

## NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2012

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RIVER NENE REGIONAL PARK  
**INSPIRED SPACES**

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## Welcome to Jez Elkin

Jez, RNRP's new Project Officer brings with him extensive experience of biodiversity/wildlife planning and habitat management. He joins us from Buckinghamshire County Council where he worked as a Biodiversity Officer co-ordinating the delivery of the Biodiversity Action Plan. He also worked as a Nature Conservation Officer for Waltham Forest Council in East London where he managed many nature reserves and community organisations. Jez will be taking the Revital-ISE project forward and in addition, supporting the Rockingham Forest for Life Project.

There are also four appointments that have recently been made as part of the wider package that will support the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area, details of which are set out later in this newsletter.



## Revital-ISE Project

The Revital-ISE project is now being taken forward by Jez Elkin, RNRP's new Project Officer who is also supporting and developing the Rockingham Forest for Life project. His current priorities for Revital-ISE, which support the objectives of the Water Framework Directive, are the management and improvement of the condition of the River Ise and Meadows SSSI, as well as the stretches upstream of this site.

These include the restoration of a meander in Rushton, which will reduce the sediments being deposited in the Site of Special Scientific Interest, and the delivery of in-channel and bankside habitat improvements throughout the SSSI. This work is being carried out in partnership with the Environment Agency and Natural England with work planned to start in Autumn 2012 for completion by Winter 2013/14.

Revital-ISE will also implement in-channel improvements on the Ise between Warkton and Wicksteed Park, including the River Ise Park in Kettering, with the work being carried out by the Environment Agency in 2013. In addition, the community organisation, Natural-ISE, will continue to undertake management work in this public open space, with support from Revital-ISE.



**For further details, please contact Jez Elkin:**

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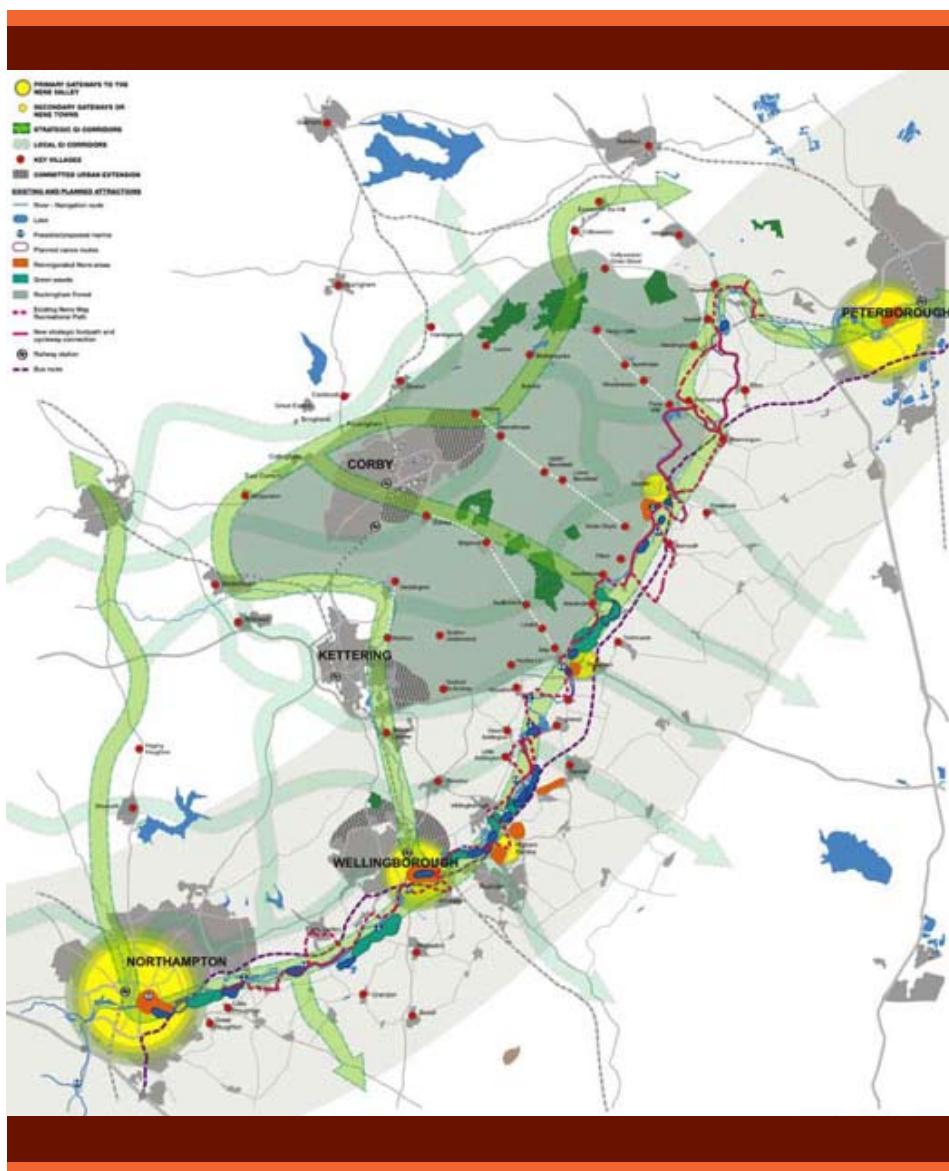
## The Nene Valley Strategic Plan

The Nene Valley Strategic Plan (NVSP) provides an overview of environmental initiatives for the Nene Valley from Northampton to Peterborough and was developed through a period of extensive consultation with partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Since its launch it has provided a framework for the development of a collaborative approach to the implementation of a wide range of environmental measures, which are being delivered through effective partnership working that will secure a wide range of social and economic benefits.

The NVSP complements Northamptonshire County Council's "Green Arc" and its daughter document 'Towards a Naturally Resilient and Low Carbon Northamptonshire', which act as a focus for the Local Nature Partnership, for which government approval has recently been granted. NCC's document identifies seven aspects of eco-systems services that support Northamptonshire's environment and economy, and each of these is reflected in the NVSP document through one or more of its five "themes". These include: a more enjoyed River Nene, improved Nene towns, a living countryside, a connected Nene Valley and enhanced natural and cultural attractions.

The plan highlights a number of areas that could be addressed, such as the development of the primary and secondary towns as gateways to the Nene Valley, addressing the needs of local communities and visitors to the valley, the potential for a winter economy and that of the catchment area in terms of visitor attractions and job creation. These themes were developed to ensure that the plan addressed issues that centred on, but were wider than, the natural environment to ensure that there would be tangible social and economic benefits from its partnership delivery, and are being taken forward by the following initiatives.

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## Nature Improvement Area (NIA)

A number of the Nene Valley Strategic Plan themes are also being taken forward and delivered through the Nene Nature Improvement Area (NIA). This will support partners in the development of a more resilient ecological network based on the themes of; growth and development, public awareness and access, river environment, farming and land management and markets for ecosystem services.

Heather Webb, the new Natural Development Officer, based at County Hall, will address the first of the NIA's five key NIA objectives, 'growth and development'. Her role is to ensure that these objectives are embedded in planning policies and that, in conjunction with the Joint Planning Units, to strengthen the relationship between landscape scale change and planning policy and its ability to secure a positive contribution to a coherent ecological network.

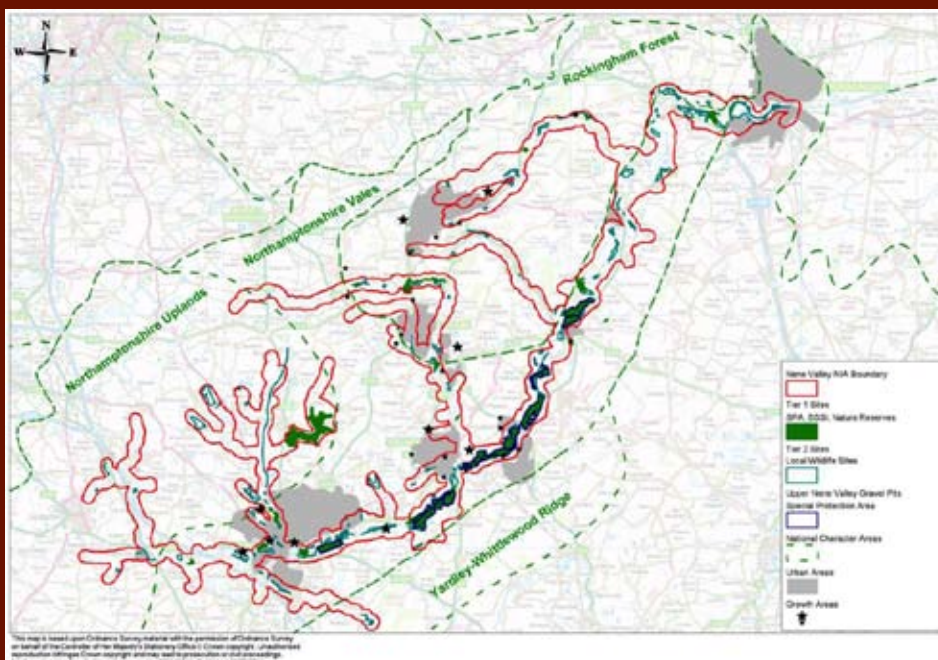
RSPB are addressing the second objective 'access and awareness' and have begun the process of short-listing, interviewing and engaging consultants. The successful consultancy will then undertake a visitor access study, produce a visitor engagement plan, integrate the NIA into recreation and tourism strategies and the delivery of implementation plans through public and private investment, including contributions from developers.

Simon Whitton, the recently appointed River Restoration Advisor for the River Restoration Centre, hosted by Cranfield

University, will be working from RNRP's office in County Hall. His role is to tackle the third NIA objective, 'to improve the ecological status of the river and enhance its ecosystem service provision'. He will be working closely with RNRP's Jez Elkin, the Revital-ISE Project Officer, Neil Monaghan, who is leading on NICP, and colleagues at the Wildlife Trust and Northamptonshire County Council.

He will also be working closely with Dr Robin Field, the Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer, who has since been appointed as the NIA's Land Advisor. In this role, he will deliver the fourth objective, which is to 'Strengthen the ecological network through effective engagement with farmers and landowners'. Working closely with the Wildlife Trust, he will develop action plans with priority areas for agri-environmental advice, Whole Farm Environment Plans and High Level Stewardship agreements, revised BAP habitat creation and restoration targets, a landowner engagement strategy, ground habitat improvements, research into possible long term funding and scoping for a landscape partnership

The University of Northampton are leading on the fifth objective, which is to 'investigate the potential to market the ecosystem services provide by the Nene Valley'. They are appointing a post-doctoral research associate who, supported by access to the wider expertise within the university, will work closely with other academic and professional centres within the NIA partnership. In addition, a university funded PhD student will be appointed in 2012 to focus on how different habitat types in the Nene Valley support populations of pollinators.



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## Nene Integrated Catchment Pilot

The Nene Integrated Catchment Management Plan (NICMP), supported by Defra and the Environment Agency and hosted by RNRP, is one of a number of strategic initiatives that supports, develops and helps to implement the NVSP. Its purpose is to inform the second phase of the Anglian region's River Basin Management Plan (due in 2015), which sets out to meet the objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD).

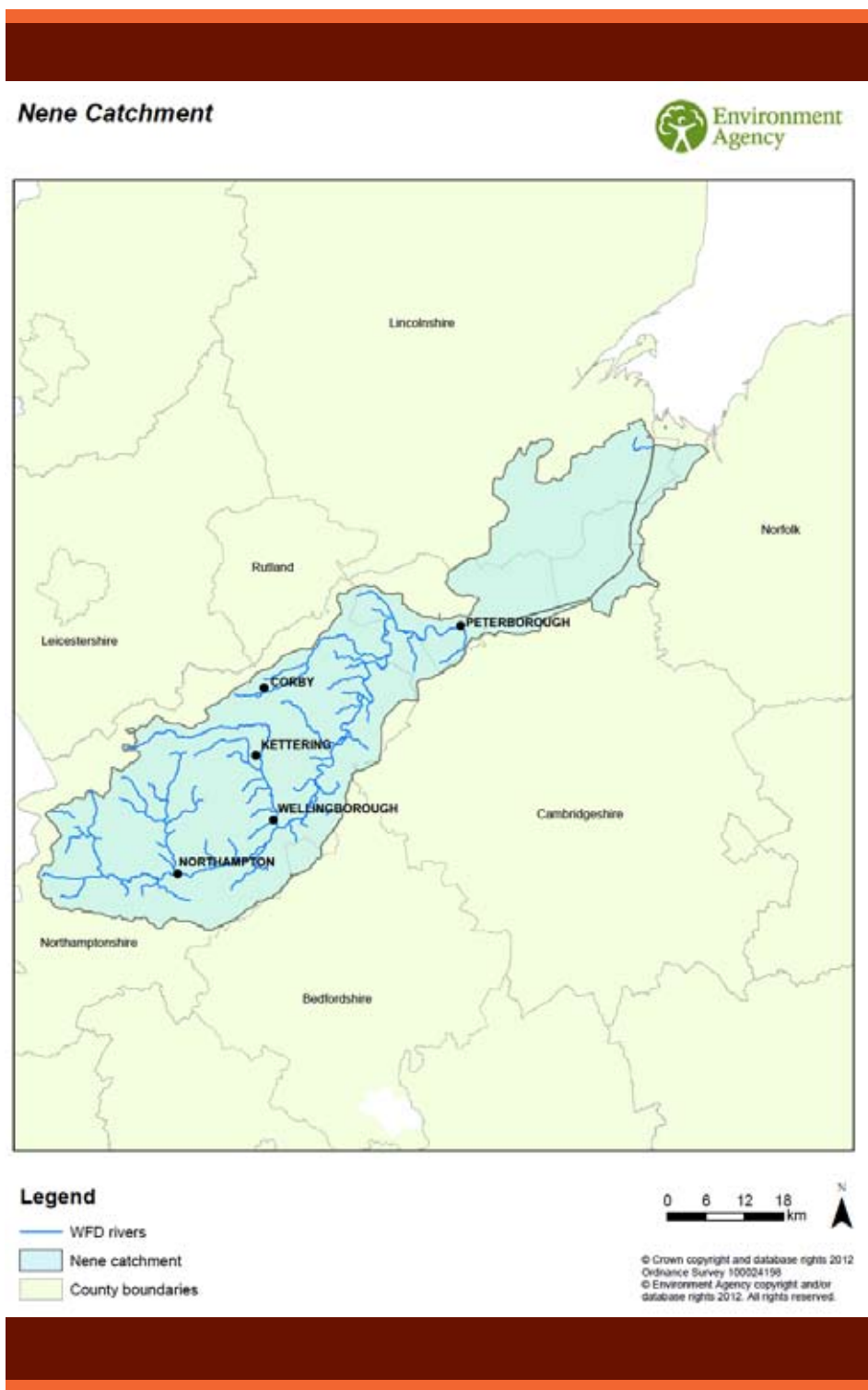
The study focuses on the River Nene, its tributaries and their catchment areas, covers most of Northamptonshire and the former Soke of Peterborough, and will provide a sound basis for projects within this catchment. The current evaluation phase of the pilot will continue until March 2013. This will engage partners, communities and other stakeholders in developing an integrated approach to the protection and enhancement of the river catchment.

As part of the study there has been a strong focus on the urban waterfront areas of Northampton and Peterborough, where issues and opportunities have already been identified that will support the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and the NVSP. Detailed walkovers of the urban reaches of both the River Nene in Northampton and Peterborough are taking place, involving a wide range of stakeholders. These will identify WFD issues that need to be addressed, and offer solutions which will also inform spatial planning and regeneration.

These opportunities will be set out in a report at the end of the year, along with proposals as to how they should be tackled to inform the River Basin Management Plans.

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## Rockingham Forest for Life

The Rockingham Forest for Life project is now moving towards implementation, having recently received Section 106 funding for woodland creation in the Rockingham Forest. The Rockingham Forest, a former Royal Hunting Forest founded by William the Conqueror in the 11th century, retains a significant amount of Ancient Woodland, which provides valuable habitats for a wide range of flora and fauna.

The project aims to protect and enhance the character and diversity of the Forest by linking and buffering areas of Ancient Woodland. This will increase their ability to act as habitat reservoirs and, importantly, create wildlife corridors that will allow the migration of species, which may otherwise be at threat of extinction if they are unable to cope with climatic or other environmental changes.

RFfL aims to create 40 hectares of new woodland each year, thereby capturing carbon dioxide, one of the greenhouse gasses that contribute to climate change. It also seeks to secure private sector investment that will provide additional funding to encourage the planting of sites that would not otherwise come forward. It will do so by offering funding to secure the carbon reporting rights that can then be passed on to private sector sponsors who are looking for a suitable local scheme that would help them demonstrate their green credentials, introduce environmental management systems, address corporate social responsibility and reduce their carbon footprints.

Jez will shortly be seeking expressions of interest from both landowners who feel that they may have suitable sites for woodland creation, for which they would receive carbon funding, and from private sector potential project sponsors who would benefit from being associated with the RFfL project. The scheme will not only capture carbon but safeguard and enhance the character of the Rockingham Forest, improve wildlife habitats, increase connectivity and the areas resilience to climate change.

The Rockingham Forest for Life website is shortly to be updated to include details of how to submit expressions of interest and the nature of the application process.

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## Kingsthorpe North Meadow Charitable Trust

The Trust purchased 12 acres of wet meadows adjacent to the Brampton Nene a couple of years ago and has received advice on its management from both RNRP and the Wildlife Trust. The site is now developing well with a range of wildflowers returning and a formal management plan in place. With support from RNRP, the Trust applied to 'Awards for All' for a grant of almost £10,000, and has just learned that they have been successful. Over the next few months they will be using the grant for the publication of site leaflets, the installation of interpretation panels, access improvements, hand tools for site management, volunteer training and community events.

**For further details please contact Dr Robin Field NIA Land Advisor:**

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## Catchment Sensitive Farming

Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) is a partnership project between Natural England, the Environment Agency and RNRP. The Nene Catchment Partnership operates on the upper Nene and Ise catchments and provides advice on farming to landowners within these areas.

The main issues of concern are sedimentation, phosphates and metaldehyde (slug pellets) that can discharge into the water table, rivers and streams from the adjacent land. To help counteract issues such as these, the partnership gives free one to one advice, runs workshops and on-farm events, and provides guidance for a Capital Grant Scheme.

The application window for the Capital Grant Scheme has closed for this year, although several farmers have already been successful with applications for funding. The rest of applications will be determined by Natural England within the next two weeks with approved work to be completed by February next year.

A six month project on the Lower Nene has just been approved by Natural England, so a series of targeted visits will be taking place between October 2012 and the end of March 2013. This will supplement the work funded by the NIA.

**For further details contact the Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer Dr Robin Field:  
Tel: 01604 367243 Email: [rfield@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:rfield@northamptonshire.gov.uk)**

## Destination Nene

**Taking the economic development, leisure and recreational aspects of the Nene Valley Strategic Plan forward, Destination Nene Valley aims to better interpret Northamptonshire's green visitor economy credentials by focussing on the River Nene from Wellingborough to Oundle, which has a strong track record in attracting visitors, locally and from further afield.**

The project will raise the profile and potential reach of this important group of sustainable businesses, promote the resulting 'revitalised' product and address gaps in access to green infrastructure. It is being taken forward in partnership with local businesses / organisations, RNRP and Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership, in conjunction with East Northamptonshire Council.



A number of Nene Valley initiatives were launched in Easter 2012 including a Nene Valley website, new interpretation boards, a map and use of social media for promotion.

Further plans include:

- The establishment of a Nene Valley project board
- NEP / ENC and partner support for the Nature Improvement Area project
- A broader geographic scope and more targeted communications, providing an opportunity to engage with new partners / audiences
- Resources permitting, a more proactive approach to attracting hotel development to key sites in the Nene Valley
- A focus on Nene Valley food and drink / heritage / 2012 / culture and arts projects
- Foundation projects such as the development of skills
- The development of a Nene Valley T-BID (Tourism Business Improvement District)



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RIVER NENE REGIONAL PARK  
INSPIRED SPACES

Protect **natural and cultural assets**  
Improve **health and well being**  
Tackle **climate change**  
Increase **leisure and recreation opportunities**  
Promote **Northamptonshire**  
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](http://www.riverneneregionalpark.org)