



Little Ouse Headwaters Charity

Annual Report of the Trustees 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2004

Landmarks

This report covers the first full year of the LOHC's existence as a registered charity and company. It was an exceptionally busy year for the group. We purchased our first parcel of land, won the East Anglian Daily Times Wildflower Sites Award and were successful in securing major European funding and a grant from the Shell Better Britain fund. We re-instated grazing management on the Frith and the Lows, opened 2 km of new permissive paths and saw growing participation at volunteer work parties work and public events. This report details these achievements and summarises our finances for the year.

Land management

The Charity is now responsible for the management of nearly 100 acres (39ha) of land. During the year we extended the area that we manage with the purchase of 5.4 acres (2.2ha) of degraded, open fen and wet woodland at the western end of Blo'Norton Fen. We have named this piece of land 'Betty's Fen' after Betty Williams, the former owner, who wanted us to own and manage it. We are especially pleased with this purchase as it adds to the area we manage within the designated Site of Special Scientific Interest and European Special Area of Conservation (part of what is known throughout Europe as the Natura 2000 network). We have drawn up a Management Plan with English Nature and work will start to restore the open fen habitat and create access for the public in 2005.

Management work on the Frith and the Lows has continued. After the sterling efforts of our volunteers in removing huge amounts of rubbish from these fields, the pile of scrap that was threatening to become a permanent feature was removed, and new fencing, access gates and water troughs installed. The vegetation on these sites is showing significant improvement, with numbers of species typical of acid grasslands and fens increasing under the new grazing regime. We are most grateful to our graziers Mr and Mrs Jenkins, whose sheep and cattle graze the Frith and Lows. Stinging nettles and thistles continue to be a problem and the grazing has to be supplemented by regular topping.

On our wet fen sites, the Blo' Norton and Hinderclay Fens, we carried out our now routine summer mowing and raking-off of the vegetation, helping to restore their botanical interest and improve the habitat for fenland birds such as snipe, water rail and reed and sedge warblers. A small pilot area of alder and sallow scrub was cleared to assess recovery of the fen flora at the western end of Hinderclay Fen.

As well as clearing a small proportion of the recent scrub from the wet fens, we have invested in improving the hedges and woodland on the drier soils. On the Frith some of the oaks in the hedge were re-pollarded by expert tree surgeons and 100m of hedging was planted. To retain the landscape character of the field, new standard trees were planted and the old pine circle was re-instated by planting new trees donated by the Forestry Commission. Tree guards were constructed to protect these trees from sheep and rabbits.

Involving people

The LOHC really is its volunteers. Since we have no paid staff, our dependence on volunteers, and our indebtedness to them, cannot be overemphasized.

Our conservation volunteers worked as hard as ever this year at our regular work parties. The emphasis at work parties changed from clearing rubbish and removing scrub from fence lines to the more constructive tasks of planting trees and hedges, mowing and raking fen vegetation, and clearing recent scrub from the open fens. Additional volunteer hours were logged up by those keeping paths clear, installing water troughs and making, and putting-up, nestboxes suitable for a variety of species. A major biological recording day in July brought in expert volunteers from across the region to start to build an inventory of the wildlife on our sites.

Part of our Heritage Lottery funding is set-aside for volunteer training. Two of our volunteers successfully completed a week-long course and passed the subsequent test in the maintenance and use of

chainsaws. Ten volunteers attended a training course on the use of hand tools as part of one of our work parties.

As well as those who volunteer to help restore the sites that we manage, many other people contributed expertise and time to help run the project. We are very grateful to everyone who makes a contribution to the success of this project.

In line with our stated policy, for practical management tasks that are beyond the scope of volunteer work parties, we continued to use local suppliers and contractors as much as possible.

We were particularly pleased to be able to involve more children in the project this year. The younger children from St Andrew's School, North Lopham, together with the South Lopham Estates Charity Trustees, planted many of the new trees on the Frith and will be able to watch as them grow over the years. All the mature oaks around the Frith were tagged by members of the local Wildlife Watch group so that their development and use by wildlife could be monitored.

We are always keen to see more people enjoying the landscape and wildlife of the sites that we manage. During the year we opened nearly 2km of permissive paths with map-boards, way-marking, footbridges and wide-access kissing gates. This created a circular walk around the Frith and the Lows and gave public access to these sites for the first time. These paths bring to a total of 4km the path network within our sites. These paths link to footpaths throughout the valley and to the paths at Redgrave and Lopham Fen National Nature Reserve. To encourage greater use of these paths, and foster understanding of the management and wildlife on our sites, we ran a well-attended series of both short and more substantial guided walks.

Membership

Our membership has remained at about 80 with many members becoming Friends of the Fens, with considerably benefits for the group's unrestricted funds.

Members of the Board of Trustees

Our Officers and Trustees remained unchanged during the year:

Reg Langston (President and trustee nominated by Hinderclay Parish Council)

Jo-Anne Pitt (Vice-President and trustee nominated by Blo'Norton Parish Council)

Helen Smith (Honorary Secretary)

Mike Wraight (Honorary Treasurer)

Paul Brown (Membership Secretary)

Nigel Clark

Rowena Langston

Bob Hayward (trustee nominated by Redgrave Parish Council)

Dan Haskin (trustee nominated by Thelnetham Parish Council)

Rob Webb (trustee nominated by South Lopham Parish Council)

Funding our work

Much of our management work this year was funded by a Heritage Lottery Fund 'Your Heritage' grant and a Countryside Stewardship (CS) scheme agreement. The HLF grant was a contribution of £49,400 towards a £76,741 project over a five-year period, starting in February 2003. The CS agreement is for ten years, and started on 10 October 2002. The income from this scheme varies from year-to-year. In August 2003 we were awarded £75,750 of European funding, over three years, as a contribution towards a £151500, project. This money comes from the EU's North Sea Commission Inter-Regional fund. It is administered by an international partnership, the Transnational Ecological Network (TEN) for which Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils act as the UK's lead partners. They administer the grants for a series of projects, including our own, along the Waveney/Little Ouse valley corridor. This funding has already enabled us to purchase Betty's Fen. We were also delighted to win £1000 from the East Anglian Daily Times Wildflower Sites Awards Scheme for the restoration of Blo'Norton Lows and to receive a grant of £1779 from the Shell Better Britain Campaign fund for a footpaths leaflet and disabled access improvements. We are very grateful to all of our funders.

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31ST MARCH 2004
LITTLE OUSE HEADWATERS CHARITY

<u>INCOMING RESOURCES</u>	<u>Unrestricted Funds</u>	<u>Restricted Funds</u>
Balance transferred to Company 7 March'03	119	
Subscriptions	488	
Donations and Legacies	7,319	
Rental Income	75	
Other Income	150	
Grants and Funding		43,824
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Total	8,151	43,824
<u>RESOURCES EXPENDED</u>	<u>Unrestricted Funds</u>	<u>Restricted Funds</u>
Habitat Management	445	18,229
Promotion/Volunteer Recruitment		213
Monitoring		588
Access		899
Training		982
Professional Fees	229	229
Insurance		320
Small Tools	4	1,300
Water Charges	333	333
Rent & Rates	1,925	
Land Purchase	2,750	2,750
Post & Stationery	13	159
Loan Repayment	262	
Petty Cash	7	
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Total	5,968	26,002
<u>FUND BALANCES at 31ST MARCH 2004</u>	2,183	17,822

Trustees Statement

This summary of our accounts was prepared by Diss Accounting and Taxation Services, in conjunction with Harriet Potter, based on the information supplied by Little Ouse Headwater Charity. Diss Accounting and Taxation Services act as our independent examiners: the LOHC is not required to have its Annual Accounts audited because its annual turn-over is too small. Our full, annual accounts will be submitted to the Charity Commission and the Registrar of Companies after approval by the Board of Trustees. Copies of these accounts can be obtained by writing to the Honorary Secretary, enclosing a stamped, self-addressed, A4 envelope.

We are very grateful to all of our funders for their contribution towards our work. We are also indebted to the LOHC's many volunteers. Although the very substantial financial value of their contribution does not appear in the annual accounts, we are able to cost it as match funding toward our Heritage Lottery Grant on the Frith and the Lows. During this financial year, for these two sites alone, this was equivalent to over £9,500.

The Little Ouse Headwater Charity (also known as the Little Ouse Headwaters Project- LOHP) is a company Limited by guarantee and is governed under company law by Memorandum and Articles of Association. The Company's registered number is 4684054 and its charity registration number is 1098232. Its registered office is Waveney Cottage, Redgrave Road, South Lopham, Diss, Norfolk IP22 2 JN.