

PRESS RELEASE:

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National Lottery support for ‘New Life on the Old West’ project to benefit Cambridgeshire Fens

Cambridgeshire ACRE is delighted that it has received initial support* from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the ‘New Life on the Old West’ project. Made possible by National Lottery players, the project aims to improve public understanding of the vulnerable biodiversity in the landscape around the Cambridgeshire Fens’ Old West River, whilst developing demonstration sites to showcase new ways of working on the area’s community green spaces and ditch network.

Development funding of £99,000 has also been awarded to help Cambridgeshire ACRE progress its plans, allowing the organisation to develop this project throughout 2018 working towards a full grant application of £729,900 to deliver the project from 2019 until 2022.



Community green space in Cottenham.
Image: ©Cambridgeshire ACRE

The landscape on either side of the Old West River is recognised as a stronghold for many rare and endangered species such as Turtle doves, water voles, water beetles and aquatic plants such as Water Violet and Greater Water Parsnip. This area, with its many local settlements on either side of the Old West River, contains a great number of community green spaces and an extensive network of ditches and wetland habitats. Together, these contribute to its high biodiversity value, making this a vital ecological corridor which links the internationally significant wetland reserves of National Trust’s Wicken Fen and RSPB Ouse Fen.

The project brings together 30 expert conservation and land management organisations who will work collectively to achieve the project vision of creating resilience for the area’s priority habitats and species, to counter their ongoing decline. This collaborative approach provides a unique opportunity to test a landscape-scale conservation approach that has not been undertaken before in the Fens in this manner.

The project will instigate habitat improvements at multiple locations across the landscape. These will be highly visible to communities and landowners, providing for stronger connections with their natural heritage. The project will create visible demonstration sites where the impact on the area’s natural heritage will be monitored and where communities and landowners can showcase that it is possible to be wildlife-friendly without compromising land function, influencing others to adopt similar management practices.

There will be many opportunities for local people, communities and schools to join in the citizen science, volunteering and events programmes that will be developed, to learn about and to connect with their diverse fenland natural heritage and community green spaces. A variety of training will also be delivered to help increase people’s knowledge of how best to maintain the assets in their care and safeguard the area’s vulnerable biodiversity.



Stretham Old Engine in the Cambridgeshire Fens landscape.
Image: ©Cambridgeshire ACRE

Commenting on the award, Kirsten Bennett, Cambridgeshire ACRE’s Chief Executive said: *“This is wonderful news for the communities in the Cambridgeshire Fens. We are particularly grateful to all those local National Lottery players who will now see their community green spaces improved. Local landowners will also be able to benefit from wildlife-friendly improvements on their ditches and arable land. The demonstration sites will enable local people to proudly display wildlife-friendly management practices, the project supporting local parishes and community groups in their important work.”*



The Old West River near Twenty Pence road crossing. Image: ©Cambridgeshire ACRE

Notes to editors

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. www.hlf.org.uk. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #HLFsupported.

* Heritage Grants (HG) applications are assessed in two rounds. New Life on the Old West has initially been granted round one development funding of £99,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund, allowing it to progress with its plans. Detailed proposals are then considered by HLF at second round, where a final decision is made on the full funding award of £729,900.

About Cambridgeshire ACRE

Cambridgeshire ACRE is an independent charitable company founded in 1924. As the rural community council for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough we are one of 38 similar organisations across England, collectively known as the ACRE Network.

The main purpose of the charity's work is to give encouragement, practical help and support to rural communities throughout Cambridgeshire and Peterborough enabling them to plan and develop as vibrant places to live and work.

Find out more about our work at <http://www.camsacre.org.uk/>, or on Facebook ([@camsacre](#)) or Twitter ([@camsacre](#)).



About the New Life on the Old West project:

More information about this exciting new project can be found at:

Website: <https://newlifeontheoldwest.wordpress.com/>

Twitter: [@NewLifeOldWest](https://twitter.com/NewLifeOldWest)

Facebook: [@newlifeontheoldwest](https://www.facebook.com/newlifeontheoldwest)

#NewLifeOldWest

#OldWestRiver

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