

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Biodiversity Partnership

Update 2010



Introduction from the chair



Welcome to the 2010 Biodiversity partnership report. It is high time for an update, as it has been quiet for a while and lots of good work has taken place! 2010 has been one of the most important years for biodiversity. International targets to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 have not been met, in spite of some successes. Business as usual continues in too many places with society and unsustainable economic activity that fails to properly account for the true costs of environmental degradation continuing apace. In parts of China, fruit crops now have to be hand pollinated by people because insect and bumble bee populations have been wiped out. Yet it is not just far flung places of the world where this is happening. Bumblebee and insect populations are continuing to decline in England. The decline in farmland birds has yet to be reversed. Can you imagine large amounts of cheap labour hand pollinating our crops in Cambridgeshire?

Yet, there is always hope and we can all take positive action to halt and then reverse the decline in wildlife. In Cambridgeshire, the adoption of the local biodiversity indicator has resulted in significant progress with over half of our local Wildlife Sites now in positive management, compared with only a third before the indicator was adopted. Farmers are starting to include higher quality habitats such as nectar strips and bird cover crops within their farms, though much more is required. Most major developments in Cambridgeshire have significant green infrastructure and habitat creation included within their proposals. Major habitat creation initiatives with economic and social benefits are progressing at the Great Fen and Wicken Fen. This report provides a summary of some of the positive actions taking place locally.

We may be moving into a time of relative austerity, yet work to protect and enhance our environment invariably provides good value for money and wildlife conservation action has the potential to provide good news stories and a feel good factor in the hard times. Nature conservation is not a luxury, it is essential to and underpins our whole way of life.

Therefore I encourage all of you in both your personal and professional lives to take action for wildlife and continue to support local wildlife conservation initiatives. I wish you an enjoyable read and hope you will get inspired to see where you and your organisation could get involved and further the work of the Biodiversity Partnership in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough.

Chair of the Biodiversity Partnership

If you want to find out more about our work, please get in touch:
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Biodiversity Partnership Work

Our Natural Environment 2010 - report for key decision makers

The Biodiversity Partnership teamed up with the Environmental Records Centre to collate facts and figures on the natural environment in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and produced "Our Natural Environment 2010", a document for key decision makers in our area, looking at designated sites, area of Biodiversity Action Plan habitat, species trends, wider landscape activity in terms of agri-environment and woodland grant uptake and water quality, and also public participation in terms of visitor numbers at reserves and volunteering in nature conservation.



A small taster of the findings: There is good uptake across the whole area of agri-environment schemes and woodland grant schemes, encouraging biodiversity-friendly land management. None of the districts provides sufficient area of Local Nature Reserves as recommended by Natural England, but Peterborough comes closest. On the positive side, there is good public participation in nature conservation projects across the whole area. It is planned to produce a similar report again in two years' time to see where trends are going.

An electronic copy of the report is available for download from <http://www.cpbiodiversity.org.uk/publications.php>, go to Biodiversity Partnership reports.

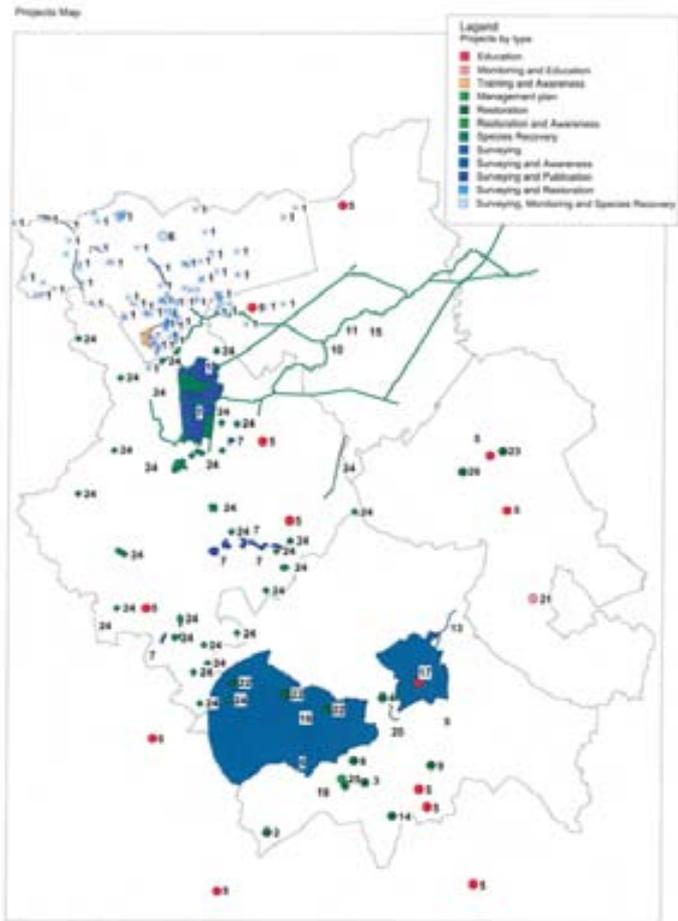
Biodiversity Partnership small projects fund great success over last 4 years

Graduate student Alice Ward-Francis spent some time volunteering with the Biodiversity Partnership and carried out an analysis of our small projects fund over the last 4 years. A 16 page report sums up which Biodiversity Action plans were covered in the projects we supported, what kind of conservation actions were funded, how the projects were spread geographically, how much money we spent on projects and how much other funding these projects attracted.

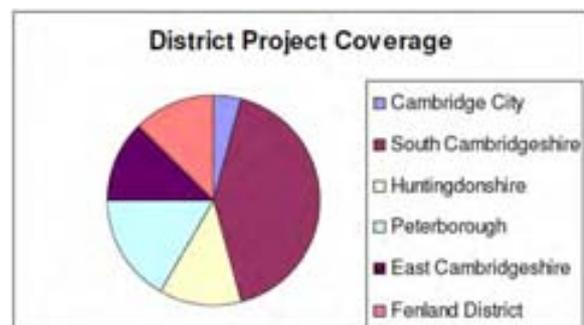
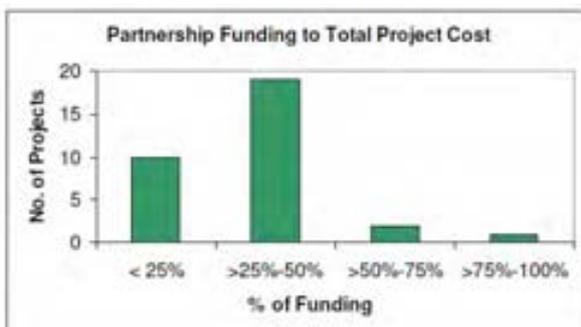
32 projects were supported from 2006-2010. The biggest focus of projects were habitat restoration, surveying/monitoring and publication/awareness. The majority of projects focused on habitats, with grassland and wetland habitats having the highest number of projects. Some projects had a species focus, e.g. on water voles, otters, moths, and many habitat projects had also species benefits. Geographically, South Cambridgeshire had the most projects. Relating project numbers to district size, particularly Huntingdonshire would benefit from more projects to achieve a more even geographical spread.

The partnership contributed a total of over £50,000 during the last 4 years, and the 32 projects secured a total of over £500,000 from additional funding sources. In some cases, additional funding was enabled by the

partnership funding. For the future, the report recommends to target Urban BAPs and Woodland BAPs, and to work jointly with the Environmental Records Centre and species groups on species related projects. The report is available at www.cpbiodiversity.org.uk/publications.php



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Examples of funded projects across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

River Cam Restoration in South Cambridgeshire: Increasing biodiversity and improving flood control

In South Cambridgeshire, an exciting project to restore over 1.5km stretch of the River Cam was completed in October 2009. The Biodiversity Partnership grant contributed to a much bigger project with funding received from Housing Growth Fund, Environment Agency, Wild Trout Trust, Cam Valley Forum, and our grant helped to make this a bigger scale project than otherwise possible. The restoration work included creating 8 gravel shoals to enhance the river's flow to increase biodiversity and encourage wildlife. River banks were re-graded to enable safe public access to certain sections of the river and to protect more sensitive sites. Tree roots were used to create flow deflectors to reduce siltation and to provide fish cover and habitat.

An important element of the project was ditch restoration and the selective removal of flood levees to control flooding and high water levels along the River Cam. A 1 km ditch



River Cam Work and Flooded Meadow;
Photos Rob Mungovan

system was restored, reconnecting the river to a flood meadow in the river's floodplain to improve flood water flows. During recent local flood events, the results of the restoration work were tested and the constructed ditch system and restored flood meadow filled perfectly, with adjacent land experiencing reduced flood levels. The breaches made in the levees were seemingly easing the flood pressures elsewhere in the local catchment. The project had created areas to protect fish species during river flooding and during the flood no fish were found trapped on the flood meadow.



The Plight of the Bumblebee – Cambridge Bumblebee Survey

Bumblebees have been declining nationally for many years. The main cause of population decline has been due to the destruction and fragmentation of essential habitat and the intensification of farming, so that urban sites and particularly gardens have now become essential habitat for bumblebees. They are important pollinators for many wild flower species, commercial crops and garden plants.

This project, funded by the partnership and Cambridge Sustainable City, highlighted the importance of bumblebees, and raised awareness of what can be done to preserve local populations of bumblebees and of their importance in the urban environment of Cambridge. Bumblebee counts and identification surveys were carried out in urban areas such as gardens, parks and allotments by volunteers from the general public throughout the city of Cambridge. This highlighted those sites within the city which support important populations or species of bumblebee and to ensure that suitable habitat management is carried out or continued.



Surveying for bumblebees;
Photo Ian Webb

Bumblebee Gardening Tips

1. Plant a variety of species with different flowering times to provide nectar and pollen at different times of year
2. Avoid using pesticides
3. Leave a log pile or compost heap as an undisturbed place for bees to nest or to hibernate in the winter

Hedgerow Planting in Peterborough district



Ufford Hedgerow planting; Photo Frieda Gosling

Hedgerows provide important natural resources for wildlife including shelter, nesting sites, food and refuge. They provide connectivity and linkages between existing wildlife sites, act as windbreaks and can also intercept chemical sprays from fields drifting on to wildflower rich road verges.

The verges and remaining hedgerows to the east of Ufford parish are particularly important and as such are designated as a County Wildlife Site. However, hedgerows were found to be in a poor state with many gaps and several fields with no hedges at all. Ufford Parish Council's hedge planting project went ahead with funding from the Biodiversity Partnership. The overall objective was a continuous hedge line behind the verges on both sides of the road east of Ufford to the parish boundary.

Altogether over 2,000 locally sourced native hedge plants were planted which included hawthorn, hazel, blackthorn, wild privet, crab apple and wild rose. Since then, Ufford parish secured more funds for hedge planting from other sources to carry on with improving the parish hedgerows.

Middle Level Otter and Water Vole recovery projects in the Fenland Drainage Ditches

Over the last 3 years, the Middle Level Commissioners have carried out habitat improvements for water voles and otters. The main funding for the Otter recovery project has come from SITA Trust, and from Biffawards for the Water Vole recovery project. The Biodiversity Partnership's contribution enabled more enhancements to be delivered for both species. Both projects are now in their final year. So far, 35 artificial otter holts have been built, and some fitted with infrared cameras. Otter numbers have increased across the middle level system, as a bridge survey in 2009 revealed. Water vole habitat has been provided by establishing pre-planted coir rolls on the banks. Another part of the water vole project is to hire out mink traps to local landowners to control the American mink, a non native species that decimated water vole populations. Water vole populations are being monitored with indicator rafts.



Water Vole on indicator raft



Coir roll planting in flower



Artificial otter holt construction; Photos Cliff Carson

Managing Dutch Elm in Huntingdonshire district for the White Spotted Pinion Moth

This exciting project started in spring 2010. Cambridgeshire is the national stronghold for White-spotted Pinion which has seen a 90% decline elsewhere in the UK due to Dutch elm disease. There are pockets of mature elm trees which appear to still be unaffected by the disease in Cambridgeshire while all the trees around them have died. The project will enhance the status of White-spotted Pinion, a UKBAP Priority species in Cambridgeshire, and improve and extend habitat for elm in hedgerows and small woodlands, which is also beneficial for other butterfly species.

There have been some great results from the White-spotted Pinion surveys in Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire so far, with 17 positive records and 10 new locations for the moth confirmed. The next stage of the project will be to work with local groups and landowners to plant new stands of elm using suckers obtained from healthy mature stands of Cambridgeshire elms or trees grown from Cambridgeshire stock.



White Spotted Pinion on Elm leaf;
Photo Nick Greatorex-Davies



White Spotted Pinion moths in moth traps; Photo Sharon Hearle

Pauline's Swamp in East Cambridgeshire

Pauline's Swamp is an important site for wildlife within the county and is designated as a County Wildlife Site. The area has a diverse mosaic of fen meadow habitat with a number of ponds, hedgerows and woodland. The site had been managed inappropriately and its full value as a local recreational area had not been realized. The partnership backed parish plans to positively manage the site through seasonal grazing, scrub clearance, retaining fallen and standing wood to benefit wildlife and hedge maintenance. The site was also surveyed for wildlife to enable appropriate actions for habitat enhancement for species. To develop the Swamp's as an educational resource and local recreational area the project raised awareness of the site, improved access and created teaching materials.



Sheep grazing at Pauline's Swamp; Photo Laura Watson

Countywide Pond Restoration Project – update

The Biodiversity Projects Group identified Pond Restoration as a priority project in our area. Froglife together with input from FWAG and the Biological Records Centre carried out an assessment of existing biodiversity ponds and associated species records. The sites highlighted in there are currently being checked by district contacts and prioritised according to certain criteria. The Pond Assessment study is a valuable piece of work in its own right, but it will also form the basis of selecting sites for pond restoration.



Pond in need of restoration Norwood Nature Reserve;
Photo Wildlife Trust

Over the past year, a pond sub-group of the partnership has been developing a pond project to restore 30 ponds across Cambridgeshire, including surveys, landowner and community involvement, and guidance for the long-term aftercare for community groups and landowners. A lot of work has gone into developing the bid, identifying and surveying initial restoration sites and liaising with partners. A bid was put forward to SITA trust, but sadly, we weren't successful, down to unfortunate circumstances, amongst them the fact that there wasn't enough money left in the funding pot. Our aim is now to put forward an improved bid, with selected pond sites, to other funders. We are also exploring to take forward the restoration of individual ponds through individual funding schemes.

Orchard activities: from apples and plums to lichens, mosses, birds and butterflies

Cambridgeshire Orchard Group (COG) has been very busy since securing about £20,000 Countdown 2010 funds as part of an England-wide Orchard project, led by the National Trust. With these funds, COG funded a Phase 3 Survey of the most promising orchards, Orchard workshops for individuals and community groups, two Plum Week-Ends in 2009 and 2010 in Huntingdonshire, and support for a community orchard project in Great Gransden and District.

Plum Week-End 2010 was a very successful event, with even more orchards and venues involved than in 2009. The villages of Colne, Somersham and Bluntisham had about 2000 visitors on each week-end day in 2010, and guests had an opportunity to appreciate and learn more about these delightful orchards that were once the economic basis for these villages, while picking plums, enjoying plum related produce and taking part in a huge range of activities.



Orchard Creation workshop at Little Downham; Photo Fabiola Blum

Bob Lever from East of England Apples and Orchards Project delivered 5 **orchard workshops** in 2009/2010, focused on orchard restoration or creation. Participants were inspired to start new plantings or restore existing orchards, and several groups have taken the next steps to start a community orchard project since, e.g. in Manea parish. Great Gransden and District Community Orchard planted about fruit 60 trees.

Phase 3 Surveys concentrated on the following groups: mosses, lichens, birds, butterflies, bats. More surveys are still planned for deadwood invertebrates and fungi. Val Perrin is collating the various Phase 3 Survey results and envisages to write a summary report in 2011.

Following on from the roadside Phase 1 orchard survey in 2005, COG finished the **Phase 2 Survey**. On the basis of the Phase 2 Survey results, the orchard group identified about 30 sites with potential of becoming **County Wildlife Sites**. These sites will be put forward to the County Wildlife Sites panel in this and the consecutive year.



Plum Week-End 2010: Guided Orchard Walk in Colne, Plum Identification in Bluntisham; Photos Warren Trotter



More information

- Phase 2 and Phase 3 survey: Valperrin@aol.com; Phase 2 report available on <http://www.cpbiodiversity.org.uk/publications.php>.
- East of England Apple and Orchards Project: www.applesandorchards.org.uk/
- National Trust Countdown 2010 project and national orchard work: www.orchardnetwork.org.uk



**ORCHARD
NETWORK**

New Biodiversity Partnership website

Biodiversity Partnership volunteer Rob Calvert re-vamped the partnership's website design this year. Meanwhile, he is running his own web design company Green Shoots Design, together with his colleague Stuart Bates. Check out the new website on www.cpbiodiversity.org.uk

Local Area Agreement and Local Strategic Partnerships

The National indicator NI 197 on Local Biodiversity was chosen as an improvement indicator in Cambridgeshire for the period of 2008-2011, and as a local indicator in Peterborough. In the first two years, the targets for positive conservation action on County and City Wildlife Sites (CWSs) have been achieved. There has also been progress with the improved management by the County Council of Protected roadside verge CWSs, which will help meet the target for the final year 2010/2011. The Biodiversity Projects Fund helped with the improvement of 3 CWSs. It's not yet clear if the biodiversity indicator will stay on beyond 2011, and we will watch with interest what's going to happen.



Fenland Greener Living Fair 2010; Photo Fenland District Council

Some of the district Strategic Partnerships have an Environment Group associated with them, and the Biodiversity Partnership is involved with Fenland's and Huntingdonshire's Environment Group. The group in Fenland identified several practical biodiversity related projects, amongst them a Green Spaces Audit, improved access of local greenspaces, organising an annual Greener Living Fair and support for Green Groups that are operating locally. Huntingdonshire District Council is leading on a retrofit project in St Ives and St Neots, and the Biodiversity Partnership together with the Wildlife Trust is helping with interpretation for the wildlife gardens on the two properties.



Partner updates:

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC)

In early 2010, our Local Records Centre got a new manager, John Cornell. He has been busy liaising with all Local Authorities to discuss services that CPERC can provide for them, and is also exploring new projects, e.g. working with parishes. The Centre changed its name to Environmental Records Centre to better reflect the breadth of their work. Since June 2010, the Records Centre has also been hosting a regional advocacy officer, Fiona Hazelton. Her role is to promote the services of Local Records Centres and is one of the outcomes of a regional consultation on what is needed to improve the Local Records Centres' work in the East of England. Another regional post is based with Norfolk's Biodiversity Information Service to develop a standardised model for engaging with ecological consultants, and a third post's aim is to establish a Local Records Centre in Essex.



Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre Manager and Data Officers; Photo CPERC

More information: www.cpbrc.org.uk/

County Wildlife Sites Project

Sarah Rodger has replaced Christa Perry as County Wildlife Sites Officer in spring 2010. Her role is to provide management advice and support to owners of County Wildlife Sites (CWS) to help them bring their sites into positive management; to monitor sites through a rolling programme of surveys to check CWSs still meet their selection criteria and provide information to inform management advisory work; and to work with partners on the CWS panel to select new sites as CWSs and update the selection criteria. In 2010, seven new sites were selected. At a regional level, Natural England is supporting a 2 year Wildlife Sites project to increase Higher Level Stewardship applications, which will enable landowners to manage their CWSs sympathetically, with the post based at Norfolk Wildlife Trust.



Sarah Rodger seedharvesting in 2010; Photo Wildlife Trust

Regional Biodiversity

East of England Biodiversity Forum



The regional Biodiversity Forum is steering the East of England's contribution to UK Biodiversity. The Forum published regional habitat targets for 2015. Previously, the Forum produced a Biodiversity delivery plan which highlights broad challenges facing biodiversity in our area, including networking nature, enhancing the evidence base and realizing biodiversity's social and economic value. The Delivery Plan is an important document to make reference to in funding applications.

More information: www.eoebiodiversity.org

National Biodiversity

Report Making Space for Nature

An independent review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network was launched in September 2009. The review has considered whether England's collection of wildlife areas, both the legally protected areas and others, represents a coherent and robust ecological network that will be capable of responding to the challenges of climate change and other pressures. The report "Making Space for Nature" was published in September 2010 and is available on www.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/index.htm

The report concludes that the current network of wildlife sites is insufficient to conserve the current range of wildlife present in the UK, let alone reverse some of the past losses. **A significant improvement in local action to conserve wildlife is required now.**

Twenty-four recommendations are made including the need to better protect and manage Wildlife Sites and the need to identify and take action within ecological restoration zones. The report identifies opportunities for novel ways of working including the delivery of nature conservation through the provision of the ecosystem services essential for a healthy society and economy. The full costs of these services or replacing them once they've been lost also needs to be calculated and included in economic and political decision making. Opportunities for new funding mechanisms are also explored including "habitat banking" and "carbon offsetting".

Natural Environment White Paper

A government White Paper is aimed for publication in spring 2011, and Defra wants all interested parties to have a say in shaping the development of this. According to the new government, communities, businesses, civil society organisations and local authorities should have bigger roles in protecting and enhancing the natural environment and a bigger say about priorities for managing the natural environment. Responses are invited to a discussion paper "An invitation to shape the Nature of England". **The deadline for responses is 30 October 2010.**

More information: <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/our-responsibilities/nat-environment/>

International Biodiversity

2010 International Year of Biodiversity

2010 has been declared the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) by the United Nations – the year that celebrates the diversity of life on Earth, including every plant, animal and micro-organism. In the UK, IYB has over 400 partners ranging from universities, media organisations and museums to theatre companies and artists. Our Biodiversity Partnership is also signed up to it, and we promoted international biodiversity together with our local work at various events. e.g. Ely Eel Day, Peterborough Green Festival, Cambridge Environment Fair, Fenland Greener Living Fair, and the Huntingdonshire Plum Week-End. The Natural History Museum hosted a "Big Nature Debate" on 7th October with prestigious panelists, and the debate can be watched online.

More information: www.biodiversityislife.net www.nhm.ac.uk/natureplus/community/big-nature-debate



Biodiversity Conference in Nagoya: new biodiversity targets for 2020

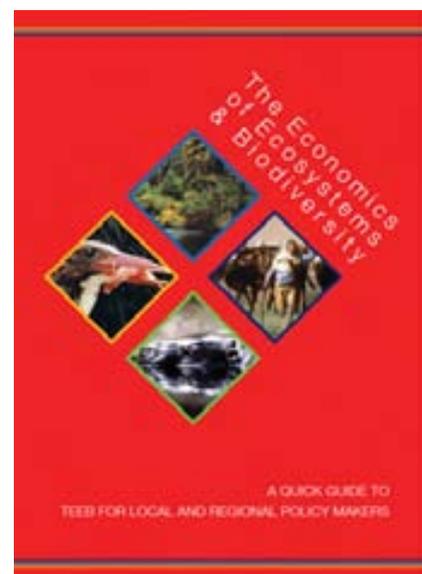
The Convention of Biological Diversity's Conference of the Parties (COP 10) will be meeting in Nagoya, Japan, 18 to 29 October 2010. Officials from 193 countries will gather in Japan to agree how to tackle biodiversity loss and set new targets to conserve biodiversity for the next ten years, and develop a vision for 2050. The meeting will acknowledge that the target set in 2002 to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 has not been met, although there are some success stories.

More information: www.biodiversityislife.net/?q=Nagoya www.cbd.int/

Business case for biodiversity and ecosystem services

The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) study is a major international initiative to draw attention to the global economic benefits of biodiversity, to highlight the growing costs of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, and to draw together expertise from the fields of science, economics and policy to enable practical actions moving forward. TEEB makes the case for integrating the economics of biodiversity and ecosystem services in decision-making. There is one report specifically tailored for regional and local policy makers, covering areas such as Urban and Public Management, Natural Resource Management, Spatial Planning, Protected areas, Payment Schemes and Market-based instruments.

More information: www.teebweb.org



For further information and for contributions to future reports, please contact:

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In Partnership with Buglife, Butterfly Conservation, Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge City Council, Environment Agency, East Cambridgeshire District Council, East of England Apples and Orchards Project, Fenland District Council, Forestry Commission, Froglife, Huntingdonshire District Council, Natural England, Peterborough City Council, RSPB, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough ... and more partners involved in biodiversity action!

