



Waterbeach Energy from Waste Appeal APP/E0535/W/19/3225123 Briefing on UNESCO designation of Fens Biosphere

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Summary of material available from the Fens Biosphere web site.

Background

The Fens Biosphere project: is part of a larger and time-limited project called Water Works. Water Works is a partnership between the Wildlife Trust Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire; Cambridgeshire ACRE, The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the University of East London and is funded by the People's Postcode Lottery Dream Fund: a grant-giving charity funded entirely by players of People's Postcode Lottery.

The Water Works project aims to look at ways to develop a more sustainable future for fenland resources - its soil, water and people. It will do this by trialling new farming methods designed to protect our precious peat soils and water resources, by using new science and technology to develop and monitor these techniques and by applying for UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status to support and unite people to create a thriving fenland economy and countryside. Once established, the Fens Biosphere will continue in perpetuity under the auspices of its Steering Group.

The current 'Fens Biosphere project' work is all about developing the geography, vision, aims, action plan, governance and funding model which will be detailed in the nomination form that is being prepared for submission to UNESCO in spring 2021.

Project Administration

The project is administered by Cambridgeshire ACRE.
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More details can be found at: <https://fenlandbiosphere.wordpress.com/>

Partners

The following organisations are listed as partners in the Fens Biosphere project.

- Wildlife Trust Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire

- Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
- University of East London
- Natural England
- National Farmers Union
- Country Land and Business Association
- Environment Agency
- G's: Cambs Farm Growers Ltd
- Cambridge Geological Society
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Anglia Ruskin University
- Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
- Cambridge Conservation Forum
- Historic England
- National Trust
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Water Resources East
- University of Cambridge
- Great Ouse Valley Trust
- The Fenland Trust

Project Description and Progress - extract from FAQ section of web site

1. What is a Biosphere?

A Biosphere is an area of land which has been recognised by UNESCO as having a strong identity, excellent resources management and a focus on learning and innovation. Biospheres also help achieve the global ambitions for the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

2. What will a Fens Biosphere actually do?

Once an area has been granted Biosphere status it will be managed by a group of local organisations and community members .

In practice this group will support work which demonstrates new ideas and innovations to ensure the fens landscape can carry on providing a living to the people who work there, more and better spaces for nature to thrive and a sustainable and high quality of life for its communities.

3. Why a Fens Biosphere and why now?

The Fens face an uncertain future - the need to deal with changes associated with climate change - sea level rise, peat loss, water scarcity - and population growth, the fragility of some of our more vulnerable wildlife areas and the increasing need to find sustainable solutions to feeding and housing us all mean we must find joint solutions which deliver the best possible environmental outcomes coupled with a good quality of life.

4. How do you become a Biosphere Reserve?

You must apply to UNESCO to become one; becoming a Biosphere gives international recognition of a region's value. The application process is usually managed by a group of

relevant organisations, charities and local authorities with one lead partner (in this case, Cambridgeshire ACRE) and must be endorsed by a wide range of stakeholders. All appropriate stakeholders and local communities must be given a chance to influence the development of the Biosphere and its future management/activities. The Fens Biosphere is aiming to apply to UNESCO in September 2021 with the designation by UNESCO expected in July 2022.

Once an area has achieved Biosphere status it is known as Biosphere Reserve but this does not mean that it is a protected area.

5. Will it make more “red tape”?

No. Biospheres are not protected areas (apart from the already protected Core Zones) and as such can't prohibit any activity. The big idea behind Biospheres is the creation of strong partnership working across the area: organisations, local authorities, communities and businesses will work together more and better through the Biosphere, making the area a better place for all.

6. Where is the proposed Fens Biosphere going to be?

Below is a draft map of the area currently being considered for Biosphere Status. Please note that this is not a final map, it is a work in progress.

Explanatory note on zones:

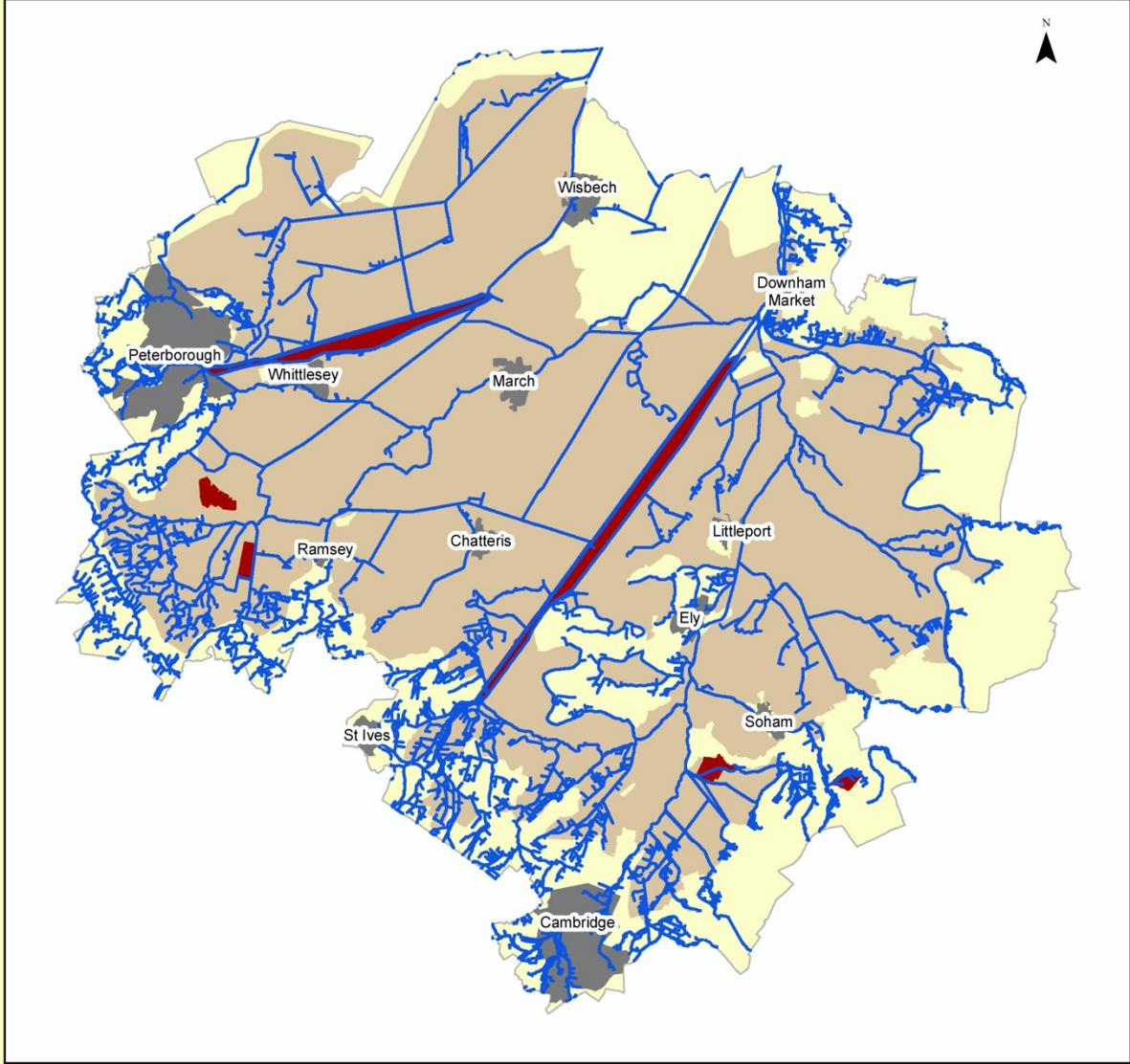
The Core Zone: these are the sites of specific conservation value. They are already legally designated protected areas and are carefully managed to enhance their wildlife.

The Buffer Zone: this area surrounds the Core Zones; the Biosphere will support activities in this area which are strongly focused on linking people, science and conservation to support the Core Zones. These activities could include trialling new agricultural crops and techniques, encouraging communities to develop new spaces for nature or looking at how water resources can be managed on a landscape scale.

In the UK this Zone is often already designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or National Park, in the Fens Biosphere this is not the case.

The Transition Zone: this is the outer zone which often contains the towns, cities and villages of the Biosphere. Because this is where most people live, activities will focus on ensuring that resident needs (housing, jobs, recreation and so on) are sustainable and if possible benefit wildlife and the environment.

The maps below have been kindly produced by Natural England with input from the Fens Biosphere Working group. These show that Waterbeach is within the planned Fens Biosphere.



Fens Biosphere:
Draft as at 2nd October 2019

-  Rivers
-  Settlements
-  Core Zone
-  Buffer Zone
-  Transition Zone

 Map produced by Naomi Stevenson
 West Anglia Team
 Updated: 13/08/2019

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**Cambridgeshire Fens
Biosphere Reserve:**

Draft as at 22nd July 2019

-  LPAs
-  Transition Zone

 Map produced by Naomi Stevenson
West Anglia Team
Updated: 22/07/2019

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