have given this in principle but we are waiting for a formal agreement. The defined route of the bridleway has yet to be finalised and this could be discussed at a future user group site meeting.
**Action NT will formally contact CCC again to seek a formal approval for the bollard to be changed to a removable bollard.**

Reach Lode Bridge: Royal Haskoning has been commissioned to design and build the bridge. It is at the design stage at present with the challenge being to ensure that the ramps do not impact on any of the other access routes.

**Action: Group members will be Notified when the designs are ready and they will be made available for people to see.**

Burwell Lode. Jon informed the group that the EA has agreed to fund a feasibility study to look at all the options for crossing Burwell Lode to include designs as well as the best position.

**Action: Once the study is complete it will be brought to the group for comments.**

The track across Guinea Hall Farm from Priory Farm to Wicken will be resurfaced the Fenlands Bridleway Association (FBA) had been asked for a design for a box kissing gate for horses to use this route. Barry informed the meeting that the FBA was opposed to open grazing in this area so would not be advising on the designs.

Barry suggested that the tracks should be fenced off and culverts put in place to allow animals to move from site to site. Andrew noted that this issue would not be resolved at the meeting and asked that the NT report back to the next meeting with all the options. This is a significant change in concept with resource implications and animal behaviour issues however NT recognises the strong feeling of the group and will consult with local committee and Grazing forum.

**Action: NT to look at the options for integrating recreational use and grazing animals this will be a discussion at the Local Committee which will be reported back to this forum.**

Tubney Fen

David reported on the planned work at Tubney Fen. Additional gateways will be installed to allow users options when the site is being grazed. After discussion and at the request of the Joy and Barry the access points marked on the attached map were agreed upon.

It was also noted that the mounting blocks were not designed properly. It was agreed that Joy would supply designs for replacement mounting blocks to ensure that NT does not make the same mistakes again.

**Action: Joy to provide mounting block designs**

**Action: NT to install new entrances and mounting blocks**

It was requested that the gates are left open when there are no grazing stock in the fields at Tubney.
Action: NT to fix gates open whilst no stock on Tubney Fen.

Note after the meeting, these gates have been temporarily removed to make access easier whilst there is no livestock in the fields.

The NT is planning to install a hide at Tubney Fen Mere and the designs were circulated at the meeting. Neil commented that as it was open backed movement in the hide may startle birds. Chris pointed out that it would have a mound behind so no sky should be seen. He also noted that it was a watching station as well as a hide. Also that use and disturbance would be monitored.

Feedback from Drop-in Sessions.

David read out the points that had been raised at the drop-in sessions many of these have been addressed in earlier discussions.

Any Other Issues?

Barry had sent a letter of issues some of these had already been discussed in this meeting but for clarification he was handed a written response.

Can agenda items be more specific in future, just Tubney Fen is meaningless?

Can NT look into the issue of low flying aircraft across the fen? Last weekend a small aircraft was flying low and fast along the Burwell Lode and across the Fen.

Neil asked if the Vision had any areas that could be set a side for no access?

Neil also asked how the NT planned to police the Vision area to ensure that people used the area responsibly?

Can the comments made on the consultation forms be made available to the group members?

Action: Chris to check that there aren’t any Data Protection Act issues and subject to clarification the comments will be circulated.

Chris stated that a travel strategy will be produced looking at past present and future usage. There will be a discussion group meeting in February and invites will be sent to all on this group.

Action: Invites to be sent to users forum members

Future Meetings

After discussion it was agreed that future meetings should be at 7.00pm on week days.

It was also agreed that boat users and users from the south of the Vision area should be invited to future meetings.

Date of next meeting Thursday 5 March 7.00pm
User Forum Meeting  
Thursday 05 March 2009

Present:  
Andrew Powell  Chairman  
Joy Fuller  Horserider  
Barry Garwood  Cyclist  
Francis Reeks  Walker  
Mike Causer  Cyclist  
Martin O’Leary  Naturalist  
Neil Larnar  Naturalist  
David Rogers  Boating  
John Colvill  Horserider

National Trust Staff  
Chris Soans  
David Dench  
Jon Megginson

Apologies:  
Tom Leggett  Angler  
Jill Tufnell  Walker

Notes and Action Points from the Meeting

Andrew welcomed David Rogers to the meeting as a new member of the forum.

Matters Arising

White Fen bridleway, a map of the route has been sent to the County Council who are in the process of adopting the route as a definitive bridleway, Jon has met Council officers and Jackson’s, the contractor to finally sign off the bridgework.

Horse and cart agreements, The Fenlands Bridleway Association were sent a copy of a draft licence for cart users on 17 February, John confirmed that they are happy with the conditions set out in the agreement.

Grazing animals, Andrew confirmed that this will be discussed at the next Local Committee meeting on 18 March.

Feed back comments from the public consultation exercise were distributed as requested.

Spine Route

Waterbeach Section  
The plan was to surface Green Drove and a local footpath, agreements had been reached with local landowners and the NT had been informed that planning permission was not required, however at the last minute it was decided that planning permission was required so the project had to be
cancelled, the funding available for this route was time constrained and this did not allow for time to obtain planning permission.

**Bottisham Lock Crossing.**
Designs have been looked at and these have been discussed with the Environment Agency. They will not allow a bridge to be put across a lock as this encourages people to jump and dive in! So alternatives need to be looked for.

David Rogers asked if a minimum air draft of 3m can be given for boats, JM confirmed that this is the case with all bridges we construct on navigable routes.

**White Fen Drove**
This road will be surfaced by the County Council using a technique of breaking up the concrete and then tarmacing over the top. The work is planned for this summer/autumn.

**Reach Lode Bridge**
CS presented the plans for Reach Lode bridge and explained that this design took account of the fragile lode banks, health and safety requirements of a bridleway and clearance of 3m required by boat users.

JF asked what the surface of the bridge will be? It will be to the same standard as the bridge over Swaffham Bulbeck Lode.
NL asked if gaps in the railings could be binocular width?
Someone asked if the ramps would be protected and was told ‘hopefully not’
NL raised the question as to whether the footpath across Burwell Fen should be closed as a new route was being created. After discussion it was agreed that this option would not be pursued at present.

**Action**
**It is intended that these plans will be presented for planning approval in the near future.**

**Burwell Lode Crossing study**
The meeting was informed that a feasibility study would be carried out to ascertain the best design to accommodate all eligible users wishing to cross Burwell Lode. This should be carried out over the next 4 months, the next challenge will be to draw together a funding package. Plans will be presented to a meeting of the User Group for comment.

**Action**
**NT and EA to commission feasibility study**
Guinea Hall path surfacing
This is due to be laid down in the next few weeks and will be rolled granite chips to a width of 1.8m.

Action
Path to be surfaced in next few weeks

Tubney Fen progress report gates and mounting blocks.
The group was informed that work was underway and should be completed in the next couple of weeks. A choice of routes across Tubney suggested as a way of providing options if the cattle are on the site. Also discussion about whether access to the bird hide would be cattle proof, it was confirmed that the hide would be fenced around.

Feedback from Transport Strategy
Chris outlined the discussion that took place at the meeting that was held to seek views of local people on the transport strategy and circulated copies of the points raised at that meeting.

Action
The completed Strategy should be available by the end of April – copies would be distributed to members of the UG.

Burwell Fen wetting project
The plans for rewetting the fen were presented and discussed by the group.

Points raised by forum members

Barry
Concerned that the cows may chase his dog.
Also concerned about the state of Harrison’s drove – belief was that the NT vehicles are making it worse.

After meeting note
The Environment Agency have taken a large tractor and cutter up the Drove and along Wicken Lode Bank

Action
David to contact the EA and express concern

Martin
Horseriders cantering on the waterproof bank are scaring the birdlife, last weekend he was walking the route and a horse cantered past setting up all the birds from each water area it passed. He posed the question, when we have surfaced the Guinea Hall path should we not close off the water proof bank to horseriders?
Neil
Noted that there will always be a conflict between recreational use of a site and wildlife so it is important to have non-access areas. Also that Bakers Fen is an important bird area.

David (R)
Stated that a report on the Orwell concerning recreation and wildlife had been produced and would be worth looking at.

Francis
Asked why the Viridor Walk leaflet was from the Fen and didn’t show links into the local villages? This was at the request of local people who didn’t want parking encouraged in the villages.

Raised on behalf of Jill (Cambridge Ramblers)
Can we have kissing gates rather than stiles, though this may not be a problem on NT land.
Can we have more seats and benches?
Can waymarking be improved; again this may not be an issue on NT land?
Cambridge Ramblers keen to be more involved.

Action David to contact Jill to discuss ways in which CRs can be involved

Date of next meeting
Thursday 4 June 7.00pm
Meeting between the NT and FBA
Friday 16 January 2009

Present:
David Dench
Chris Soans
John Colvill
Barry Garwood
Joy Fuller
Emma
Hilary Fielding
Zena Knight

Hurdle Hall link
This track has been fenced off from the rest of the field and a culvert has been installed on to the Reach Lode underbank. The surface is rough at present. John offered to cultivate the track. There is a wire stay from the electricity pylon running across the track which requires marking.

Action
John to run a set of cultivators across the track.
NT to mark the wire stay with a casing in high visibility colours.

Reach Lode Bank
Horses being tethered on the Lode bank are making it difficult for horse users to pass. This is an issue for the County Council ROW dept.

Action
NT to supply contact details for the ROW Officer.
FBA to contact the ROW Officer.

The County Council Officer managing the paths in this area is, John Cooper telephone 01223 715 633

White Fen
The meeting was informed that it is still intended that the County Council will adopt the Bridleway across the Fen and the maintenance of the bridge. The NT is seeking written confirmation that the County Council are happy with the proposal to allow horse and cart access across the bridge. Once this is in place we can replace the bollards with removable bollards.

Action
NT to progress the adoption of the bridleway with the County Council and pursue a permissive agreement for horse drawn carts.

Tubney Fen
It was reported that the additional gates and improved mounting blocks will be constructed as agreed through the Users Forum. Hilary asked if cart users could be given access when the cattle are not on the fen. It was agreed that this could happen and be reviewed at the end of the
season. An agreement will be drawn up based on the White Fen agreement (when the Council have sent it across to the NT)

**Action**

**Mounting blocks to be installed and additional gates to be installed.**

**Reach Bridge.**
The meeting was updated on the progress with this so far. Once the plans are nearing the final stage they will be sent to the Parish Councils for comment and also taken to the User groups Forum.

**Guinea Hall cycle path**
DD to supply JC with designs for corral gating system and when the design has been agreed this will be installed by Guinea Hall Barn to allow the option for people to ride or walk the circuit using the perimeter track around Guinea Hall.
The Cycle route across Guinea Hall will be surfaced in the near future.
We will look at options for bridges etc as per User groups Forum notes.

**Water Proof bank**
Can the gates be widened to make access across the animal track easier?

**Action**
NT to consider options

**Burwell Fen**
A discussion was had on access on to and around Burwell Fen. The NT informed the group that it was keen to leave as large an area as possible with minimum access to create a large area with minimum disturbance for wildlife in particular water fowl.

The following items were agreed.
- **Lode banks**
  Once Tubney works have been completed successfully the designs for the mounting blocks can be used again here to facilitate easy access to the lode banks by horse riders
- **Spine route**
The spine route will run across from Reach Lode to Burwell Lode this will be an access track for people on foot, cycle and horse and will follow the route of Hundred Acre Drove as marked on the map produced by Barry. When this is built it will also include an access point on to Newnham Drove.
- **Path from Newnham Drove to Lodeside Drove**
This is across NT land and there is already a culvert in place. It was agreed that a couple of step over stiles could be put in across the fences to enable people to walk the route if they desired.
• It was agreed that no access would be promoted through the centre of Burwell Fen Farm though people would not be stopped from entering the area. This would enable wildlife to have a large refuge area away from disturbance by people.

Burwell Underbank Drove

The FBA asked about access to use the Burwell Lode bank / underbank between Burwell High Lift Bridge and the Upware Cockup bridge for horse riding. As this land is owned and managed by the EA. It would be best if they were contacted by the FBA

The person to contact at the EA is:

George Shelton
Regional Estates Manager
Kingfisher House
Goldhay Way,
Orton Goldhay,
Peterborough,
PE2 5ZR

Car Parks and Parking

This issue was raised including the request for horsebox parking. The NT are in the process of collecting information to produce a Transport Strategy for the Vision area and all these points will be discussed as part of this process.

Waterbeach

Chris explained issues at present.
Emma offered help in lobbying PC if required.
Joint National Trust & Parish Councils Meeting

Thursday 26 February 2009 at 7.30pm at Wicken Fen, Wicken

AGENDA

1. Introductions

2. Apologies for absence

3. Andrew Powell the independent chair of the new Users Forum to give a brief summary of the Users forum, how it operates and how parishes can feed into it.

4. NT projects update:
   - Sustrans Connect2 cycle route: Reach Bridge, Burwell Bridge and new cycle paths.
   - Adoption of routes by CCC, and new permitted Cart routes.
   - Burwell Fen, wetland project.
   - Re-wetting of Sedge Fen.
   - New bird watching hide on Tubney Mere.
   - General update on other land holdings.
   - Visitor Travel Plan.
   - Community engagement update.
   - Wicken Fen’s 110th Birthday in May.

5. Review of previous Notes

6. Other Useful Information

7. Date of Next Meeting
Notes of Meeting between Parish Councils and National Trust held on Monday 21 April 2008 at the Wren Building, Wicken Fen, Wicken

Attendees: Philip Broadbent-Yale (NT)
John Covill (Swaffham Prior PC)
Chris Soans (NT)
Geoffrey Woollard (Swaffham Prior PC)
Ross Chilers (IDB)
Phil Dean (Lode PC)
Liz Houghton (Wicken PC) (Chair)
Loder Bevington (Swaffham Bulbeck PC)
Peter Fuller (Wicken PC)
Peter Johnson (Waterbeach PC)
Michael Aves (Reach PC)
Jonathan Lewis-Jones (Waterbeach PC)
Sylvia Durrant (Burwell PC)

Apologies: Gill Butler (Quy PC), Charles Jones (Fen Ditton PC), Jon Megginson (NT)

1. Introductions

Members of Waterbeach PC were welcomed to the meeting.

2. Car Parking

There was considerable discussion around this point with varying views. The need for a strategy covering the next 10-20 years with flexibility for the future was the main concern. The general view was that the Vision Area should be as car free as possible. Points made were:

- PCs are already seeing an increase in cars parked within the proposed Vision Area.
- Park & Ride in reverse fashion. Bus system to key access points. Create a circuit bus.
- Rail network to be used to bring people and cyclists in from Waterbeach, Cambridge and Ely. However, the Waterbeach & Ely railway station car parks are already full as is the IDB car park at Bottisham Lock.
- Existing car parks at Anglesey Abbey and Wicken Fen. The Lode car park is being extended by 200 spaces. The NT believes these 2 car parks are sufficient for now as they are not expecting to see massive increases in the short term. Wicken & Lode PCs are both concerned at increased traffic and wish to see additional car parks in other locations for visitors to take pressure off.
- The use of Environment Agency car parks should be investigated.
- Other car parks exist already in villages.
- Possible new car park on new land at Tubney & Lode Fen.
Swaffham Prior PC and Reach PCs expressed strong concerns at increased onstreet parking in their villages and the detrimental effect this will have. Also very concerned at increased off-road parking in the Fen area.

River transport should be investigated.

Overall the view was that it is imperative to encourage and develop public transport arrangements that discourage car usage. Traffic surveys can be implemented to monitor.

3. Date of Next Meeting

Due to the size of the meeting it is proving difficult to agree a date. The Chair agreed to propose a future date.

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**Attendees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jon Megginson (JM)</th>
<th>National Trust (Chair)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nigel Brigham (NB)</td>
<td>Regional Manager Sustrans (Vice Chair)</td>
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<td>David Smith (DS)</td>
<td>Environment Agency, Ely</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Dyke (JD)</td>
<td>Environment Agency, Ely</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rohan Wilson (RW)</td>
<td>Sustrans Cambs Development Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adrian Wright (AW)</td>
<td>Waterbeach PC</td>
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<td>Joan Lonsdale (JL)</td>
<td>Burwell PC Chairman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Duthie (PD)</td>
<td>Cambs County Council – Rights of Way Team</td>
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<td>Patrick Joyce (PJ)</td>
<td>Cambs County Council – County Cycling Officer</td>
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<td>Mike Causer (MC)</td>
<td>Cambridge Cycling Campaign</td>
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<td>Alan Lamb</td>
<td>Lode PC Chairman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlie Rickard</td>
<td>Lode PC</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Covill</td>
<td>Swaffham Prior PC Chairman, Fenland Bridleways Association</td>
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**Apologies**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Giles Merritt (GM)</th>
<th>Natural England, Swaffham Bulbeck PC</th>
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<tr>
<td>John Adams (JA)</td>
<td>Ex Environment Agency Waterways Sustrans Warden Waterbeach</td>
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<td>Oliver Merrington</td>
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<td>Howard Cooper (HC)</td>
<td>National Trust (Secretary)</td>
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**Agenda Item**

| The meeting welcomed Charlie Rickard from Lode Parish Council who has joined the Steering Group. His contact details are charlierrickard@btinternet.com; |  |

**Agenda Item 6 - page 25**
Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 17 September 2008 were noted.

Matters arising

Re Lode

The proposals for reduction in the No 10 bus service were discussed together with the planning application for the proposed new car park opposite Anglesey Abbey.

Lode Parish Council had expressed their dismay to the Bus company and it was reported that the bus service was being retained in its current service levels for at least six months. Concerns were also expressed about the possible removal of the central road “refuge” if the new car park for Anglesey Abbey is created. It was understood that a toucan crossing could replace it. A new bus stop flag is needed opposite the shelter at Anglesey Abbey, the new stopping point for the bus.

Sustainable Visitor Transport Plan

JM reported progress on the production of a long term Visitor Travel Plan for the Wicken Fen Vision area. Tenders from consultants were due and a panel will be evaluating these on Tuesday 25th November.

The appointed consultant will be holding a “workshop” in early 2009 to look at all the options and discuss community involvement in sustainable transport issues across the Vision. All members of this Steering group will be invited to the workshop and the Steering group will also receive progress reports on the progress of the Plan.

Local User Group Forum

As a result of the ongoing consultation over the Wicken Fen Vision, it had been agreed that a User Forum would be set up to discuss issues and concerns. It will hold its inaugural meeting on Thursday 11 December at 5.30pm at Wicken Fen Visitor Centre. The next issue of “News from the Fen”, due shortly, will include a front page feature about the Local User Group including meeting details.

For further detail please contact
David Dench at National Trust Wicken Fen
01353 720274
4. Update on funding secured for access work

4.1 Sustrans/ Big Lottery Connect2 Funding £600k from April 2008

The Memorandum of Understanding is close to being signed by both parties

JM briefly reviewed the principal core and aspirational links planned for the Spine Path and network. PJ thought that the term “aspiration” seemed rather weak: JM explained that “core” and “aspirational” were terms agreed between the Big Lottery and Sustrans, that the completion of the core links was essential to release the funding, and that the NT has every intention, using Connect2 or other funding, to complete the “aspirational” links at some time in the near or medium term.

JM spoke of Community Involvement, an integral part of the Connect2 scheme. The Steering Group and User Forum form the initial phase, Community Wardens will be appointed and public events will be organised to raise awareness of the developing route. The first event will be in spring or early summer 2009.

4.2 Housing Growth Fund Years 1 and 2

The £216K for Year 1 (i.e. 2008/09) will be spent on the Waterbeach station – Bottisham Lock section, and next year’s provisional funding of £116K will be used for works at the Lock and as far as Bottisham Lode. A question was raised as to the Government’s current intentions of increased public spending to boost economic growth, and the possible benefits for the project. There is no certainty as yet over this prospect.

4.3 East Cambridgeshire Local Strategic Partnership Fund

The Spine route bid for funding to East Cambs has been declined. This bid would have helped with the Burwell Bridge crossing. Other very worthwhile projects have made use of the available funding.

4.4 The Environment Agency

A small grants fund administered from Brampton office by Kru Doshie has delivered £10K for spending this year for improvements to the link from Burwell Lode to Wicken Lode.
### 4.5 EU Interreg
The NT has received £250K for eco-hydrology work in the area of Wicken Fen, which includes the construction of new earth bunds at Burwell Fen Farm that will also be used for the Spine Cycle Route.

### 4.6 Viridor
This waste management company based in Suffolk has provided a major grant of £460K. Some £300k of this funding has been used to purchase farmland from the County Council for associated rights of way work at Hurdle Hall, the remainder will be used in conjunction with EU Interreg finance for the ongoing water level and habitat management across Burwell Fen.

### 4.7 Fens Adventurers Partnership
This Local Action Group has won £4million from EEDA to promote rural businesses in the South Fens, including eco-tourism. The Trust is bidding jointly with WWT and RSPB for promotional and project work associated with tourism development on or associated with their sites.

### 4.8 Natural England (Higher Level Stewardship)
The NT’s March bid for conservation work in a wide area of Wicken Fen, including improvements to the Burwell Lode lifting bridge (for land management access, but opening the Spine Route) is still undetermined.

### 5. Review of routes, discussion on progress
Discussion took place using copies of a large-scale project map and agenda pages.

#### A1-8 Waterbeach Station – Bottisham Lock
JM reported the issues raised at the Waterbeach Parish Council October meeting, and provided copies of the extract from the minutes, together with a detailed email of points raised by local farmer David Smart particularly as it applied to the proposals for Burgess Drove. It was possible to alter the design of the surfacing and width of the track to take these into account. Lockable bollards at two locations would allow access by farmers and adjacent land occupiers but cut off any abuse of the road by motorised vehicles. Motor usage from the Burgess Road properties would use the manual railway crossing as at present.

A discussion as to the best way to secure cycle access followed – since it was considered very unsafe to create a bridleway using the crossing. The landowner at the southern end of Burgess Drove would be approached to consider whether he would consider allowing the dedication of a bridleway link to the riverside bridleway. If this were not forthcoming then creating a bridleway along Burgess Drove would be to a dead-end and County Council...
Rights Of Way team would not find acceptable. The advice was therefore that the creation of a public footpath, with permissive cycle rights (as in the proposed section between Burgess Road and Waterbeach Station) would be the more practical option. It appeared that no one claims ownership of the Drove, so the source of the permissive cycle rights or their withdrawal would remain indeterminate.

A hardened surface of 3.5 metres width, leaving slubbing margins for IDB ditch clearance was the favoured design. One of the adjacent landowners had in fact asked for much narrower hard surface.

The ongoing maintenance responsibility for the track remains an issue. The County Council Highways (Phil Crack) had confirmed that the track would not be adopted as a public highway and would not therefore be eligible for any of the limited funding available for rural road maintenance. With the bollards in place the only users of heavy vehicles would be the adjacent arable farmers. The suggestion was made that provided the new track was constructed well and that adequate material was provided in a local yard to make good any deterioration from agricultural usage, then this was not going to be such an intractable issue.

Negotiation with Network Rail for the route through their northern yard is proceeding. Sustrans will be undertaking the risk assessment referred to by the Waterbeach Parish Council.

The other points made in David Smart’s email were being taken forward in the ongoing negotiations between tenant and landlord of the Charity Field. JM confirmed that the water trough and connection provision can be achieved following a conversation with the Cambridge Water Company.

**B1 Bottisham Lock** Waterbeach IDB own the car park area, where the surface would be improved, and a ramp laid up the side of the adjacent bank. To create ramped access to and between the two bridges their original fabricator has returned a competitive quote which was recommended for acceptance. It would not be realistic to widen the bridges, which means they would remain unsuitable for equestrian use. Works access could be mainly by river from Clayhithe, using a Cam Conservators’ barge. The EA would continue maintaining the new structures, as now. Work would need to meet EA requirements. A detailed design and applications for permission will now be produced by the chosen bridge fabricator. The EA will be looking into the issue of how VAT can be dealt with in the final contract.
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<th>B2, 3 etc Bottisham Lode to Anglesey Abbey</th>
<th>JM</th>
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<td>JM outlined the various route options, each needing landowner agreement, of which the most likely would use the road at the foot of the northeast bank and across Fen Farm land adjacent to the Lode, and requiring two footbridges. Under this scenario the footpath through the residence garden could be extinguished and simultaneously created on the new alignment.</td>
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<th>B12 Bottisham Lode to Swaffham Bulbeck Lode bridge</th>
<th>JM/PJ</th>
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<td>A short report on the condition of this track was considered. The concrete track (White Fen Drove) is mostly in reasonable condition but the gaps in the concrete base, with ridges of tarmac, make cycling very uncomfortable. The most practical way to improve this appears to be to plane off the tarmac top layer, patch the concrete and the gaps where necessary, and re-finish with tar and gravel. A County Council maintenance engineer will be asked by PJ to visit and consider the most suitable treatment.</td>
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<th>B15 Private track (circular route north of Lode)</th>
<th>JM</th>
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<td>The adjacent landowner would welcome improvements to this track which also has the backing of the County Council Rights of Way team and support from the Lode PC representatives, and JM was asked to proceed with negotiation.</td>
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<th>B19 Baitsbite Lock crossing</th>
<th>NT</th>
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<td>The Local Strategic Partnership seems likely to support improvements to the route from Horningsea Road, including ramps to the lock bridge, and negotiation is progressing. Horningsea Parish Council is in contact with the County for cycle provision alongside the road to Fen Ditton, and this would be another useful route for the Project.</td>
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<tr>
<th>C1 etc Swaffham Bulbeck Lode to Reach Lode</th>
<th>EA/IDB</th>
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<td>Mostly on road, with a short length needing construction south of Reach Lode.</td>
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<th>D1 Reach Lode bridge crossing</th>
<th>EA/JM</th>
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<td>Royal Haskoning have been appointed to look at the design of the major bridge across Reach Lode, to produce plans by 1 December for local consultation, and to be seen on 15 December by the NT’s architectural panel. JM showed a sketch of an arched bridge to give 3m headroom for navigation and 5m wide for shared use with equestrians. It was suggested by JC that a more attractive parapet and protective railing designs would be preferred. Ongoing consultation over the proposals will follow with local communities and through the formal planning process.</td>
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Agenda Item 6 - page 30
D2 – D6 Burwell Fen Farm to Burwell
This low-lying fen area is to become a new wetland, with investigations also being considered over extending some of the north western area used for flood protection. Bunds will be built to keep floodwater from the lode banks, and an eastern bund would carry the Spine Route. Detailed discussions are proceeding with the EA and local IDB.

EA/JM

E1 Burwell Lode bridge crossing
Severe health and safety issues with the proposal to keep the lifting bridge in the open (lowered) position, to then be opened by the occasional visiting boat users have been identified by the EA. This has led to the proposal that a new arched bridge, similar to that planned for Reach Lode, should carry the Spine Route and animals and agricultural vehicles. A feasibility study will need to be commissioned as to how this might be achieved. The EA are being approached to help with this.

PJ

RW

E2 etc Burwell Lode – Wicken – Ely
Route to be resurfaced and in part widened to Monks Lode, and the kissing gates removed. This is to be funded by EA grant in Jan/March 2009.

A10 etc A future Cam crossing at Upware
It was mentioned by AW that as part of Cambridge University’s 800th anniversary celebrations the Bishop of Ely and the University Vice-Chancellor will meet at Upware following on a walk from the two cities. This seemed an opportunity to generate public awareness and support for a bridge crossing which remains in the County ROWIP. PJ to let Kate Day know of the impending meeting.

Progress on route evaluation and monitoring
Sustrans has funding for surveys of walking and cycling usage in the project area, before and after construction. RW and JM have identified possible survey locations, RW to discuss appropriate work with Sustrans’ Route Monitoring Unit.

Dates of Subsequent Meetings (venues to be confirmed)

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>11th February</td>
<td>2.00 pm</td>
<td>Wicken Fen tbc, may now include for workshop on sustainable Visitor travel plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>13th May</td>
<td>2.00 pm</td>
<td>Environment Agency, Ely</td>
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<td>15th July</td>
<td>2.00 pm</td>
<td>Reach</td>
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<tr>
<td>16th September</td>
<td>2.00 pm</td>
<td>Anglesey Abbey</td>
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Cllr Peter Moakes  
43 Chelmer Way  
Ely  
Cambs  
CB6 2WS  

15th January 2009

Dear Peter,

I thought I would take this opportunity to write to you, as a Cambridgeshire Horizons Board Member and as Deputy Leader of East Cambridgeshire District Council regarding the National Trust’s Wicken Fen Vision project.

As you are aware, Cambridgeshire Horizons has supported the Wicken Fen Vision because of the contribution we believe it can make to delivering sustainable communities in Cambridgeshire. In particular there are real benefits in extending publicly accessible and high quality green space as compensation for the loss of some green space elsewhere in the county as more housing comes forward, as well as the biodiversity and “carbon sink” (or “sequestration”) benefits the project can deliver. We continue to work closely with the National Trust, who have been active participants in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Forum, which is led by John Onslow.

We hope that the Wicken Fen Vision will, over time, become one of the most exciting projects of its kind in the UK, and a real asset for East Cambridgeshire, the wider County and region. Providing public access is at the heart of the Wicken Fen Vision, which has been included in the Horizons Business Plan, your own 2008 Corporate Plan, and the Government’s Regional Spatial Strategy as a focus for the provision of green infrastructure.

I understand from my discussions with your Leader before Christmas that East Cambridgeshire District Council has, perfectly understandably, decided to reserve support for Wicken Fen in order to ensure that the interests of local residents, the farming community and countryside user groups are heard.

I thought it would therefore be useful to write in response to some of those concerns and to offer the assistance of Cambridgeshire Horizons in working together with you and the National Trust to resolve them.

I understand that taking land out of cultivation is an emotive issue. However, the total area of land within the Vision used for agriculture is a tiny percentage of land under cultivation in the UK and not all of it is currently used for food production. Even if the Vision blueprint is completely enacted, much of the land would still be productive, albeit in different ways (some examples being the production of willow coppice for fuel, reed for thatching, meat from grazing animals and hay meadows).
The current practice of draining the land for cultivation inevitably leads to erosion of the peat soils, losing a depth of approximately 1cm per annum. At this rate the peat will be seriously depleted within 50 years, reducing the ability of the land to support productive agriculture, and making it harder to restore the peat over time to play a greater role as a carbon sink.

Additionally, peat soils contain large vast amounts of carbon, and when they are farmed this is released into the atmosphere so contributing to climate change. Protecting peat soils will therefore help reduce carbon emissions in two ways.

As I understand it, any land acquisition by the National Trust is dependent upon a voluntary decision by the landowner to negotiate a sale, and the Trust being able to secure funds to purchase the land whether by public donation or grant. The Trust does not have powers of compulsory purchase and so if landowners do not wish to sell their land then they cannot be compelled to do so by the National Trust.

I gather that the National Trust is aware of residents’ concerns that increased visitor numbers could lead to traffic congestion and parking difficulties in the villages surrounding the Vision area. As a first step the Trust is seeking to engage transport consultants to assess predicted visitor flows, traffic management and options for sustainable transport. I would expect this work to also be the subject of consultation with local residents.

The anticipated increase in visitors to the Vision area will also of course provide new economic opportunities for local communities that are in keeping with the character of the villages adjacent to the Vision area. It is also expected that additional employment will be created by the Trust in areas such as visitor services, land and property management, cycle hire and camping facilities.

Finally, I understand that the National Trust has not, nor is it advocating that the Lodes should be lowered, removed or abandoned and that they have sought to re-affirm this throughout their consultation processes to date.

I would welcome discussions with you about how Cambridgeshire Horizons can work with East Cambridgeshire District Council and the National Trust to address the concerns that local residents may have so that we can deliver what I believe is an ambitious and visionary project with far-reaching benefits, but to do so in a way that works best for existing residents, farmers and other stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Plant
Chief Executive