



# News from the Fen



THE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER FOR THE NATIONAL TRUST'S WICKEN FEN VISION OCTOBER 2010

## Community celebrates opening of Reach Lode bridge

Hundreds of walkers, cyclists and horse riders gathered for a community picnic and barbecue hosted by the National Trust to celebrate the opening of the Reach Lode Bridge and Burwell Fen cycleway on Sunday 12 September.

The opening ceremony was performed by representatives of four local communities – Lode, Reach, Burwell and Wicken – playing a giant game of Connect4, to represent the important role the bridge will play in connecting villages and communities.

The new bridge across the historic Reach Lode, together with a 1.2 mile cycleway across Burwell Fen forms part of the Lodes Way, a nine mile cross-country walking and cycling route being developed by the National Trust to improve countryside access for local residents and visitors.

The Lodes Way is being developed in partnership with sustainable transport charity Sustrans. They won a £50 million grant from the Big Lottery Fund's Living Landmarks in The People's Millions



public vote in 2007. The route is part of the Sustrans' Connect2 scheme, which is developing 79 new walking and cycling routes throughout the UK.

Funding for the Reach Lode Bridge was also assisted by a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme grant of £167,000 from Natural England. Additional financial support for the Lodes Way has been received from Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Horizons, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Environment Agency.



Find out more about the Lodes Way on pages four and five

## Design for new Burwell Lode crossing unveiled



Artist's impression of the new bridge over Burwell Lode. Wicken Fen Vision staff are keen to hear local views about the proposed bridge.

Plans for a new multi-user bridge over Burwell Lode, the vital last element of the Lodes Way have been unveiled.

The existing pedestrian footbridge over Burwell Lode cannot be used by horse riders, wheelchair or pushchair users and although wheel gullies have been installed to help cyclists get their bikes over the bridge they do not provide a satisfactory long term solution.

A new crossing suitable for all users is proposed which also incorporates a segregated channel and access point for our free roaming herds of konik ponies and highland cattle so they can cross freely from Adventurers to Burwell Fen.

A planning application will be submitted in the next few months with construction scheduled for completion by 2013.

### GIVE US YOUR VIEWS

Proposals for the bridge are on display in the Wicken Fen Visitor or can be viewed online at [www.wicken.org.uk](http://www.wicken.org.uk). Members of the Wicken Fen team are available to discuss the proposals or please e-mail comments to [chris.brown@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:chris.brown@nationaltrust.org.uk)

### CONTACT THE WICKEN FEN VISION

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## Wildlife boost with landfill grant

Rare and endangered species are set to benefit thanks to a grant of more than £230,000 from a national Biodiversity Action Fund.

The Wicken Fen Vision was one of 10 projects to receive a share of WREN's Biodiversity Action Fund, which this year totalled £2 million.

WREN is a not-for-profit business which awards grants to community, environmental and heritage projects across the UK. Funds come from the Waste Recycling Group (WRG) as part of a voluntary environmental tax credit scheme called the Landfill Communities Fund. The money is generated by a tax on rubbish and is available to projects within a 10 mile radius of landfill sites.

"This fund supports ecological projects like the Wicken Fen Vision that have a significant long-term impact and will help to redress the biodiversity balance," said Mike Snell, head of external affairs at WRG. "We are committed to supporting projects that enhance people's lives and that deliver meaningful improvements to their communities.

Helping to ensure healthy biodiversity is part of that process and we're proud to be able to play our part."

The grant will be used to help create and restore wetland habitats on the Vision lands (such as Baker's Fen, see left) and will help fund a new Vision Warden post.



## Countryfile visits Wicken Fen

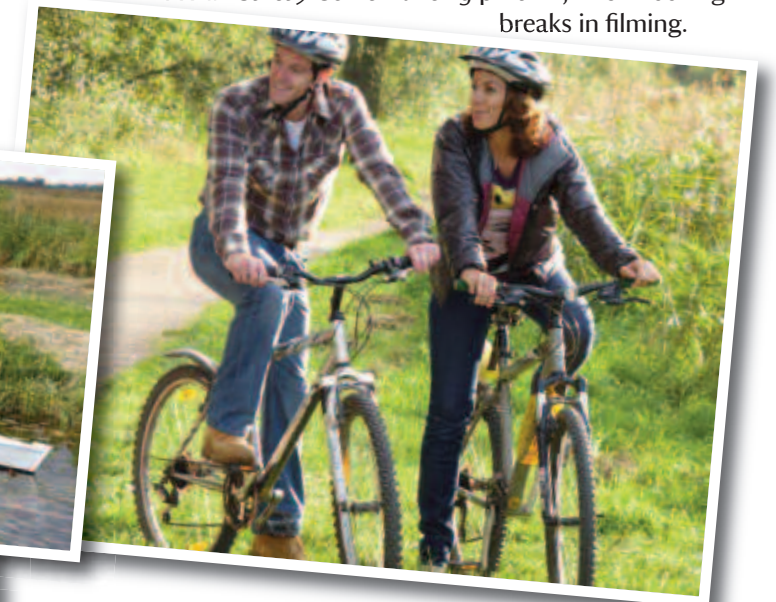


Visitors to Wicken Fen in late September were pleasantly surprised to see television personalities, Julia Bradbury and Matt Baker filming on the fen.

Julia and Matt spent two days at Wicken Fen filming for Countryfile, the BBC's popular peak time programme on the British countryside.

The Countryfile cameras were at Wicken to film progress on the implementation of the Wicken Fen Vision. Julia and Matt recorded features on the Lodes Way, Wicken's konik ponies, and tried their hand at sedge harvesting, standup paddleboarding and eel-catching with Peter Carter, the last traditional eel-catcher in the fens.

It was an extremely busy schedule for Matt, who was practising with his Russian *Strictly Come Dancing* partner, Aliona during breaks in filming.



From top left: Julia and Matt explore the Fen on Paddleboards.

Julia and eel-catcher Peter Carter set off in search of eels.

Matt learns about sedge harvesting from John Satchel, then gets stuck in with the machinery.

Property manager Chris Soans shows Julia around by bike. Above: Matt and Julia out and about on the Lodes Way and below: at the Wicken Fen Visitor Centre.



### Scarecrows at the Fen

A steady stream of entries has been received for Wicken Fen's first ever Scarecrow Festival and Competition being held over the weekend of 23 and 24 October.

All three classes have proved popular - Individual Under 11, Individual 11+ (including adults), and Groups (school classes, toddler's groups, Women's Institutes, Cubs, Scouts, Brownies, Guides and other clubs and societies).

The judges will be awarding extra marks for scarecrows which include fen characters or animals. All entries will be displayed along the trails, in Fen Cottage gardens and around the picnic areas and special prize will be awarded to the winner of each category

If you'd like to make a last minute entry, bring your scarecrows to the Wicken Fen Visitor Centre by Thursday, 21 October. Judging takes place on Friday, 22 October and you can come and see the winners that weekend.

# Take the Lodes Way

Enjoy a day discovering the magical landscapes and wildlife of the Cambridgeshire fens, walking or cycling the Lodes Way.

The Lodes Way is a new nine mile cycle way developed by the National Trust from Wicken past Anglesey Abbey to Bottisham. It forms part of National Cycle Network route 11 (NCN11).

The Lodes Way is named after the six historic manmade waterways that the route crosses which connect fen edge villages to the River Cam.

Originally thought to have been dug by the Romans, it is now believed the Lodes were built by the monasteries at Ely and Ramsey in the late Saxon period to protect their grazing land from excessive spring and summer water.

Each of the waterways has a distinctive history and was used extensively for waterborne trade until the end of the 19th century. Today the beautiful reed-lined Lodes are mainly used by recreational craft as well as being important wildlife sites.

The route uses both traffic-free cycle way and minor public roads and is signed using blue national cycle network signs. Expect to meet farm vehicles and other traffic on the road sections. The section from Lode village to Bottisham has a cycle way beside the road.

From Wicken the Lodes Way links to Ely via NCN 11 and from Bottisham you can reach Cambridge via NCN51. This numbered route also leads from Burwell to Newmarket.

A colour leaflet on the Lodes Way, including a map is available from Wicken Fen Visitor Centre on 01353 720274 or online at [www.wicken.org.uk](http://www.wicken.org.uk). Cycle hire will be available from Wicken Fen from April 2011.



### Tubney Fen (4)

Tubney Fen was a turf farm a little over five years ago. Since being purchased by the National Trust a mere has been created which is now home to several species of rare wading bird. Avocets with their distinctive curved bills have successfully bred on Tubney Fen in recent years. A bird hide overlooking the mere can be accessed from Little Fen Drove.

### White Fen (5)

A joint project between the National Trust, Woodland Trust and community of Lode with Long Meadow will see the creation of a community woodland on White Fen. Planting is set to commence over the winter of 2010/11.

### Anglesey Abbey, Gardens and Lode Mill (6)

Developed by the 1st Lord Fairhaven in the 1930's, Anglesey Abbey and Gardens is a Jacobean style country house with formal gardens and parkland. It is noted for its displays of snowdrops in spring, herbaceous borders and dahlia gardens in summer and colourful Winter Garden. The water powered Lode Mill dates from the 18th Century.



### Wicken Fen (1)

Discover a lost landscape, as you explore this last piece of un-drained fen with its amazing abundance of wildlife.

Wicken Fen has been shaped by centuries of human influence on the land. Fen dwellers lived off the land by cutting sedge and peat, by fishing and wildfowling. But while most of the fens were drained for agriculture, Wicken was saved from this fate by the local villagers, Victorian wildlife enthusiasts and then the National Trust who purchased two acres of the fen for £10 in 1899.

Today Wicken Fen is a haven for wildlife with over 8,400 recorded species, such as bittern, hen harriers and marsh harriers, otters and rare wildflowers.

### Bakers Fen and Guinea Hall (2)

Bakers Fen and Guinea Hall are an ideal location to spot Wicken Fen's free roaming herds of konik ponies and highland cattle. The animals are part of a low density extensive grazing project helping to create new habitats for Wicken's diverse range of wildlife.

### Burwell Fen (3)

Burwell Fen is one of the lowest parts of the Cambridgeshire fens at nearly two metres below sea level in places.

The fen is part of a major European Union funded project to create more sustainable habitats in response to the threats posed by climate change.

Here the construction of a low level clay bund will enable wet grassland habitat to develop. In turn this will create new areas for threatened wildlife.



FIND OUT MORE: [www.wicken.org.uk/vision\\_lodesway.htm](http://www.wicken.org.uk/vision_lodesway.htm)

# Sedge harvest helps wildlife and thatchers

Sedge harvesting is an ancient practice at Wicken Fen which can be traced back through the centuries to at least 1419.

Each summer John Satchel and Sam Welch from Ormesby in Norfolk spend the long hot days harvesting around 1,200 bundles of sedge from the fen. The sedge is dried before being sold to thatchers throughout the UK.

Sedge is harvested after three to four years growth. This

infrequent cutting allows a wide variety of rare fenland plants such as milk parsley and marsh pea to grow among the sedge.

Historically, sedge was burnt to provide heat or used as bedding for animals but today is mainly used for thatching. Alvin Augstein visited Wicken Fen last year and was so struck by the durable qualities of the sedge that he decided to use Wicken Sedge on a new "Grand Designs"



Above: Alvin is using Wicken sedge to thatch his roof. Below left: cutting and bundling in full swing

style house he is designing and building in the village of Wood Hurst, near St Ives. "I'm delighted to be using a natural sustainable material which was grown locally" says Alvin. We wish Alvin and his family many happy years in their dream house confident that Wicken sedge will keep them nice and dry.



## Cottage garden in good shape



The gardens at Fen Cottage are in good shape thanks to workers from the Prospects Trust.

Teams from the Trust have been hard at work weeding, dead heading, digging and pruning to keep the gardens in tip top condition through the summer.

Based at Snakehall Farm near Reach, the Prospects Trust provides training and work in horticulture and organic market gardening for people with learning disabilities.

Organic produce from the farm is sold in their farm shop and supplied to catering outlets and a team provides garden maintenance services from Ely to Cambridge.

To find out more call 01638 741551 or visit [www.prospectstrust.org.uk](http://www.prospectstrust.org.uk)

## Chalky water to the rescue



The unique ecosystems of Wicken's Sedge Fen will be protected with a new water management system.

A major project has begun to help conserve the unique fenland flora of Wicken's ancient Sedge Fen.

Sedge Fen is one of only four surviving fragments of the Great Fen Basin and is home to many rare fen species such as saw sedge and fen dandelion. In the past, the Fen was frequently flooded with calcareous water which had filtered through the chalk of the Newmarket hills before flowing along Monks Lode towards Wicken Fen. In recent years the main source of water has been acidic rainwater which has led to a decline in the Fen's delicate plant communities.

Chalk-rich water from Monks Lode will be taken under Wicken Lode and a small windpump on the edge of Sedge Fen will lift the water into a ditch from where it will gradually spread throughout the peat.

The work to conserve Sedge Fen is being paid for by the Environment Agency and will contribute to the government's target to have 95 per cent of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in favourable or unfavourable but recovering condition by the end of December 2010.

# Christmas is coming...

Christmas is creeping up but there's no need to get stressed out searching for parking spaces and fighting jostling crowds in the shops - why not head to Wicken Fen instead.

What could be better than decorating your home and Christmas tree with your very own handmade decorations and wreaths. Join our Christmas Decorations Workshop on Saturday 13 November or Christmas Wreath Making on Saturday or Sunday, 27 and 28 November.

In December Father Christmas will be making regular visits to the Fen. Follow the Christmas Trail around the Boardwalk to discover Father Christmas in his secret grotto where he will have a present for each child.

And why not do your Christmas shopping at Wicken? Our shop has an impressive range of toys and games, books, travel accessories, outdoor wear, local crafts and a mouth-watering range of delicious locally-made jams, chutneys and beers.

**For a special Christmas gift why not give membership of the National Trust, with free entry to over 300 historic houses and inspirational gardens plus free parking in National Trust car-parks at hundreds of countryside and coastal properties. Find out more at the Wicken Fen Visitor Centre.**

## ...but first enjoy those autumn days

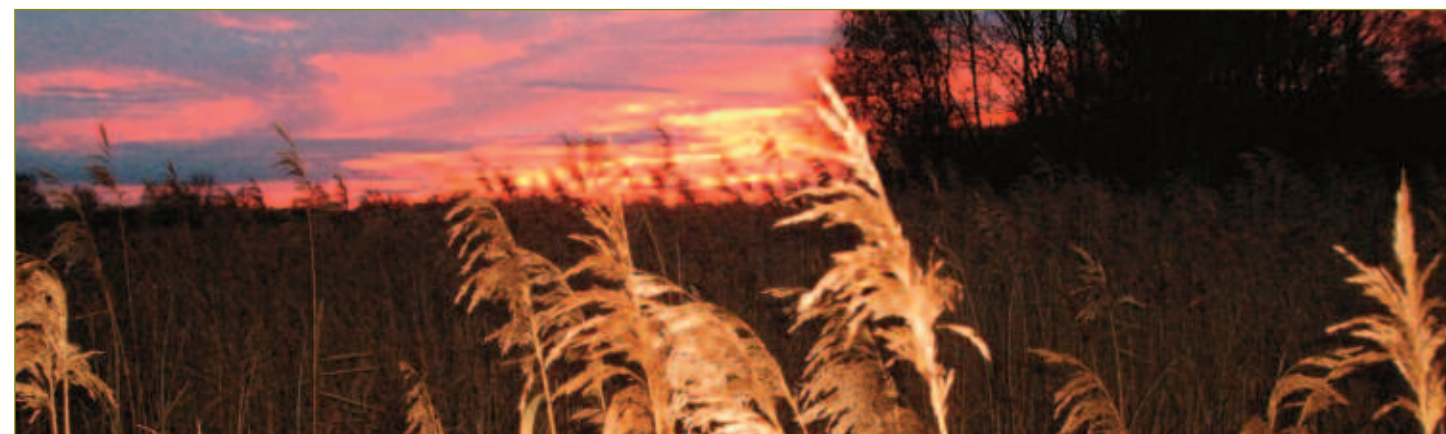
The days may be getting shorter and the temperature dropping, but now is the perfect time to wrap up warm and enjoy Wicken Fen in its autumn glory.

The Fen takes on a golden glow as the sun gets lower in the sky and leaves flutter on the breeze, red berries hang in abundance from the trees and bushes offering a tasty treat for birds. Frost turns the landscape white and crunches underfoot whilst intricate dew laden spiders webs stand out on a misty morning. Be still and look out for roe deer hiding in the bushes.

Head to Adventurers Fen to see herons, little egrets, lapwing and wading birds including red and greenshank and black tailed godwit. In late autumn the air will be filled with the sight and sounds of hundreds of wigeon and teal.

To discover Wicken's amazing wildlife join our wardens on a Winter Wildlife Walk on Saturday 13, Sunday 28 November or Saturday 4 December - see back page for details.

And don't be in a hurry to rush home, from the cosy warmth of the Visitor Centre you can watch Britain's rarest bird of prey, the hen harrier, glide on the breeze before settling down to roost on Sedge Fen - and marvel as the landscape takes on a crimson glow at sunset.



## Christmas events at Wicken Fen

Saturday 13 November 10am-1pm or 2-5pm

### Christmas Decorations Workshop

Use rush and willow to make rustic decorations for your home and Christmas tree.

£15 (includes materials)

Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 November, 10am-12.30pm or 1.30-4pm

### Christmas Wreath Making

Make a Christmas wreath for your home from willow and natural fen materials

£18 (includes materials and seasonal refreshment)

Friday 10 December 4-8pm

### Lantern-Lit Christmas Carols and Chestnuts

Make a Christmas Lantern, sing traditional carols and enjoy mulled wine and chestnuts, visit our Christmas Shop.

Saturday and Sunday 11, 12, 18 19 December 10.30, 11.15, 1pm, 1.45 and 2.30pm

### Father Christmas at the Fen

Follow the Christmas Trail to discover Father Christmas in his secret grotto. Child £6.75

**Please note: booking is essential for the above events. Call 01353 720274.**



events@wickenfen

*Don't forget...  
Wicken Fen is open  
every day from Boxing  
Day to New Year's Day  
for winter walks.*



Saturday 23 – Sunday 24 October  
**Scarecrow Festival and Competition**  
Enter your Scarecrow for the Wicken Scarecrow Festival and Competition – see page 3 for details.

Monday 25 – Friday 29 October  
**Half Term at Wicken Fen**  
Solve the clues on our wildlife murder mystery trail to see if you are a master detective.

Tuesday 26 October 10.30am and 2pm  
**Winter Wildlife**  
Make bird feeders and food and learn how to help your garden animals through the cold winter.  
Child £4.50

Friday 29 October 10.30am and 2pm

**BATTY HALLOWEEN**

Wear your spookiest outfit for some ghostly goings on. Apple bobbing, mayhem and madness!  
Child £4.50

Saturday 30 October, entry 6.30 – 7.30pm

**GHOST WALK**

Are you brave enough to venture out onto the fen where ghosts and ghouls abound.  
£5 (7+ years only please)

Thursday 11 November 10.30am – 12 noon  
**Mucky Pups**  
Pre-school fun for little pirates (18 months – 4 years)  
£3.75

Saturday 13 and Sunday 28 November and Saturday 4 December 10am – 1pm  
**Winter Wildlife Walk**  
Join our Wardens to discover the amazing winter wildlife of Wicken Fen. Adults £8.50 Child £4.50 (includes soup)

Wednesday 8 December 10.30 am – 12 noon  
**Christmas Elves**  
Pre-school elf workshop to help Father Christmas  
£5 (includes present)

Saturday 5 – Sunday 6 February  
**Celebrate World Wetlands Day**  
Guided walks and cycle rides to explore Wicken Fen and the Vision lands where new wetland areas are being created.

Monday 21 – Friday 25 February  
**Wild, Wet and Windy Trails**  
Explore new areas of Wicken Fen – geocaching, cycling and discovery trails for all the family.

**Please book early to avoid disappointment as numbers are limited. For further information and to book please contact the Wicken Fen Visitor Centre, telephone 01353 720274.**

*FRIGHT ON THE FEN  
don't miss our  
Halloween events!*

The Wicken Fen Vision is supported by a wide range of partners including:

