



NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2014

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RIVER NENE REGIONAL PARK
INSPIRED SPACES

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RNRP Achievements

- ✓ **Northampton Marina**
- ✓ **Nene Valley Strategic Plan**
- ✓ **Environmental Character & Green Infrastructure Suite**
- ✓ **Tree Top canopy walk, Salcey Forest**
- ✓ **Stanwick Lakes**
- ✓ **Top Lodge, Fineshade Wood Nr Corby**
- ✓ **Connecting People & Places – Breathing Spaces**
- ✓ **Northampton Parks**

More information available at: www.riverneneregionalpark.org



Introduction

Welcome to the Summer 2014 edition of the River Nene Regional Park Newsletter. It turned out to be quite a busy winter with tree planting in the Rockingham Forest, finalisation of the Integrated Catchment Management Plan for the Nene and developing the bid for Heritage Lottery Fund for Landscape Partnership Funding which will be submitted at the end of May.

We have also been working hard to secure funding and projects for the coming year. While we have not secured this just yet there are some interesting possibilities with the launch of the Nene Catchment Partnership planned for early June and discussions around a 'Foods from the Forest' branding program for Rockingham.

Please enjoy the project updates in the newsletter and contact us with any questions or for clarification on any of the items covered.

A hearty thank you to the team at RNRP for their continued enthusiasm and energy and to our Board for their encouragement and support.

Have a happy Summer!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathryn Hardcastle'.

Kathryn Hardcastle

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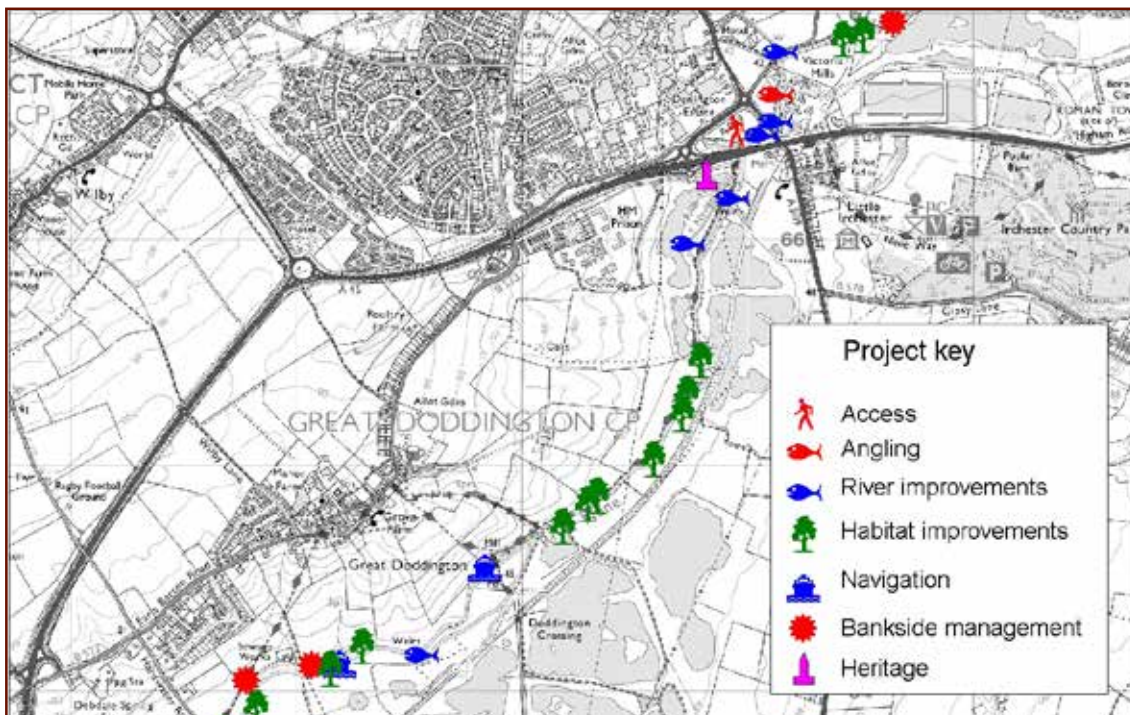
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Nene Integrated Catchment Management Plan

Following from the public and stakeholder consultation which was undertaken late last year there have been a large number of workshops and individual meetings with many different groups and organisations to discuss the Catchment Plan and develop projects.

There has been particular emphasis on liaising with local authorities and the different user and amenity groups who are involved in the Nene Catchment. The process has greatly helped to create better understanding and communication within the catchment and a much clearer role for the revised Catchment Management Plan and how it can relate to other strategies and plans.

Many hundreds of projects have been identified covering all parts of the catchment. These range from Water Framework Directive-related environmental projects from the Environment Agency through local access issues suggested by Parish Councils to new infrastructure promoting the tourism and economic benefit of the navigation suggested by local businesses. Many of the projects are being implemented or actively pursued by the River Restoration Adviser (Simon Whitton) and others or are developed by new local partnerships with community groups along the length of the river.



The projects are being incorporated into a standardised GIS database and being collated to highlight opportunities for multi-benefit projects at a range of scales. The map shows a simplified selection of projects in the Wellingborough area.

The opportunity to link the information with the ecological services mapping of the whole catchment being undertaken by the NIA/Northampton University is being pursued, potentially creating an invaluable tool the new Catchment Partnership and others can use for assessing and prioritising projects and maximising the potential benefit. The information is already being used by local authorities to help with Green Infrastructure strategies and it should assist in gaining funding from a variety of sources to implement groups of projects meeting multiple objectives.

Angling in Northampton: Local angling groups hope to establish a visitor centre, improve facilities and organise volunteer parties to tidy litter and manage the river bank.

For further information please contact Dr Simon Newell: Tel: 01604 367325 Email: snewell@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Forests for Life – Rockingham



Can you see the wood **from the trees?**
 £6000-£8000 per hectare funding for landowners to create woodland.



Forests for Life **Rockingham**

Signage at the recently planted area adjacent to Kettering on the Boughton Estate will be installed soon. No additional planting was completed this winter but there are several interesting schemes coming forward for the next round of planting later this year.

On an exciting note, this initiative has attracted its first corporate sponsor from a locally owned business in Corby. We are currently planning an activity day centred around the Forest for the company staff to participate in.

Additionally, we are working with East Northamptonshire Council and the Northamptonshire Leader Program on a 'foods from the forest', branding idea. Workshops with local producers will be held in June to determine the appetite for this initiative and to plan the initiative in detail. Keep your eyes open for more news on this in the coming weeks. If you are interested in being involved in this initiative please contact us.

For further information please contact Kathryn Hardcastle:

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What is the Forests for Life, Rockingham Forest Area?
 The Rockingham Forest was originally established as a Royal Hunting Forest by William the Conqueror in the 11th century and initially covered much of Northamptonshire. However, pressure from agriculture and development, resulted in much of the ancient forest being felled, leading to widespread habitat destruction and fragmentation. This had a disastrous impact upon a variety of species including butterflies, such as the now extinct Disjunct Skipper butterfly, as well as bats and mammals.

To address the issue of woodland fragmentation across Northamptonshire, the North Northants Regional Park (NRRP) in partnership with the Woodland Trust and Groundwork Northamptonshire has funded for landowners to create woodland where it meets the following priorities:

- Protects and enhances existing ancient woodland through coverage and buffering.
- Buffers or increases the size of existing ancient woodland.
- Reconnects woodland on previously wooded sites, particularly former ancient woodland sites.
- Addresses fragmentation by creating connections between existing woodland.

How can you get involved?
 If you have land in the Forests for Life, Rockingham Forest Area and are interested in planting trees on it then we would like to speak to you!

We can support you from start to finish providing you with:

- Expert advice on planning and designing your woodland.
- Financial support with grants of between **£5000-£8000 per hectare** to help with purchasing, planting and initial maintenance of trees. (These grant amounts will be based on the extent to which a site meets the criteria listed above).
- We can organise and oversee community planting projects for your site.

What criteria do you need to meet?

- Your site must fall within the Forests for Life, Rockingham Forest Area.
- Your site must be suitable for planting trees. You should not plant on wetlands, chalk grassland, grassland that has never been ploughed or broadcast. We can help you check this if you're unsure.
- Ideally we want to target sites that either increase the connectivity of the remaining blocks of ancient woodland in the Rockingham Forest, or buffer them from existing agricultural or development activity. As a result sites will be prioritised for planting once applications have been received.
- An intended minimum planting density of 1,000 trees per hectare.
- We can only support the planting of native tree species.

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Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area - River Restoration Adviser

River walkovers recommenced in early March. Although the flooding in the Nene catchment hasn't been as bad as other parts of the country, the riparian areas were simply too wet and the river itself too high for walkovers to have taken place earlier in the winter. I had hoped to complete walking the River Nene within the NIA by the end of this financial year. Instead, I have now completed approximately 90% of the total length of the river (143 km). The sections left to do are between Elton Lock and Water Newton Lock (just upstream of Peterborough) and, upstream of Northampton, a few kilometres between Lower Weedon and Kissingbury. These will be completed by mid-May, whereupon I shall finalise management plans for the main river.

At my recent Steering Group meeting, we discussed which of the river's tributaries are the priorities and therefore should be assessed next. It was agreed that the tributaries in the areas expecting the most development (for example Kettering, Wellingborough, Northampton and Corby) are the priorities. The Environment Agency (EA) informed me that one of their staff will soon start to assess the Brampton Branch catchment. Furthermore, the Ise catchment will be assessed via the Revital-ISE project, if funding allows for that to continue. I will help with those walkovers as required, but will be left to concentrate on the three waterbodies in the Corby area, namely the Southern Stream, the Northern Stream and Harpers Brook.

In the first instance, however, I will work up approximately twelve potential projects that I have identified from previous walkovers. Because money is scarce, it is highly unlikely that we will reach our original target of ten completed projects. Instead, we have proposed that by the end of March 2015 we will have 20 projects that are fully scoped out and designed, with permissions in place where our meagre funds allow, so that they can be implemented when money is available.



Figure 1: Pre-vegetated coir rolls, each 4m long and with a diameter of 300mm (Photo credit: Ponds UK Aquatic Management Limited).

These twelve projects will be the ones that I consider to offer the best combination of good ecological benefits for the river, ease of access, partnership potential, and prospect as a demonstration site, amongst other issues. Simon Bonney (the EA's lead for Water Framework Directive in the Nene catchment) recently asked me to give him brief details of any potential projects that I have identified in order to help him in his bid for funding for works in the catchment. I therefore completed a table for Simon that gave him the location, details and approximate costs of 190 schemes. However, those schemes were in only about 60% of the river's length, so, once I've completed the walkovers, the full number of projects could be more than 350. These range from very minor projects, e.g. a short length of fencing to prevent cattle trampling down the riverbank, to major engineering works, such as moving back flood defence berms (raised banks) in order to better connect the river with its floodplain.

I have spent much of the past few months working up a project in Peterborough that involves the installation of pre-vegetated coir rolls (coconut matting; Figure 1) along 640m of the river's northern bank through the city centre, which currently consists of concrete and sheet piling. The rolls have a diameter of approximately 300mm (see the typical cross section, Figure 2). The plants will provide habitat and cover for fish, invertebrates and birds - and will transform the sterile environment into a much more pleasant place to walk, cycle and navigate by boat. The project is being funded by Peterborough City Council (PCC), who, in the first instance, asked us to complete a 12m-long trial section. We installed this in March (Figure 3), and, once the vegetation has developed, PCC will be able to evaluate the feature and consider whether they wish to fund the full 640m-long project. If PCC agree to this funding, we hope to complete the work in the spring of 2015.

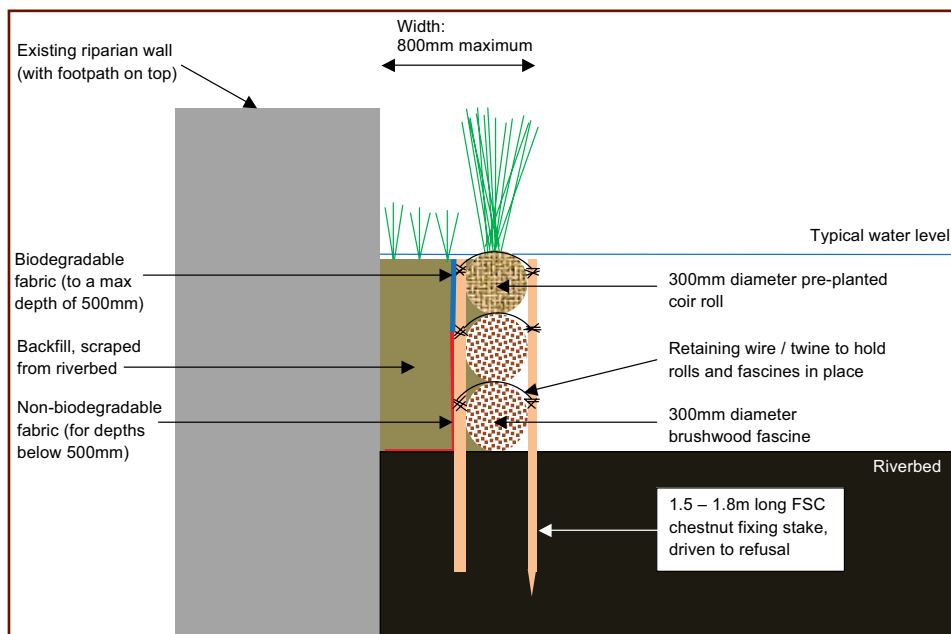


Figure 2: A typical cross-section through the installed coil roll habitat enhancement



Figure 3: The trial section of pre-vegetated coil rolls being installed on the River Nene in Peterborough

I have also followed up a discussion with Nene Park Trust, a major landowner in and around Peterborough, and have started to develop ideas to improve the habitat at Habbs Stauch, a rudimentary navigation lock that dates back to the 18th century. This could be developed into a backwater that will provide excellent spawning and refuge habitat for fish. Much of the original stonework for the lock remains in situ, but is buried and obscured by silt, so excavation of the area should also bring about a great deal of archaeological interest (academics from Cambridge University have already carried out a preliminary investigation).

In each newsletter, we are highlighting different issues regarding rivers and their habitats. In this edition, we will give an overview of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), arguably the most important piece of environmental legislation to come from Europe for decades, and which will have implications for anyone whose activities depend on or affect the water environment. That means all of us.

The WFD is formally known as Directive 2000/60/EC. It came into force in December 2000 and was introduced into UK law in 2003. Its role is to protect all surface waterbodies such as streams, rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs, estuaries, wetlands and coastal waters out to 1km from low-tide, as well as the groundwater in our aquifers. Its key aims are improvements in ecological and chemical quality, the sustainable use and management (and therefore quantity) of water, and finding cost-effective solutions to problems. For ease of explanation, reference here will only be made to surface waterbodies and the River Nene in particular.

The WFD requires that by 2015 all waterbodies will reach good status (or better), which is explained below. If that is not possible, then the Directive allows for interim targets to be set for 2015 and 2021, with full compliance by 2027. However, there is an unchangeable deadline of 2015 for the achievement of objectives for protected areas designated by other EU Directives, for example a river classed as a Special Area of Conservation. The WFD also establishes a common approach for all EU Member States for protecting and setting environmental objectives for their respective waterbodies, which will require monitoring. For surface waters, status is defined in terms of chemistry and, significantly, biology and morphology, i.e. the physical shape of the river, lake etc. Classification is made with reference to a pristine site untouched by human activity, and can be bad, poor, moderate, good or high (pristine), with only good or high meeting the standards required by the WFD. To achieve overall good status, waterbodies must have both good chemical status and good ecological status (which comprises both biology and morphology) or better.

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Good ecological status means that the waterbody exhibits the populations (both the range of species and numbers) of fish, invertebrates and plants that expert judgement would expect to find in a water of that type, i.e. size, altitude, gradient, location etc. These organisms are surveyed by the Environment Agency, who also assess the waterbody's morphology (shape) and, in the case of watercourses, its flows, to see whether too much water is being abstracted – as this will impact on what can live in that river or stream. The status (classification) of the waterbody is assigned accordingly. The further deterioration of any waterbody is strictly prohibited (so plans for development must give particular attention to the adjacent river, lake etc), and habitat restoration or alterations to abstraction regimes may be required to bring it up to the required standard.

Waterbodies that are significantly modified as a result of specific human activities (for example, for navigation and / or flood risk management, or contain a significant number of weirs or dams) can be designated as Artificial or Heavily Modified under the WFD. As you may expect, therefore, most of the River Nene is classified as Heavily Modified. The 'use' of these waterbodies may make it difficult for them to achieve good ecological status, so instead these waterbodies must achieve good ecological potential. This means that they must achieve as good a status as possible once their 'use' has been taken into account.

The Directive is a framework in that it prescribes steps to reach the common goal of good status. Part of this the division of Europe into River Basin Districts. The River Nene catchment falls within the Anglian River Basin District, which stretches from Essex to Lincolnshire. The WFD requires that each District produces a number of key documents over a six-year planning cycles. The most important of these are the River Basin Management Plans, published in 2009, 2015 and 2021. These documents identify the problems in the catchments and set out the actions that will be taken to improve waters to good status, and ensure that public sector bodies, businesses and individuals work together to protect the water environment and address significant impacts by coordinating all aspects of water management within the District.

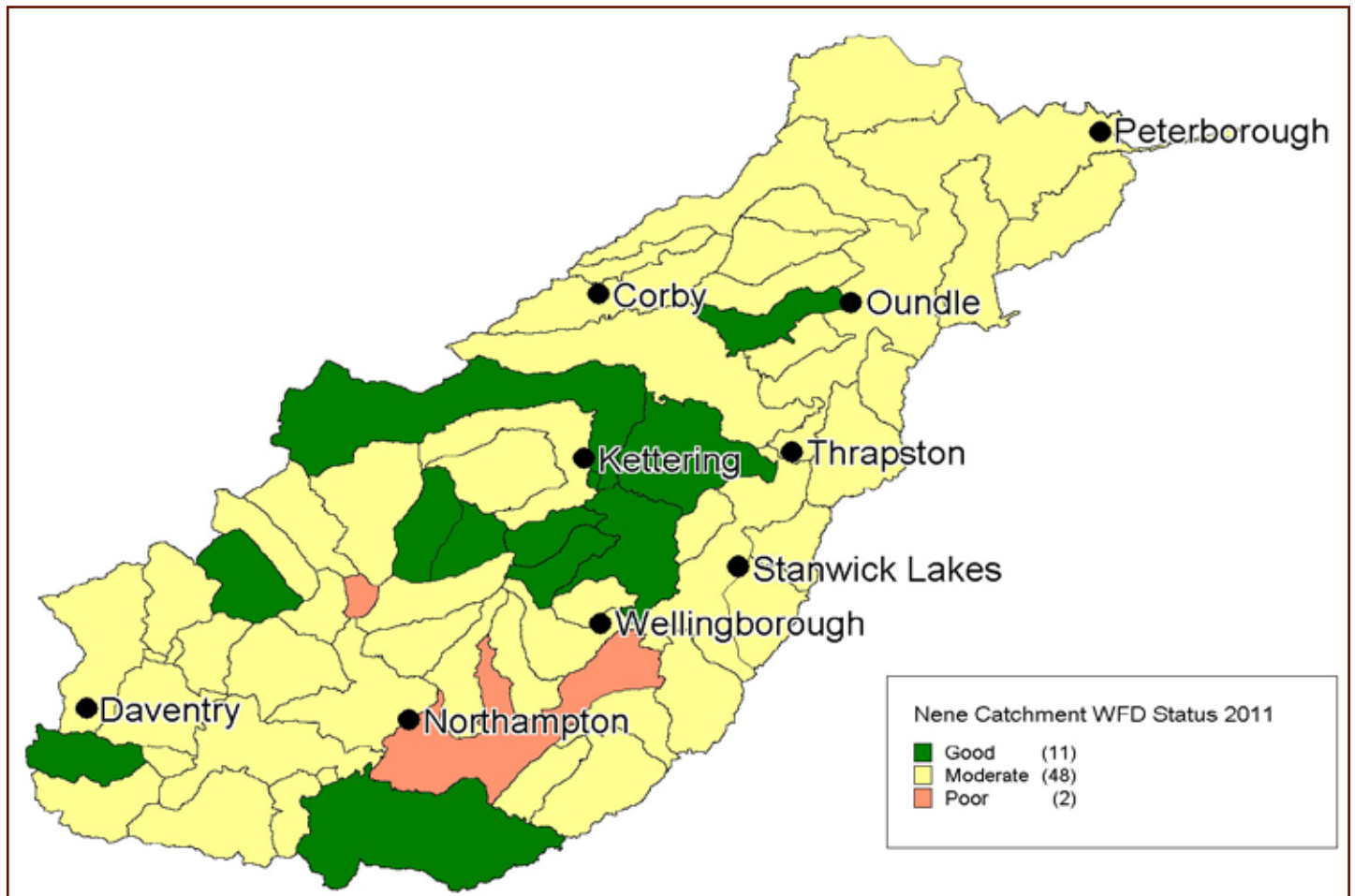
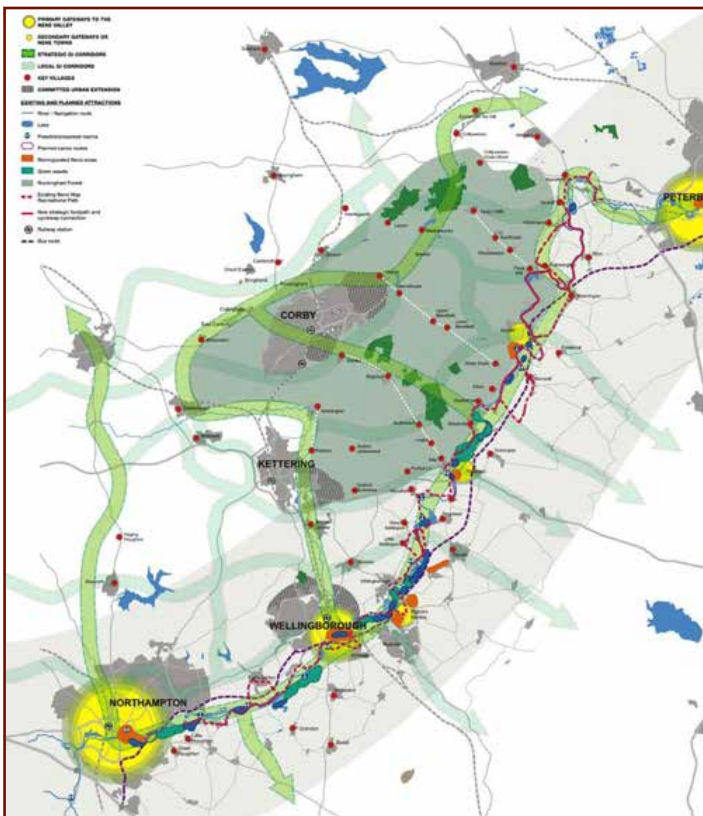


Figure 4: The River Nene catchment, showing the Water Framework Directive status of the constituent waterbodies

Each District may be subdivided into smaller, more manageable, catchments, and each of these will have an Area Advisory Group, led by EA coordinators – for the Nene, this is Simon Bonney. These groups help to better involve local organisations and expertise. The Nene catchment within the Nature Improvement Area, which includes all its major tributaries, is subdivided into 61 river waterbodies. Of these, none are in high status and only 11 are in good status (2011 data; Figure 4). In other words, 50 waterbodies within the Nene catchment are failing to meet the requirements of the WFD. The majority of waterbodies are in moderate status, but two, the River Nene from Northampton to Wellingborough and a short middle section of the Brampton Branch, are in poor status, so will need particular attention. Thankfully, no waterbodies in the Nene catchment are in bad status. Typical reasons for waterbodies in this catchment failing to meet the requirements of the WFD are for low fish populations and high levels of phosphate in the water. The former may be due to poor habitat and / or barriers to migration (e.g. weirs and sluices), whilst the latter may be from sewerage treatment works (STW) discharges and / or runoff from farms.

The assessment and classification of waterbodies in this way helps recognise the general state of the catchments and, specifically, will identify the main causes of failure, enabling solutions to be found. Examples of such solutions include fencing to prevent livestock trampling riverbanks, the removal of non-native species, the creation of fish-passes, the upgrading of STWs and measures to prevent pollution from bad farming practices, as explained in previous newsletters. Measures to achieve these improvements may vary from the most extreme (the banning of certain activities) to the most soft, such as education.

For further information, please contact Simon Whitton: Tel: 01604 367445 Email: swhitton@northamptonshire.gov.uk



Revital-ISE Project

The independent review of the Revital-ISE program was completed in March and found that the program had been very successful in achieving its original aims for the River Ise.

Over the course of the project no other funding partners could be found and with a shift within Defra it is no longer feasible to employ a full time officer to support the initiative.

The remaining funds will be used to conduct some strategic planning and mapping for the River and to support community initiatives for small projects, this will be delivered via an external consultant commissioned by the RNRP.

**For further information please contact Kathryn Hardcastle
Tel: 01604 366331
Email: khardcastle@northamptonshire.gov.uk**

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Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area - Land Advisor and Catchment Sensitive Farming

Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area Land Advice

With the completion of the High Level Stewardship Program we are now working on transitional High Level Stewardship applications. Three of these are in progress, two at sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs); Achurch Meadows and Twywell Gullet and one at a Scheduled Ancient Monument: Papley. Assessments of breeding wader number are being carried out at Achurch Meadows SSSI and early results suggest it is a very important local site with up to four different species of wader breeding their.

The Catchment Sensitive Farming Project has been confirmed as running nationally for another year (until end March 2015) and we have agreed with both Natural England and the Environment Agency what our local commitments will be over the next twelve months and in parallel to this the Land Advisor grant will fund additional projects in our area. As part of the CSF project we are working on an Anglian Water zero Metaldehyde project, one of four projects nationwide designed to assess whether by careful targeting levels of Metaldehyde in water can be reduced.

The National Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) Capital Grant Scheme is now closed and more farmers have applied from the Nene target area than ever before. More details to follow when all the applications have been assessed by Natural England.

For further information, please contact Dr Robin Field: Tel: 01604 367243 Email: rfield@northamptonshire.gov.uk



Update on Northampton Washlands

The Community Panel convened at the end of 2013 to discuss future management of the Washlands have concluded their deliberations and presented a Management Vision and Plan to the NIA Board for their consideration. The work of this group was very thorough and their recommendations will be duly considered by the Board and actioned where appropriate and where funding allows. The Community Panel expressed an interest in forming a 'friends of' group or similar for the Washlands and this initiative will be supported in the short term by the RSPB.



The next Community Panel under the NIA engagement program will be centred around Summer Leys and the first meeting will be held in early June. If you are a resident or user of this area and interested in participating in the Panel please let us know so that we can include you in the invitations to meetings.



'Off The Hook' Beer Selling Well

The following outlets stock 'Off The Hook' beer:

Nobbys Brewery (Please contact Jane Leadbitter) c/o The Ward Arms, Guilsborough, Northants	01604 740785
Beckworth Emporium Glebe Road, Mears Ashby, Northants, NN6 0DL	01604 812371
St Giles cheese 77 St Giles' St, Town Centre, Northampton, NN1 1JF	01604 622271
Manor Farm Shop (Should be available mid February) Main St, Catthorpe, Leicestershire, LE17 6DB	01788 869002
Creaton Post Office High Street, Creaton, Northants, NN6 8NA - www.creatonpo.co.uk	01604 505801
The Wine Barn Heart of the Shires, Unit 7, A5 Watling Street, NN7 4LB	
Stanwick Lakes Visitor Centre shop, NN9 6GY - www.stanwicklakes.org.uk	01933 625522
Stamford Cheese and Wine 17 St. Mary's Street, Stamford, Lincolnshire, PE9 2DG - www.stamfordcheese.com	01780 489269
Skylark Farm shop Shuckburgh Road, Staverton, Northants	01327 300471
The Rugby Tap 3 St Matthews St, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV21 3BY	01788 576767
Yelvertoft Post Office Yelvertoft, Northants	01788 823313
The Pantry at Potterspury Wakefield Country Courtyard, Potterspury, NN12 7QX	01327 811511
Seaton Stores High street, Guilsborough, NN6 8PU	01604 743541
Quarryman's Rest cafe Irchester Country Park, Gipsy Lane, Little Irchester, Northants, NN29 7DL	01933 276833
Buckingham Garden centre Tingewick Rd, Buckingham, Bucks, MK18 4AE	01280 822133
Bosworth's Garden Centre Finedon Road, Burton Latimer, Northants, NN15 5QA	01536 722635



RIVER NENE REGIONAL PARK
INSPIRED SPACES

Protect **natural and cultural assets**
Improve **health and well being**
Promote **Northamptonshire**
Tackle **climate change**
Increase **leisure and recreation opportunities**
Improve **connectivity and support biodiversity**
Support the **local economy**

Working in partnership to

For further information please contact the River Nene Regional Park CIC

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Website: www.riverneneregionalpark.org