



The Langdyke Countryside Trust

The Langdyke Countryside Trust is a voluntary, membership based organisation that through community action aims to preserve and enhance the natural heritage in the area between Peterborough and Stamford, ensuring the continuity of its natural beauty and distinctive character.

Since our foundation in 1999 we have established a network of five nature reserves across the area – Swaddywell Pit, Torpel Manor Field, Bainton Heath, Etton Maxey Pits and Etton High Meadow. We have an active membership of over 120 households and run a variety of events throughout the year. We have created a new visitor centre at Torpel Manor Field and a range of educational materials to help people understand its heritage. We have put up nearly 200 nest boxes across the area and helped plant new hedgerows and new trees. We have seen orchids thrive at Swaddywell, avocets breed at Etton Maxey and rare moths and butterflies prosper at Bainton. We have planted a community orchard at Etton High Meadow.

Together we have achieved a lot.

But we want to do more. As residents, we want to live in an area where nature is at the heart of our lives. Where swifts and swallows are a central feature of our summer evenings, where otters continue to enthral people as they play in the Maxey Cut, where bees and other insects thrive, not decline, and where there are far more, not less, ponds, meadows, wild flowers, hedgerows and trees. And where local people can walk or cycle out in safety and tranquillity across this thriving countryside, enjoying the sights and sounds and even the silence of the natural world; enjoying dark skies and cherishing the heritage – both natural and man-made- around them.

That sounds like a countryside worth living in. But it is a countryside under threat and increasing pressure from housing growth and traffic and sadly even from lack of appreciation.

We now want to work with others to ensure that we conserve the beauty of our landscape¹ and our heritage and establish an area characterised by

- Outstanding **natural biodiversity** through major habitat restoration connected through a mosaic of smaller wildlife havens and corridors
- **Unspoilt countryside** that is used by local people and the people of an expanding Peterborough, providing them with a large area of unspoilt countryside on their door step.
- Cycle paths, footways and 'quiet roads' – a **green transport infrastructure** - where priority is given to walkers and riders.

¹ The landscape west of Peterborough and north of the river Nene, east of the A1 and south of the Welland, extending east to include the villages of Glinton and Peakirk

- **Well-kept heritage sites**, accessible to all and working together to involve and attract visitors
- Prosperous and successful **farming**, profiting from a combination of environmentally friendly farming practice, sustainable tourism and recreational activities

The Trust cannot achieve this vision on its own. We recognise that our role can only be as one of many champions of this agenda. Our own focus will be on facilitating and promoting the natural biodiversity elements of this vision, working in four principal theme areas of activity

1. **Places** – working with landowners, or if appropriate managing land ourselves, we aim to enhance, re-create and connect habitats in order to increase both the diversity and the numbers of our local wildlife species.
2. **People** – working with our members, schools and other community groups and wildlife charities, we will offer opportunities for people to learn about, appreciate and support the natural environment and cultural heritage on their doorsteps.
3. **Projects** – alongside our Place agenda, we will establish projects designed to promote nature and cultural heritage across the wider area. This work will include, for example, projects to promote the creation of ponds, tree and hedgerow planting etc.
4. **Promoting the Vision** – we will champion the natural environment across the area, promoting wildlife friendly policies and campaigning against plans, policies or practices that don't reflect the character of the area or enhance its natural heritage.

Places

The Trust's Vision focuses on two main landscape-scale habitat creation projects

Helpston Heath and the Hanglands

We aim to use our existing reserve at Swaddywell Pit to provide the nucleus for the re-creation of Helpston Heath, a large area of limestone grassland.

Our vision is that by working with local landowners and agencies the three former landfill sites of Swaddywell, Ailsworth Road and Ben Johnson Pit are brought together to create a large block of land that is managed to create open areas of grassland and gorse similar to those described in Clare's poems.

Looking further ahead we would explore the opportunities to link – through wildlife corridors - the re-created heath with the nature reserve at Castor Hanglands and with Southey Woods, providing a landscape scale network of accessible green spaces which can be explored on foot from the villages.

Maxey and Bainton Wetlands

Working with the parishes of these villages and with partners at Bainton Fisheries, Lefarge Tarmac, the National Grid and the Environment Agency, we aim to facilitate the creation of a large area of wetland running from Bainton across to Maxey and Etton and south towards Helpston, linked by the Maxey Cut.

Much of the work for the creation of this patchwork of wetland is already under way, but there is no current master plan that recognises how the various elements can be brought together. The aim is to create a carefully linked patchwork of lakes, wet meadows and grassland that supports a wide range of wildlife. It also would provide a significant landscape asset to the communities of the surrounding villages, as well as recreational opportunities such as fishing, bird-watching, riding and walking.

We want to engage with communities, landowners and the public and voluntary sectors to create this master-plan, and have it recognised in local planning policy. We also wish to work constructively with local landowners and with partners to ensure that the area is managed sensitively for wildlife and to link these sites up through footpaths and bridleways, including addressing the issue of how to cross the main railway. A key objective would be to ensure that the Maxey Cut itself plays a key role in supporting this habitat and is managing sensitively to support wildlife.

People

The Trust is committed to achieving its aims through community action – in other words, involving local people in running the Trust and delivering its projects. We will seek to engage a wider group of people in our activities and to widen our membership base to include residents from all the villages to the west of Peterborough. We will also promote our work more widely and seek to engage parish councils and local landowners directly, so that they understand, support and are involved in our work – indeed see it as an important part of their own local agenda.

Over the next two years, we should aim to increase our membership from its current base of 120 households to over 200 households.

The Trust will run an annual programme of walks, conservation work parties and talks designed to help people understand more about local wildlife and heritage and how they can take action themselves to enhance biodiversity. We will aim to run at least one activity each month, with the hope that as membership grows we may be able to run a series of work-parties at different sites each month in the winter, as well as an indoor talks programme. We will work closely with other local organisations to co-ordinate this programme and take opportunities for joint events.

We want to engage more young people in our work, to ensure that the countryside remains an important part of their outlook and that they have opportunities to enjoy and learn about their local nature and heritage.

Projects

As well as the two landscape projects, our priority projects for 2015-20 are

Ponds – working with other conservation bodies for advice and support, we aim to create 50 new ponds across the LCT area within the next 5 years, a combination of creating large new ponds on our own reserves (at least two for instance on Etton High Meadow) and encouraging our members to build ponds in their gardens.

Trees and Hedgerows – we will work with landowners and other partners to plant and maintain new hedgerows and trees planted and will set an example by planting [xx] oak trees on our own reserves, to establish the veteran trees of the future. We will also conduct a survey of local hedgerows and trees to establish a baseline of what exists currently.

Barn owls – We aim to encourage local landowners to use the government’s agri-environment schemes to support the spread and increase of the barn owl population by leaving wide uncut grassland strips around the margins of fields and along the edges of tracks and lanes. We will also work with landowners to supply barn nest-boxes where needed. We will closely monitor the local barn owl population with the aim of ensuring that this indicator species is a regular and accessible sight around all of the villages.

Community orchard – we will continue with our plans to develop a community orchard at our Etton High Meadow reserve, including both a traditional apple/pear/cherry orchard and a soft-fruit orchard of currant bushes, damsons and plums.