



## NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2014

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**RIVER NENE REGIONAL PARK**  
WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES

# NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2014



## **RNRP Achievements**

- ✓ **Forests for Life – Rockingham**
- ✓ **Nene Integrated Catchment Plan**
- ✓ **Nene Catchment Partnership**
- ✓ **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](http://www.riverneneregionalpark.org)

## Introduction

**Welcome to the Autumn 2014 edition of the River Nene Regional Park Newsletter. We hope you all had a wonderful summer and are feeling suitably renewed for the coming season.**

It's been a good summer for us with lots of activity in between breaks to enjoy the sun and other summer treats.

We formally launched the Nene Integrated Catchment Plan on Earth Day (June 5th), many partners joined us for this event at the Wellingborough Museum where Simon Newell presented a summary of the plan and where discussions began about the new Nene Catchment Partnership, please see more in later sections of the newsletter.

A press release has been sent to Nene Valley News and various local newspapers promoting a series of four Community Panel meetings for Summer Leys and Mary's Lake due to start at the end of September. This is part of the NIA initiative to involve local community in managing areas which are important to them and is open to anyone who would like to be a member of the panel to discuss future management of these two areas.

We have also been working closely with East Northamptonshire Council and the Leader Program for Northamptonshire on the development of 'local food' projects that will provide the opportunity to showcase and market some of the incredible local product and producers we have in our region and we are looking forward to seeing how these projects take shape in the coming months.

Planning for the coming planting season for the Forests for Life project is underway and we are aiming for 6 and 10 hectares of planting in the Rockingham Forest area this winter which we will deliver in partnership with the Woodland Trust and Groundwork Northamptonshire.

Another piece of exciting news is that the River Nene Regional Park will be taking a leap into the new millennium with a completely redesigned and redeveloped website. The new site will cross platforms (work on all size screens), link directly with social media and allow us to change content without always requiring the support of an IT professional. The work on the new site is being completed pro-bono by an incredibly talented UK outfit called TOLRAnet. The generosity of this company has saved us tens of thousands of pounds (I think they took on rather more than they imagined when they agreed to allow us to be their charity piece for this year) so I would like to say an enormous thank you to Cindy and Paul for all your enthusiasm, patience and incredible skills. Look out for the updated site in September!

Our first foray into the micro beer business with RNRP's 'Off the Hook' has proved a successful venture. A big thank you to all those who have supported 'Off the Hook'. If you are hoping to buy some please be quick, as there are only 11 cases left out of the original 120!

I invite you to enjoy the updates on projects in the following pages and as always welcome your feedback and comments.



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## Nene Integrated Catchment Management Plan

Earth Day (June 5th) saw the formal launch of the Nene Integrated Catchment Management Plan. This plan was almost three years in the making and would not have been possible without the help and support of so many partners so the credit for this achievement must be spread far and wide. That said I would like to offer my congratulations and gratitude to Simon Newell for coordinating the process and for preparing the document.

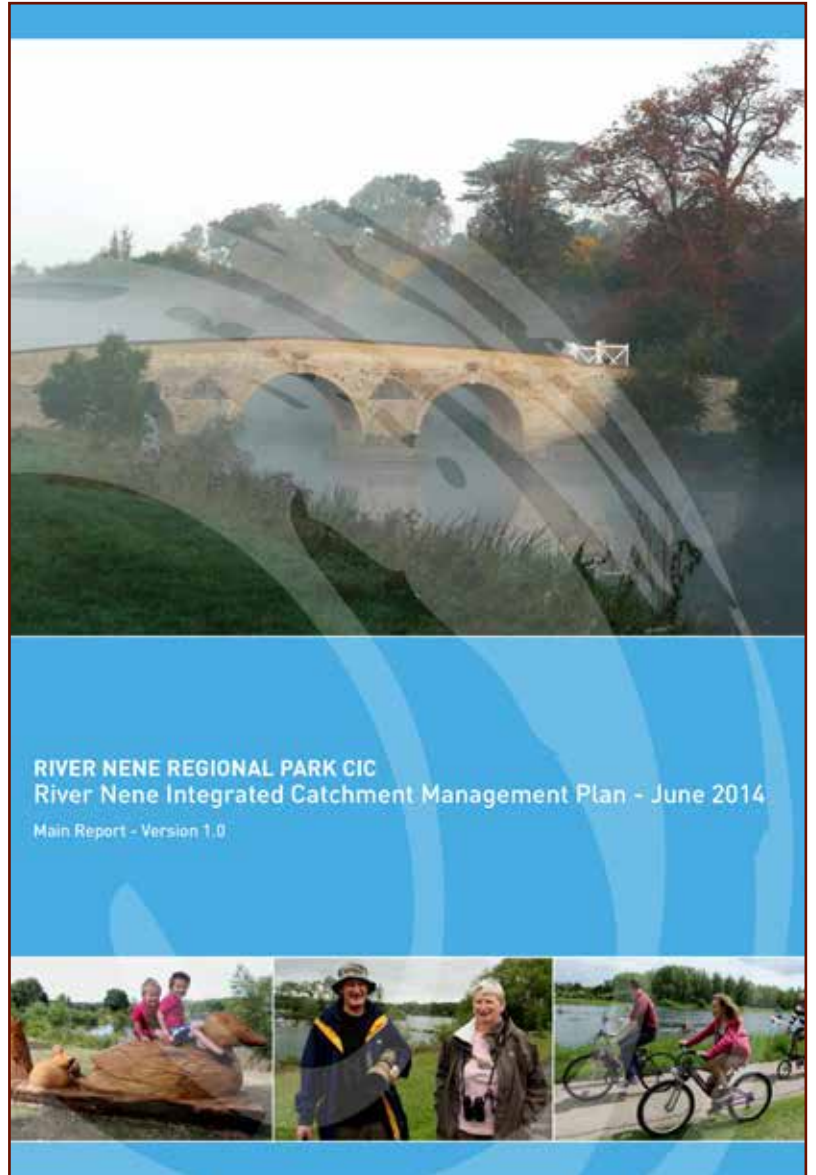
The launch was held at the Wellingborough Museum and we were joined by a large number of our partners and stakeholders who were treated to a summary presentation from Simon Newell as well as presentations on the National Catchment Based Approach and next steps.

Following on from the Integrated Catchment Management Plan, and in line with government's vision, we launched the Nene Catchment Partnership and invited interested from those present at the launch to be part of this exciting initiative. I'm pleased to say there is a great deal of enthusiasm for the partnership and the first meeting was held in early July. This meeting was facilitated by Phil Newby from Green Ventures and the format, inclusive and participatory, was very well received. At the meeting we considered what the partnership might contribute to each of us in our individual roles and how we might build upon that to create real value in working together to tackle land and water management issues.

Over the next few meetings we will refine our vision, set our objectives and decide how we want to work together moving forward. The partnership is open to anyone and we currently have representatives from recreational groups, land owners, industry, local government and government agencies as well as the volunteer and community sector. The River Nene Regional Park as the partnership host is keen to hear from anyone who has an interest in joining the partnership or just being kept up to date as it develops further.

The Nene Catchment Partnership is one of 108 Partnerships being established to cover all of the British River Catchments. The partnerships are hosted by a variety of groups including the Wildlife Trust and Rivers Trusts and the whole network are coordinating to deliver the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) for England. For the policy behind this please see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/catchment-based-approach-improving-the-quality-of-our-water-environment> and for additional information you can visit <http://www.catchmentbasedapproach.org/>

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



Forests for Life **Rockingham**

While it's not possible to undertake tree planting during the summer months this is our opportunity to take stock and to plan for the coming season. We have benefitted this summer from work undertaken by the County and the Wildlife Trust in the form of opportunity mapping and integrating this with other information has identified several potential planting sites.

Negotiation and assessment of these sites will continue over the next few weeks with a view to planting this winter.

As was covered in the previous newsletter (Summer 2014) we are looking for opportunities to expand this project from simple woodland creation to ways that enhance the value of existing woodlands to local communities. This may be by improving access and interpretation, by promoting and enabling access and distribution of wild foods from the forest or by enabling the extraction of other products and traditional crafts. We are, as always, working with others to realise some of these aspirations and it's early days but we have been boosted in our efforts by the very generous support of our first corporate sponsor who is inspired by our vision for this project and is pleased to be associated with it.

**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 heavily lowered much of Northamptonshire. However pressure from agriculture and development resulted in much of the ancient forest being lost, leading to widespread habitat destruction and fragmentation. This has a disastrous impact upon a variety of species including butterflies, such as the now extinct Chaugrove Skipper butterfly, as well as bats and mammals.

To address the issue of woodland fragmentation across Northamptonshire the Blue Home Regional Park (BHRP) in partnership with the Woodland Trust and Groundwork Northamptonshire has funding for landowners to create woodland where it meets the following priorities:

- Protects and enhances existing ancient woodland through bridges and buffering
- Buffers or increases the size of existing ancient woodland
- Releases 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-derived onsite.
- Financial support with grants of between **£6000-£8000 per hectare** to help with purchasing, planting and initial maintenance of trees. (Note: 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 heathland. We can help you check this if you're unsure.
- Ideally we want to select 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 1,200 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

Finally, I have now completed the habitat walkovers of the navigable section of the River Nene in the Nature Improvement Area – in other words, the section of river from Northampton town centre to the Dog In A Doublet sluice, just downstream of Peterborough. Along that 143km-long stretch of river, I have identified approximately 350 potential projects that will improve the habitats and ecology of the river. These projects range from very minor improvements, 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. As explained in the previous newsletter, I am therefore developing these projects, starting with the twelve that I have prioritised. Some of these will fall by the wayside for a variety of reasons, such as issues with site access or concerns that our proposals will increase the risk of flooding to nearby properties. Any projects that do get dropped will be replaced with others. The idea is that by the end of March 2015 we will have 20 projects that are fully scoped out and designed, with permissions in place, so that they can be implemented when money is available. I have also started to assess the river between Daventry and Northampton. When those walkovers are complete, I will assess the river's tributaries around Corby, namely the Southern Stream, the Northern Stream and Harpers Brook.



*Figure 1: the view from West Bridge, Northampton, looking upstream. Foot Meadow Island is on the left. Vegetation has recently been cleared from the bank, the steepness of which is clearly evident. Note also that the bare bank is prone to erosion, bringing silt into the river. We propose to make the bank less steep, which will provide additional flood storage, will diversify habitats and will make the area safer - it will be easier for anyone that has fallen into the river to get out again.*

1.3km-long section of river runs from Foot Meadow Island, adjacent to Northampton railway station, to the confluence with the Kislingbury Branch of the river near the Carlsberg brewery. There is a cap on the limit we can bid for, so we will have to carefully target our proposals. We are likely to focus on giving the steep banks (Figure 1) a much more gentle gradient (improving habitats, providing more flood storage and making the area safer) and installing vegetated coir rolls along the areas of sheet piling (Figure 2) and vertical brick wall, which currently look unsightly and provide little by way of habitats. We will also look at removing weeds such as nettles and non-native vegetation such as Himalayan balsam, which blight the river's margins.

As you may recall, I have spent a great deal of time recently developing a project in Peterborough that involves the installation of pre-vegetated coir (coconut matting) rolls to "green up" 640m of the river's northern bank through the city centre, which currently consists of concrete and sheet piling. Peterborough City Council had paid for a trial section to be built and we had hoped that they would pay for the main works to be completed. However, a couple of months ago, Simon Bonney, the EA's lead for the Water Framework Directive in the Nene catchment, alerted me that the government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) were seeking bids for river improvement projects. I therefore submitted a bid and, luckily, was successful in gaining full funding for the project. I have subsequently recently returned to site with the contractor that is likely to carry out the work for us, finalising design details. The best time to install vegetated coir rolls is in early spring (giving the plants a whole growing season to become established), so we will carry out the work in February or March 2015.

We are also about to submit a bid to the government's Catchment Restoration Fund to bring about improvements to the river's Brampton Branch in central Northampton. This



*Figure 2: the vertical sheet-piling on the River Nene's Brampton Branch immediately downstream of West Bridge. The piling is unsightly and provides almost no habitat. Our proposed vegetated coir rolls will help to disguise the piling and will provide much-needed habitat.*

Please don't think that we are only looking at urban areas! We have recently made a tentative agreement with a farmer near Oundle so that we will modify his cattle-drinker in order to reduce the amount of silt getting into the river. The farmer has had the right idea and has fenced off the river to prevent his cattle trampling down the banks. He has included a 15m-long cattle-drinker so that the cows keep access to water. However, the design of the drinker means that a great deal of silt is still getting into the river (Figure 3). We will therefore improve the drinker by placing geotextile matting on the bare soil, which will then be overlain by at least 250mm depth of cobbles, stones with a diameter of between 100-150mm. This project is to be funded through Objective 4 of the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area, namely strengthen the ecological network through engagement with farmers and landowners, which is being led by the Land Advisor, Robin Field.

Furthermore, I was recently invited by Rockingham Forest Trust to give advice on how to remedy some areas of river erosion at Stanwick Lakes. Whilst there, I took advantage of the opportunity to discuss potential projects to improve two nearby backwaters on the river, some 400m apart. Backwaters are natural features on a river, and are indeed usually part of the river's previous course. Both these backwaters were formed when the river was straightened, presumably to ease navigation. Over time, the mouths of both backwaters have slowly silted up, disconnecting them from the river. Again, this is a completely natural process (it is how an oxbow lake is formed), but it will prevent fish from being able to reach important spawning and refuge habitat. In an ideal world, we would allow the natural processes to proceed. However, the River Nene, like so many others of our rivers, has fewer fish than it ought to have, so we should do everything we can to help improve the fish populations. Rockingham Forest Trust were happy for us to develop both these projects, which will involve using an excavator to remove the silt that has disconnected the backwaters from the river.

We are also working with the Environment Agency (EA) to improve a section of backchannel habitat at Leather Mills near Cogenhoe Caravan Park. The EA are soon to carry out repairs to a sluice structure and have offered that whilst they have large machinery on site doing that work, they could then do some habitat improvement work. We therefore agreed that the best thing they could do would be to create a backwater off one of the channels. This work will hopefully take place in October.



*Figure 3: a great deal of soil is getting into the river from the cattle-drink area.*

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

### Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area Land Advice

The final transitional High Level Stewardship applications are now all completed and at Natural England. Two of these are progressing, with one completed and another almost complete. The third one at Papley is still awaiting final approval by all sides.

Meadow restoration projects have been completed at Kingsthorpe North Meadows (part of the Coronation meadows project) and Fotheringhay (Land Advisor (LA) fund), with further projects lined up for Hunsbury Hill and Chester Farm (both LA fund).

A Catchment Sensitive Project has been confirmed as running in the Lower Nene for another year (until end March 2015) and we will be running a series of events to highlight key issues that have an effect on water quality.

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. Most have been successful with 18 getting grants this year. The only ones not receiving grants this year are ones who have had a couple of grants before. This year the scoring system favoured new applicants.

The work of the Land Advisor has been showcased this year with a paper given at the Floodplain Meadow Partnerships conference in June, an article in the Ranger magazine in August and a further paper will be given at the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management conference in Edinburgh later in the year.

**For further information, please contact Dr Robin Field: Tel: 01604 367243 Email: [rfield@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:rfield@northamptonshire.gov.uk)**







## 'Off The Hook' Beer Selling Well

The following outlets stock 'Off The Hook' beer:

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