

## Biodiversity for All – 2024

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. This will be delivered through five key themes – CPCA Overview, Jobs and Skills, Strategic Open Spaces, Community Driven Delivery and Mapping. Four of these themes have developed into their own work programmes - please see project updates below.

### Project Updates: 13<sup>th</sup> September 2024

#### Jobs and Skills

##### **The Vision:**

To increase local green skills to help tackle the biodiversity crisis and facilitate further green jobs, bringing local stakeholders and residents together to support nature, educate and contribute towards a Net Zero Huntingdonshire. Find out more [here](#).

#### **What has been achieved this week?**

- We have continued working with the group of volunteers that came forward to help us with the ALM project. This has involved selecting and meeting team leaders, creating volunteer packages with PPE, recording sheets, ID guides, and equipment to go out on the survey days, and more. Everyone has been very keen to help, and we are optimistic we'll be able to collect all the data we need.
- Sadly, we said goodbye to our ARU Summer Interns, Jess and Harmony. We hope they have benefited from their time with us as much as we have enjoyed having them. We are going to start talking to ARU soon about next year's Ecology and Conversation Interns!
- One of our summer interns will be returning as a Team Leader for our ALM project, so she will be back on site with us over the next few weeks. We are sure her knowledge and passion for the natural world will be a huge asset to her team.
- We are actively recruiting for participants for our next Green Skills project at Berman Park.



- Read about all the latest Green Skills Case Studies recently uploaded to our website here - [Green Jobs and Skills - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](#)

## GREEN SKILLS PROJECT

### CASE STUDY 3: ST. NEOTS RIVERSIDE PARK

20th September - 15th November 2023

#### WHAT DID THE PROJECT INVOLVE?

The project was made up of two primary tasks:

##### Deadwood Habitats

Construction of a green treated timber fence around the standing deadwood with attached bat boxes.

##### Increasing tree canopy cover

Planting of a variety of native trees, both inside the fenced area and adjacent to the miniature railway in Riverside Park



#### OUTCOMES:

##### INCREASED BIODIVERSITY



Preserving standing deadwood serves as an invaluable habitat for a diverse array of species. Thousands of invertebrates depend on deadwood for both sustenance and shelter, forming a crucial part of the ecosystem for various species, including bats and birds. The standing deadwood also serves as excellent nesting sites for bats, providing proximity to their food source and an open canopy that aligns with predation methods. Standing deadwood supports a variety of fun lichens and moss and over time contributes rich organic matter soil, enhancing its nutrient content.



The project also successfully led to the planting total of...

23 trees

54 shrubs

250 bulbs

These plantings exclusively consist of native species, expanding the ecological range and showcasing a diverse array of flora. The benefits include:



The trees play a crucial role in reducing atmospheric CO2 levels, thereby contributing to the mitigation of Climate Change.



These trees contribute to soil stability, curbing erosion and serve as effective flood mitigation measures through various mechanisms.



In the designated habitat pocket, the trees not only provide a habitat but also serve as a food source for numerous species of birds and invertebrates. Complementing the trees, shrubs and bulbs also contribute to this ecosystem. The bulbs prove beneficial for various species of bees, both hive and solitary.

## GREEN SKILLS PROJECT

### CASE STUDY 5: HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

15th April - 7th June 2024

#### WHAT DID THE PROJECT INVOLVE?

The project was made up of a number of different tasks scattered around Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

##### Raised Wildlife Pond

The creation of the raised wildlife pond included levelling the ground, digging channels, constructing pine sleepers, laying the liner, creating beaches and exit points for different species using rocks, aggregates and pieces of wood.

##### Willow Fencing

The rangers on site constructed a wire and pine skeleton fence, which the volunteers then wove through willow branches to create a thick layer of natural material along this fence. The volunteers also pushed through branches vertically to give it a natural appearance, inkeeping with the surrounding woodland.

#### OUTCOMES:

##### INCREASED BIODIVERSITY



A wildlife pond is a thriving pocket habitat that supports a huge variety of species, including many invertebrates, freshwater plants and amphibians. Starting with invertebrates, wildlife ponds are vital for many different species life cycles. For example, dragonflies spend most of their lives in water as nymphs. This also applies to many other invertebrate species that start life in the water. The pond will also support a wide variety of freshwater plants that cannot grow in other settings. These will provide wonderful cover for many invertebrates who find their way into the pond. Although raised ponds are not as good for amphibians, due to accessibility, with suitable ramps, it can provide a safe haven for many species, including newts, frogs and toads. The rangers on site also plan to create exit ramps in the future, boosting this habitat further. The pond will also be used by birdlife as a drinking spot, both location and the increased invertebrate life will provide a better food source. The fence will also become a home to many different species of invertebrates supporting biodiversity in the area.





## Strategic Open Spaces

### The Vision:

To prioritise key HDC strategic sites across Huntingdonshire for biodiversity development. The aim is to gather evidence, engage with the community to co-design and deliver on projects to boost biodiversity on these sites.

### What has been achieved this week?

#### Alternative Land Management

Just over half of district council-maintained land is what is known as amenity grass – grass that is intensively maintained and closely mown every 2-3 weeks between March and October. We manage and maintain just over 256 hectares (2.56 million m<sup>2</sup>) of which 52% is amenity grass and in terms of biodiversity, is currently classed as Poor.

Our commitment is to:

- alter how we manage 25% of these areas by allowing grass to grow to meadow grass and cutting once a year
- increase the number of floral meadows we sow by 25% over the next four years (currently 1.4 hectares)
- increase the tree canopy by adopting and implementing a four-year tree planting programme (approximately 10,000 trees).

#### Biodiversity for All Strategic Sites

- Work for Priory Park and Hill Rise Park is going well. The team have pencilled in a start date for mid-October to begin biodiversity improvements. HDC Operations team have been involved with the delivery of this work and are finalising the size of trees appropriate for each site. Smaller trees need less watering, but Hill Rise Park has a history of trees being vandalised, hence looking for a mixture of large and small trees.



- we are in the final stages of confirming the details for the parks with our partner Glendale. We will ensure that management plans are in place to support the landscaping - especially tree planting in case we suffer from dry summers. We should be able to provide more specific updates and timeframes for the work to start in the next few weeks.

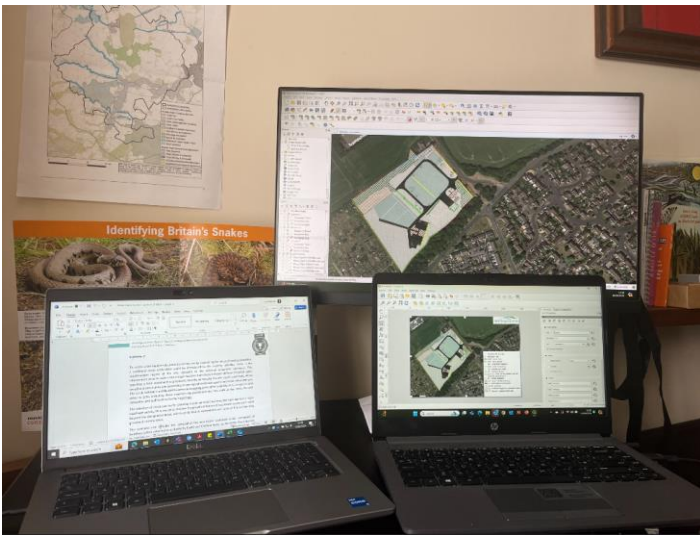
## Community Driven Delivery

### The Vision:

To encourage and enable others within Huntingdonshire to increase biodiversity through community engagement and delivery.

### What has been achieved this week?

- This week, our Graduate Ecologist, Lola, continues to write the Community Biodiversity Grant Scheme reports and recommendations, which are typically over 10,000+ words each. In the meantime, check out Lola's video about completing the biodiversity site audits across Huntingdonshire [here](#).
- We are at the final stages of reviewing and finalising the reports



Working as an ecologist – the other part of the job, which involves many laptops and screens!

## Mapping

### The Vision:

To collate data, collecting observations of species on sites. To inspire and educate future generations to raise awareness of biodiversity and the part they play in the ecosystem.

### What has been achieved this week:

- iNaturalist statistics – In the past two weeks, observations have increased by **89** to an overall total of **14,259** and identified species have increased by **4**, totalling **2,209**. There are currently **1,090** Huntingdonshire residents signed up to log observations through the iNaturalist app. This has increased by **7** since the last newsletter.
- The most recorded species was the 7 spotted Ladybird
- This week, observers found (amongst many!):

A “Speckled Wood” butterfly



Green-veined White (Pieris Napi) Butterfly



**What is iNaturalist?**

Citizen Science

Every observation can contribute to biodiversity science, from the rarest butterfly to the most common backyard weed.

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