

Biodiversity for All
Huntingdonshire District
Council



February 2022

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority awarded Huntingdonshire District Council a three-year £ 1.35 million bid to accelerate the delivery of measurable biodiversity net gain in Huntingdonshire.

HDC Climate Strategy adopted in 2023, including a Priority Action to

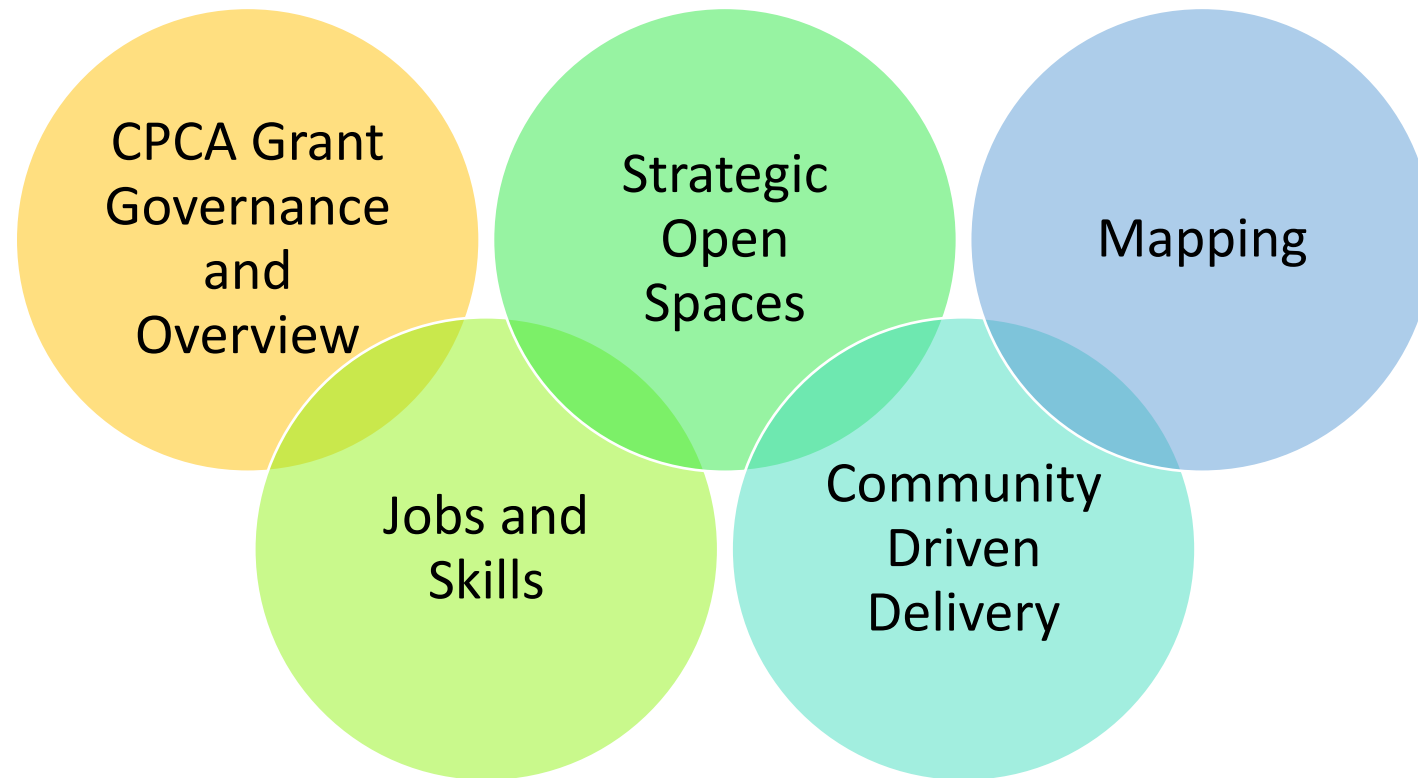
“Deliver a programme of biodiversity with the CPCA to include Community and Council Open Space”



Overview



There are five main elements to the project, and four of these elements have developed into their own work programme.



CPCA Grant

CPCA Grant/Project Management

Overview

The CPCA grant has enabled the Open Spaces team to recruit a Biodiversity for All project team. This Team sits in the Open Spaces services and reports to The Open Spaces and Countryside Operations Manager.

1x Part Time Project Manager (30 hours a week)

1x Part Time Project Support Officer (20 hours a week)

2x Full-Time Graduate Ecologists

Achievements

We have recruited two new Graduate Ecologist and we will be advertising for a new PT Project Support Officer. The Team has developed the project from a concept to a tangible delivery plan. The Team have also formalised the method underpinning the project's evidence-based approach with each site.

Planned

The Team have set out the delivery schedule for the project, which has developed into a program of work. The Team will also provide a service to external partners who apply for biodiversity audits through the grant scheme.

CPCA Grant Governance and Overview



ICARE Awards Nominee for Team Collaboration



Jobs and Skills

Jobs and Skills – Greenskills

Overview

Working with Groundworks East to deliver training and experience to individuals outside of work education and employment. Helping them achieve a City and Guilds Level 1 qualification in Horticulture whilst delivering evidence-based work on HDC-owned sites.

Achieved

There have been four successful projects delivered in this programme at the following locations:

1. Hinchbrook Country Park X 3
2. Spring Common X2
3. Regatta Meadow
4. Paxton Pits
5. Stuckeley Meadows
6. Berman Park
7. Huntingdon Riverside Park

Whats Been Delivered

- 37 volunteers have completed the course.
- Planted 1,387 trees and shrubs.
- Created 856.66m² of wildflower areas.
- 11 new habitats were created.
- 11 existing habitats quality were improved.
- total of approximately 6.09 biodiversity units added.

These habitat enhancements will support a range of native wildlife by providing essential resources for nesting, feeding, and shelter. Additionally, they will help strengthen climate change resilience in these wildlife havens.

Beyond ecological gains, the project has had a profound social impact. 67% of surveyed participants reported securing employment, and 100% stated that their mental health improved through their involvement.

Jobs and Skills

"This has been the best time of my life and the best working experience I have ever been part of."

"It's amazing, fun, makes you feel good"



Consultation Findings – Priory Park

Consultation Results

- 38 responses over a 4 week consultation period.
- The majority of responders support the biodiversity improvements.
- 16 responders offered additional ideas.
- Main concern from responders was the park appearing to shrink as areas of longer grass encroach on amenity areas and the areas looking scruffy if not maintained properly.

Key Deliverables

Transformation of the park into a parkland habitat overlooking a diverse grassland habitat. The park will be loosely zoned with the sports area kept as amenity grass. These are the key proposed changes;

- Improvement and expansion of Woodland areas
- New and improved Wildflower meadows
- Remove litter and improve water flow through ditches
- Installation of deadwood areas and bug hotels to provide habitats for invertebrates
- Pond restoration and boardwalk



A large, leafy green tree stands in a grassy field. In the background, a city skyline with several tall buildings is visible under a clear blue sky.

Consultation Findings – Hill Rise

Consultation Results

- 77 responses over a 4-week consultation period.
- The majority support the biodiversity improvements proposed.
- 34 responder raised additional issues to focus on.
- Similar concern as Priory Park responders regarding park appearing to shrink, as areas of longer grass encroach on amenity areas and the areas looking scruffy if not maintained properly.

Key Deliverables

Biodiversity improvements will seek to improve the habitats in the park. The central space will remain as amenity grass for football use and events. These are the key proposed changes;

- Enhance woodland and establish a mixed scrub buffer
- Plant cherry orchard trees
- Convert modified grassland to species rich neutral grassland
- Establish new species rich hedgerow to the South
- Ensure habitat continuity through new tree planting
- Enhance existing wildflower strip

Hill Rise Biodiversity Uplift:

HABITAT CREATED	NUMBER OF UNITS DELIVERED	REASON
Mixed scrub (planting of native species in a new scrub area)	-0.01	Loss of 0.38 units from loss of modified grassland (moderate) replaced with 0.37 units of mixed scrub (poor).
Other neutral grassland (wildflowers sown)	-0.04	Loss of 0.59 units from loss of modified grassland (moderate) replaced with 0.55 units of other neutral grassland (poor).
Urban trees (63)	0.79	Planting of 63 urban trees (poor).
Species rich native hedgerow	0.91	Planting of 3 species rich native hedgerows.
Total	0.74 habitat units (1.5% uplift) 0.91 linear units (85.85% uplift)	

Community Driven Delivery

Community Driven Delivery - Biodiversity Community Grant Scheme

Overview

The Biodiversity for All 'Community Biodiversity Grant' is an environmental grant scheme delivered by the Council's Biodiversity for All Team and funded via a grant from the CPCA.

There are **two separate** rounds of the Community Biodiversity Grant; both rounds will follow the same process.

1. The first is a Pilot round, which will take place in 2023/24
2. The full grant round will take place in 2024/25. Both rounds will follow the same process.

Each Grant round will be broken into a **two-stage process**.

1. Expression of Interest for a Biodiversity Audit of an identified site.
2. Application for a grant to deliver evidence-based ecological work.



Community
Driven
Delivery

Community Grant Pilot Round

Location	Organisation	Grant Application Score	Biodiversity Unit Baseline	Biodiversity Uplift
Coneygear	Huntingdon Town Council	26	51.3	0.19 habitat, 0.12 hedgerow
King George V Playing Field, Ramsey	Ramsey Town Council	23	12.35	0.22 habitat
Yaxley Recreation Ground	Yaxley Parish Council	27	32.57	1 habitat, 0.05 hedgerow
St Ives Outdoor Leisure Centre	Leisure Centre		33.51	-
Apreece Way, Stilton	Stilton Parish Council	28	0.39	0.3 habitat, 0.59 hedgerow
Woodland Area Bill Hall Way, Sawtry	Sawtry Parish Council	22	5.66	0.57 habitat
Oynetts Field, Warboys	Warboys Parish Council	29	12.67	11.97 habitat
The Old Cemetery, Cemetery Rd, St Neots	St Neots Town Council	29	15.99	3.8 habitat, 0.79 linear

Biodiversity Audit Summary – Buckden Recreation Ground

About the Site:

- A 4-acre nature park with pond, woodland, ditches, grassland, and new hedgerows.
- High potential for biodiversity improvement.
- Located in a conservation priority area for lapwing and great crested newt.

Current Ecological Conditions:

- **Pond:** Historic (dating back to 1780s), but in **poor condition** – duckweed and nutrient overload.
- **Woodland:** **Good condition**, but with non-native species and signs of nutrient enrichment.
- **Ditches:** **Poor condition**, shaded and with low species diversity.
- **Hedgerow:** **Newly planted**, will improve over time.

Biodiversity Units:

- 21.64 habitat units
- 1.76 linear units (hedgerows and ditches)
- **Potential uplift:** +53.51% habitat and +69.31% linear with enhancements

Recommendations & Opportunities

Habitat Improvements:

- **Pond:** Dredging, aeration, wildflower margins, buffer zones to reduce runoff.
- **Woodland:** Add native shrubs (hazel, rowan), retain deadwood, create glades.
- **Hedgerow:** Add a second row to form a rich, double hedgerow.
- **Ditch:** Plant native aquatic species, remove invasive plants, improve light penetration.

Species Support:

- Bird and bat boxes, log piles, bug hotels, and wildflower strips.
- Improved habitats for amphibians, bats, pollinators, and invertebrates.

Three-Stage Enhancement Plan:

1. **Bronze:** Simple, low-cost actions like duckweed removal and habitat monitoring.
2. **Silver:** Planting aquatic vegetation, enhancing woodland understory.
3. **Gold:** Pond aeration, woodland glades, and long-term ecosystem restoration.

Mapping

Mapping/Citizen Science

Overview

iNaturalist is a free, global citizen science platform. The app allows for recording fauna and flora (through photographs and sound bites), using an AI to suggest identifications of the subject in question.

Achieved

Developed a **citizen science** approach to **enable** the community the chance to engage further with nature and be part of our approach whilst developing their knowledge

>9,500 observations in Huntingdonshire

~1,500 active users (including a plethora of existing wildlife groups)

This network will help us deliver on the project's aim of supporting nature to flourish.

159 additional users

>1,800 species recorded in the District.

~800 non-native/invasive species recorded in the District.

What Went Well

Our pilot event was successful with 'Wild About Huntingdon' on Spring Common; this event tripled the observations on the site (even highlighting a non-native invasive species that we had no record of on the site).

Mapping

