

## MINERAL RESTORATION SITES

### LOCAL HABITAT ACTION PLAN FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Last Updated: August 2003

## 1 CURRENT STATUS

### 1.1 Context

This Habitat Action Plan covers both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The plan area has a variety of mineral deposits of economic importance. These fall into 4 main categories:-

- limestone and silica sand principally in Peterborough
- brick clay near Peterborough and Whittlesey
- chalk in the south-east of the county
- sand and gravel workings concentrated along the valleys of the river Great Ouse, the Nene and the Welland

In the National Mineral Workings survey in 1994 there were 59 mineral sites covering a total area of some 3055 hectares. Whilst some sites have been restored and closed, some significant new areas of land have been granted planning permission for long term quarrying operations since 1994, including a gravel extraction site of some 945 hectares between Needingworth and Over.

### 1.2 Biological Status

Sites where mineral extraction has taken place have shown they can support a wide variety of flora and fauna both as a result of final restoration and by providing temporary habitats during the operational phases of the site. This is reflected in the fact that 12 mineral extraction sites have been identified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and 51 have been designated as County Wildlife Sites. In addition several mineral excavation sites lie close to the Nene and Ouse Washes which have been designated as Ramsar sites.

In Cambridgeshire the impoverished level of the environmental resource means that these sites can provide vital and diverse habitats and links for flora and fauna.

### 1.3 Species

Mineral restoration sites provide key habitat opportunities for a variety of fauna and flora species. Key National Biodiversity Action Plan fauna in the Action Plan area which are associated with mineral extraction sites include Otter, Water Vole, Little Ringed Plover, Bittern, Kingfisher, Sand Martin, Great Crested Newts, Spined Loach, Scarce Chaser, Variable Damselfly, solitary wasps and other invertebrates. This is in addition to a wide variety of migrant and native wintering wildfowl. Key flora species will vary depending on the substrate of the

resource being excavated, however it is important to be aware of and explore this opportunity, especially where plant communities associated with chalk grassland and breckland habitats may be established.

## **2 CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING MINERAL RESTORATION SITES IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

- commitment in the Structure Plan to restore a large proportion of mineral restoration sites back to agricultural, forestry or recreational use
- a strong presumption contained in the adopted Cambridgeshire Aggregates Minerals Local Plan, in line with government legislation (MPG7 paragraphs 3 and 14), to restore land to agricultural use unless there are overriding community benefits of other after uses of mineral workings
- difficulties in attracting inert waste fill to restore quarry sites to agreed after uses

(Paragraph 3 states that high restoration standards enable a variety of afteruses to be achieved , and that such a standards may lead to the release of best and most versatile agricultural land for mineral working. Paragraph 14 states that the Government wishes to encourage diversification of the rural economy, where this will not result in the significant loss of high quality agricultural land. Also that alternative afteruses may be acceptable on best and most versatile agricultural land where the methods used in restoration and aftercare enable the land to remain a high quality agricultural resource for the future)

### **Legal Status**

Both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council have statutory duties as Planning Authorities for strategic planning and mineral planning within their respective administrative boundaries. Strategic land use planning policies are required to be included in the Structure Plan. The County Council and City Council are currently obliged to produce a joint Structure Plan.

The local authorities as Mineral Planning Authorities (MPA) are required to formulate and produce Local Plans in respect of future levels of mineral extraction and also determine planning applications for mineral developments. In considering the future level of mineral extraction and policies on restoration the MPA must have regard to published government guidance as set out in Mineral Planning Guidance Notes (MPG). The policies of mineral local plans are given particular weight in the determination of individual planning applications whilst Supplementary Planning Guidance (e.g. Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines) is also an important material planning consideration.

Several mineral restoration sites are now designated as SSSI's or Ramsar sites and as such enjoy protection under the 1981(amended 1985) Wildlife and Countryside Act and the 1971Ramsar Convention. The importance of these sites in providing habitat is recognised in the Structure Plan, where Policy SP12/3 states that it will not permit development within such sites nor development which might adversely affect such sites (unless it is of an overriding international or national need). The Cambridgeshire Mineral (Aggregates) Local Plan also carries similar policies.

## **3 CURRENT ACTION**

The Mineral Planning Authorities do not currently produce specific local guidance to applicants to assist in identifying particular biodiversity opportunities. However potential applicants and operators are advised to refer to publications such as Gravel Pit Restoration

for Wildlife (RSPB/Tarmac Quarry Products 1990), Wildlife After Gravel (ARC/Game Conservancy 1992) and Biodiversity and Minerals – extracting the benefits for wildlife (English Nature/QPA/SAMSA 1999).

## **4 OBJECTIVES AND LONG TERM TARGETS**

### **4.1 Objectives**

- Ensure that mineral development and restoration schemes does not result in a loss of biodiversity interest
- Provide a formal basis for the promotion and discussion of biodiversity and conservation issues between the mineral industry, local government and conservation organisations
- Ensure policies to promote biodiversity are present in the development plans
- Promote appropriate management of all mineral restoration sites to protect and enhance biodiversity so they deliver against species and habitat action plans

### **4.2 5 Year Targets for 2005**

- Continue to monitor compliance with implementation of approved restoration schemes designed to benefit biodiversity through the development plan and development control process
- Set up a countywide working group involving mineral industry, planning authorities and relevant conservation bodies to provide a formal basis for discussing conservation, restoration and biodiversity issues by 2005
- Set up a series of workshops aimed at planners and the mineral industry to raise awareness of the importance of temporary habitats and to develop ways of managing them more effectively by 2005
- Identify and promote sites which demonstrate good practice in mineral restoration schemes by 2005
- Ensure that the Structure Plan contains policies which gives full recognition and support to the need to preserve and enhance the biodiversity of the county by 2005
- Ensure that the Minerals Local Plan(s) contains policies which gives full recognition and support to the need to preserve and enhance the biodiversity of the county by 2005
- 100% (by site) of all new mineral restoration schemes with clear biodiversity objectives and targets in appropriate management by 2005

### **4.3 10 Year Targets for 2010**

- Review the Landscape Character Guidelines to ensure appropriate restoration in the differing landscape areas of Cambridgeshire by 2010
- Recognise the importance of the temporary habitats created during the operational phases and formulate clear guidelines for the inclusion and management of these areas as part of restoration programmes by 2010
- Ensure, where appropriate, that all new mineral restoration schemes have a programme of long term (beyond 5 years) protection, monitoring and management to establish success of habitat restoration on biodiversity

- Review the management of 50% of previous mineral extractions in the public domain that were restored to forestry, recreational use or nature reserves by 2010
- Increase the percentage of restored mineral workings to priority habitat in Cambridgeshire in response to national targets on habitat restoration by 2010

## **5 PROPOSED ACTION WITH TARGETS**

Action for the next three years is detailed in the attached programme

### **5.1 Policy and Legislation**

- produce a first draft of policies promoting and supporting biodiversity to be included in the Structure Plan
- produce a first draft of policies promoting and supporting biodiversity to be included in the Minerals Local Plan(s)
- review Landscape Character Guidelines
- investigate feasibility of adopting ‘Cambridgeshire biodiversity’ and supporting Local Habitat and Species Action Plans as Supplementary Planning Guidance

### **5.2 Site Safeguard and Management**

- identify sites suitable for restoration to priority habitat
- ensure that land use policies are in place in local development plans to enable the utilisation planning controls to ensure 50% of all proposed restoration schemes have clear biodiversity objectives and long term management plans
- formulate clear guidelines on the creation and management of temporary habitats
- utilise opportunities to enhance biodiversity in existing restoration schemes including reviewing old mineral permissions under the Environment Act.
- identify 10 previous restoration schemes restored to forestry, leisure use or nature reserves that have existing management plans which can be reviewed to optimise biodiversity value

### **5.3 Advisory**

- produce a leaflet promoting the Cambridgeshire mineral restoration guidance technical library
- develop and run minimum of 2 workshops and seminars aimed at the minerals industry and planners on the importance of temporary habitats and their creation and management
- provide an advisory service on mineral restoration schemes

### **5.4 Future Research and Monitoring**

- establish criteria for monitoring compliance with implementation of approved restoration schemes designed to benefit biodiversity
- establish the capital resource of existing restoration schemes

- establish criteria for monitoring success of established restoration schemes in sustaining or improving biodiversity

## **5.5 Communications and Publicity**

- identify and publicise sites which demonstrate good practice in mineral restoration schemes
- form a mineral restoration working party including representatives from the minerals industry, local government and conservation organisations
- establish annual competition to promote and reward long term good practice in encouraging biodiversity in mineral restoration schemes

## **6 LINKS TO OTHER PLANS**

Refer also to Habitat Action Plans: Reedbeds, More Recent Woodland, Farmland, Lowland Calcareous Grassland, Acid Grassland and Heathland and Scrub.

Species Action Plans: Otter, Water Vole, Bittern, Great Crested Newt, Pipestrelle Bat, Desmoulin's Whorl Snail, Ribbon-Leafed Water Plantain.

## **7 REVIEW OF ACTION PLAN**

Review this action plan **annually** at first and monitor progress.

## **8 REFERENCES**

Gravel Pit Restoration for Wildlife *RSPB/Tarmac Quarry Products* 1990  
 Wildlife After Gravel *ARC/Game Conservancy* 1992  
 Cambridgeshire Structure Plan *Cambridgeshire County Council* 1995  
 Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines – A manual for management and change in a Rural Landscape *Granta Editions* 1991  
 Department of the Environment MPG *HMSO* 1996  
 English Nature, Quarry Products Association and Silica & Moulding Sands Association (1999). Biodiversity and minerals – Extracting the benefits for wildlife. *Entec UK Ltd.*

## **9 LIST OF INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED**

Aggregate Industries Ltd  
 Amphibian specialists  
 Anglian Water Services Ltd  
 Beetles Recorder for Huntingdonshire Fauna & Flora Society  
 Beetles experts  
 Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator  
 Bird specialists  
 British Dragonfly Society  
 British Herpetological Society  
 Butterfly Conservation  
 Cambridge City Council  
 Cambridge Green Belt Project  
 Cambridgeshire County Council  
 Crustacea specialists

Damselfly specialists  
East Cambridgeshire District Council  
English Nature  
Environment Agency  
Fenland District Council  
Hanson Aggregates Ltd  
Hanson Brick Ltd  
Huntingdonshire District Council  
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology  
Invertebrate specialists  
LaFarge Redland Aggregates  
Landscape 2000  
Local naturalists  
M Dickerson (Excavations) Ltd  
Mr & Ms M & C Cummins  
OMYA Croxton and Garry Ltd  
Peterborough City Council  
RSPB - East Anglia  
Rugby Cement  
South Cambridgeshire District Council  
Tarmac Roadstone Ltd  
The Wildlife Trust  
Waste Recycling Group  
Wicken Fen  
Wicken Lime and Slate Co

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE LHAP: MINERAL RESTORATION SITES  
LAST UPDATED: AUGUST 2003**

<b>Target</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>3-5 Years</b>	<b>6-10 Years</b>
1) Continue to monitor compliance with implementation of approved restoration schemes designed to benefit biodiversity through the development plan and development control process.	Monitor a sample of restoration schemes designed to benefit biodiversity to assess compliance with the agreed scheme and biodiversity benefits	CCC/PCC (minerals planning); WiT, RSPB		2008
2) Set up a countrywide working group involving mineral industry, planning authorities and relevant conservation bodies to provide a formal basis for discussing conservation, restoration and biodiversity issues by 2005.	Form a mineral restoration working party including representatives from the minerals industry, local government and conservation organisations	LA's, WiT, RSPB		2008
3) Ensure that the Minerals Local Plan(s) contains policies which gives full recognition and support to the need to preserve and enhance the biodiversity of the county by 2005.	Formulate clear guidelines on the creation and management of temporary habitats	Minerals working group		2008
4) 100% of all new mineral restoration schemes to have clear biodiversity objectives and targets, by 2005.	Establish a technical library of guidance for restoration of mineral extraction sites in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	RSPB, LAs		2008
	Provide an advisory service on mineral restoration schemes	RSPB	Ongoing	
	Work with the Biological Records Centre to establish a database recording the biodiversity gain from existing and future restoration schemes	BRC, WiT, RSPB, LA's		2008
	Identify and publicise 3	LA's, QPA,		2008

	sites which demonstrate good practice in mineral restoration schemes	SAMSA		
	Establish bi-annual competition to promote and reward long term good practice in encouraging biodiversity in mineral restoration schemes	QPA, SAMSA, RSPB	2005	

Abbreviations:

- QPA - Quarry Products Association
- SAMSA - Silica and Moulding Sand Association
- RSPB - Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds
- WiT - Wildlife Trust for Cambs, Herts and Beds
- PCC - Peterborough City Council
- CCC - Cambridgeshire County Council
- LA's - Local Authorities