

The ‘Brecks Fen Edge and Rivers’ Landscape Partnership Scheme wins £2m National Lottery grant Communities, schools and the landscape of the Brecks will benefit from another series of exciting landscape and heritage conservation projects thanks to a £2m grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The River Lark Catchment Partnership will play a significant role by partnering with the Environment Agency on delivering river restoration work and with Suffolk County Council’s Rights of Way team to deliver river path and access improvements.

Trustee Jim Stephens states “For the River Lark Catchment Partnership the five year Brecks Fen Edge and Rivers Landscape Scheme is a huge boost to our ambition to restore our precious chalk stream which over the centuries has been canalised and disfigured so that we can return it to a more natural habitat, enriching the river’s bio-diversity and improving its amenity value for our communities”

The RLCP has made great strides in creating since 2016 a lively and effective community-based group for the river Lark backed by major stakeholders and amenity groups. The RLCP complements work undertaken by the LAPS angling group and the Bury Trout Club.

RLCP has doubled the number of its volunteers working on the river this year and has worked in co-operation with the Bury Water Meadows Group who will be actively supporting the project.

Chairman Andrew Hinchley states : The river Lark is one of East Anglia’s only chalk streams and urgently needs support given over extraction and generally unsatisfactory environment. This grant will pay for much of the materials our volunteers need to do restoration work”

The RLCP plans restoration work across the entire length of the Lark which is within the Brecks, from Fornham All Saints/Fornham St Martin downstream as far as Isleham beyond Mildenhall..

Volunteer groups have already been formed in the Fornhams and Mildenhall and now with BFER, recruitment will be expanded all along the river..

Glenn Smithson, Restoration Co-ordinator for RLCP states: The BFER grant is most welcome, not only does it recognise the issues facing this rare watercourse and riparian areas but also the potential for massive improvement on a scale not seen before.

Our existing core of established and enthusiastic volunteers throughout the Catchment will be buoyed by this news and we hope to see their numbers grow in the future.’



: River Lark Catchment Partnership

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BFER Press release follows>

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Suffolk County Council and The Brecks Fen Edge & Rivers Landscape Partnership are delighted to announce that the proposal for a £3.5m landscape conservation scheme to follow hot on the heels of the popular ‘Breaking New Ground Landscape Partnership Scheme’ has been successful.

Made possible by National Lottery players, the £2m grant will unlock a further £1.5m in match funding from partners and volunteers, and will engage local communities, schools and like-minded organisations to understand, reveal, celebrate and protect the lost heritage of the Brecks’ Fen Edge & Rivers over the next 5 years.



The Brecks' Fen Edge & Rivers LP
BFER Scheme Area
The Brecks

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Rated as one of Britain’s top three landscapes for freshwater wildlife, the Brecks are home to nature as significant as that in the New Forest and the Broads. Across the scheme area lie biodiverse chalk streams and networks of ancient Pingo ponds.

Commenting on the award, Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection, said: *“I am delighted that we have been awarded this significant amount of funding for the Brecks Fen Edge & Rivers Scheme, as it demonstrates The National Lottery Heritage Fund’s continued confidence in Suffolk County Council and its partners to deliver high*

quality landscape scale heritage conservation projects. This is excellent news for the Brecks and Suffolk as a whole.”

Conservation efforts have long focused on the internationally important heaths and forests, but legacy development work from the Breaking New Ground Landscape Partnership identified significant risks and opportunities relating to this lesser-known watery landscape, which includes unique geology - the UK's only 6 fluctuating meres, and a significant percentage of nationally rare species.

The Brecks Fen Edge & Rivers Landscape Partnership Scheme will bring to the fore how the Brecks' fenland fringe, freshwater habitats and river corridors provided the conduit for biodiversity and early settlement of a hostile landscape. Although the area is famed for being sandy and dry, it is the watery landscapes that are the driving force behind the area's unique biodiversity, and its history of human settlement.

Anne Jenkins, Director, England: Midlands & East, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: *“Characterised by fascinating features such river valleys, chalk streams, nationally rare Pingo ponds and fluctuating meres, it is no surprise the Brecks are rated within the top three of the UK's freshwater habitats. We know that National Lottery players hold natural heritage projects, such as this ambitious Landscape Partnership Scheme, in high esteem and I am sure that many of them will be delighted to learn more about the area and its hidden natural treasures. We are also heartened by Suffolk County Council's commitment to preserving and exploring their natural heritage, and that our funding will enable their work and passion to continue and benefit the communities of the Norfolk and Suffolk Brecks.”*

Tina Cunnell, The Chairwoman of the Partnership Board, and Clerk of Thetford Town Council, said: *“The Brecks Fen Edge & Rivers Partnership has been working hard over the past 2 years to bring another large-scale landscape conservation scheme to Brecks and I am delighted that the bid has been successful. Thetford will be one of the key delivery hubs for a wide range of events and activities, as well as the base for the Delivery Team's office which is great news for the town.”*

The scheme will enable the partnership to capitalise on the successful 'Breaking New Ground Scheme' which ended in 2017, and engage local communities and partners in telling the story of the Brecks and to develop a sense of pride and belonging to this fascinating landscape that will translate into a long lasting legacy.

Structure of the Scheme

The scheme will deliver 24 innovative projects which will engage schools, landowners and communities, to highlight the value and sensitivity of water resources in the area, creating a legacy of awareness and conservation. A range of partners will work together to identify and improve the most sensitive sites and to create networks of high-quality habitats with the help of volunteers. Volunteers will be at the heart of the scheme, helping to carry out important restoration and improvement projects to riverside habitats and features, including work on migration routes for native trout and eels, riparian planting schemes, and restoration of lost (ghost) ponds. The projects will also provide opportunities for training and work experience to help preserve relevant local crafts and ancient building skills.

The projects will support the discovery and conservation of 'at-risk' archaeological features. Museum partners will deliver exciting exhibitions exploring the landscape heritage and history of archaeological discoveries.

Working with Suffolk's Rights of Way team, local authorities and access groups, missing footpath links and signage will be added, and accessibility improved. New engagement opportunities between conservation organisations, areas of deprivation in a least 5 local towns, and the health and well-being community will be created.

