



# Girton Local Nature Recovery Plan

*Working for wildlife in our village*



## Local Nature Recovery Plan

Review of Year 1: 2023-2024

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## Introduction

It has been a busy year for the Local Nature Recovery Plan, building its momentum within the village. Most visibly we have held several successful events but there has also been a lot of work in the background to build a better picture of wildlife in the village and to make contacts with some land owners. This document is a summary and reflection of our achievements over the past twelve months and follows the format of the table of actions written in the plan.

## Achievements and reflections on the Plan

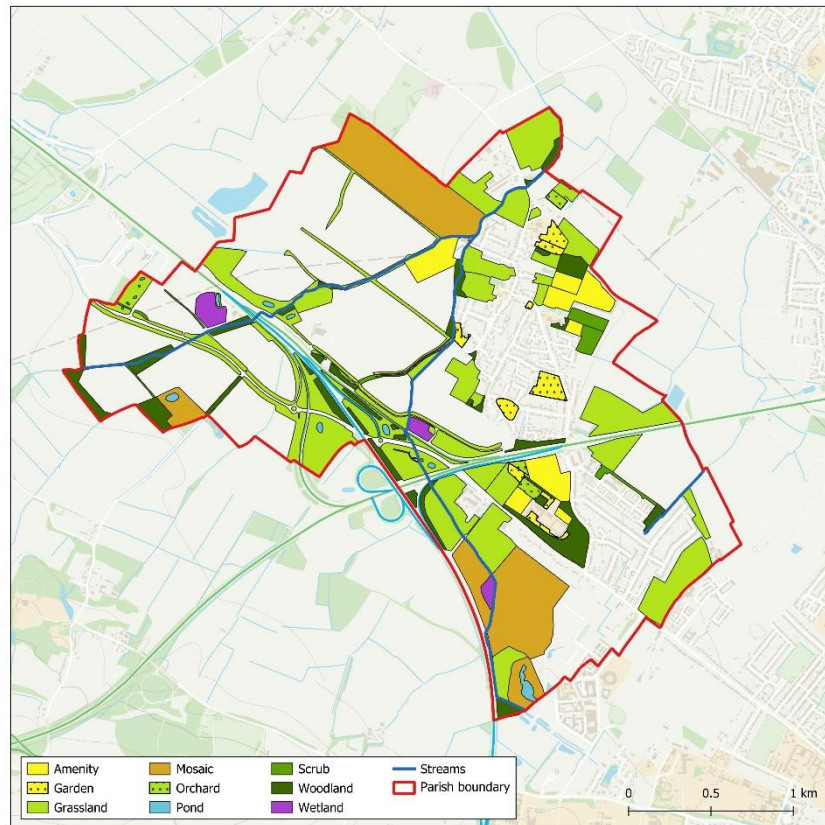
### LNRP Management Group and Plan

#### *LNRP Management Group*

The management group has met roughly once per month throughout the past year and there have been several changes in personnel. Three members have had to step down for various reasons, but we have managed to recruit a further two people in their place. The result is a strong team with a diversity of skills and eager to continue.

#### *Mapping of key habitats*

Extensive fieldwork and study of satellite imagery has allowed the habitat map to be updated providing a better understanding of the distribution and quality of the habitats in the parish. Much of the newly mapped habitat is the newly created grassland and balancing ponds along the A14 corridor. This valuable baseline assessment of habitats provides further context to the management group, helping them to tailor advice and develop future plans.



### *Assessment of biological records*

Additional historic biological records have been obtained from the Cambridge Bird Club, and the butterfly and dragonfly vice-county recorders. These complement the data set already sought from CPERC (The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre) and will help us to understand what wildlife is and was within the parish.

We have been actively encouraging residents to submit their sightings of hedgehogs within the village, including a successful mapping exercise at the village fete. St Vincent's Close and surrounding area appears to be a hotspot for these mammals, though it is a small dataset, and other biases may skew the data.

Botanical surveys have been undertaken of the scrub area behind Girton Glebe, St Andrew's Churchyard, the green at the end of Mayfield Road and Hibbert-ware Garden. Most species recorded were already known from the sites, but two newly recorded species are Wood Sage (new to the village and scarce in the county) and Pyramidal Orchid, previously known from Girton Cottage Orchard at the northern end of the village but now also recorded at Mayfield Road.

### *Key sites*

The green spaces along Wellbrook Way have been visited by the group, this includes the pond and meadow areas at either end, the hedgerow along the northern boundary and the woodland at the eastern end. It is clear that the original ponds are now mostly dried out and overgrown, and much of the meadow area at the western end of the road is covered in bramble. The northern hedgerow appears to be well managed, and it was pleasing to hear a Yellowhammer within that area. Work has begun to establish who owns and manages these areas of land and what resources there may be to restore them.

### *Local Nature Recovery Plan*

The plan has been updated, refer to the 2024 document.

### *Partnership working with landowners*

This has been a difficult task, though a positive relationship has developed between the LNRP management group and Hope CiC who are the current tenants in the area at the eastern end of the recreation ground (scrub area behind Girton Glebe School). They are planning to develop the site into a space for therapeutic farming, but to do so with respect for the local species and habitats. They are keen to engage in a collaborative project to create the right habitats for Turtle Dove and make community spaces for residents to engage with wildlife.

## **Community Engagement**

### *Public meetings*

The LNRP management group is running a Wildlife Festival on 26<sup>th</sup> October to provide an update on the progress made, to communicate with village residents and to promote nature-friendly activities within the village.

### *Communication*

Regular posts on Wild\_Girton (X and Facebook) and a monthly article in the Girton Parish News have helped to keep residents informed of our progress and events. Wild\_Girton in particular has been a success for the LNRP group to obtain sightings of wildlife around the village.

An attempt to set up a network of WhatsApp Street Champions to disseminate information has not been successful. This is due to the low interest and difficulty in finding willing volunteers. However, as the momentum and awareness of the LNRP increases it may be worth trying again in future years.

### Events

The group has ensured that it has held or participated in one event per month in the past year. A particular success was the formal re-opening of the newly restored Hibbert-Ware Garden in May, which turned out to be one of the first days of summer weather and attracted a large crowd. Special guests included Juliet Vickery, CEO of the British Trust for Ornithology and one of Alice Hibbert-Ware’s great-nephews.

Other events include two moth trapping sessions, a bat walk, an open evening at Town End Close and stalls at the village fete and Christmas fair. These have all attracted a good number of people and helped to raise awareness of the LNRP.

### Schools and youth groups

Alison Giles has kindly given up several hours per week to set up and run a successful lunchtime gardening club at Girton Glebe. As well as teaching the children more about gardening and wildlife in general, it has helped to improve their outdoor space, resulting in the club achieving levels one and two of the RHS school gardening awards.

Keith Archer presented an assembly at Girton Glebe on hedgehogs, helping to raise awareness of these mammals and to encourage children to look for them and report their sightings.

A site visit to the Gretton School campus at the northern end of the village was undertaken in order to provide management advice for their forest school area, in particular for the ponds which host a breeding population of Great Crested Newt.

## Funding

The following budget for the financial year 2024-2025 was approved by the Parish Council (note that the LNRP year runs from October-September):

Equipment - purchase/lease/rental <i>This was all allocated towards Hibbert-Ware project</i>	£900.00
Site Management - signage, pond safety, animal boxes, trees, seed mixes etc. <i>This was all allocated towards Hibbert-Ware project</i>	£2905.00
Public Engagement – hall hire, banner display stands, printing/reproduction etc.	£500.00
Data and surveying – trap cameras, bat detectors, moth traps etc.	£645.00
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>£4950</b>

In addition to this, and further £2000 was awarded by the Parish Council as match funding for a South Cambs District Council Community Chest Grant to raise funds for the Hibbert-Ware Memorial Garden renovation.

A crowd funding appeal has so far raised £1465 most of which will be used on the Hibbert-Ware Garden restoration project.

Other sources of funding which have not yet been accessed include the South Cambs 'Shared Prosperity' Fund which may have helped to pay for restoration of the pond and meadow areas on Wellbrook Way, and the Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing Scheme, funded by Natural England and facilitated by the local Wildlife Trust to restore the ponds on Wellbrook Way. The latter fund is still available once it is established who owns and manages the pond areas.

## Monitoring

### *Moth trapping*

Four moth trapping events have been conducted since the moth trap was acquired in the spring, of which two were open to the public. These have generated new records, though they have yet to be fully analysed.

### *Hedgehogs*

An effort has been made to find out where hedgehogs are currently residing within the village. New records have been submitted following on from an article in the GPN, an assembly at Girton Glebe and a mapping exercise at the village fete. St Vincent's Close appears to be a hotspot for hedgehog activity, though with a smaller data set collection biases cannot be ruled out.

### *Eddington records*

Efforts have been made to speak to the ecologist at Eddington and to obtain records from the area but have not yet come to fruition.

### *Trail camera scheme*

A trail camera has been purchased and we are putting in place arrangements to allow it to be borrowed by parishioners, as we are aware that several residents are keen to use it to discover what wildlife is living in their gardens.

### *Butterflies and dragonflies*

This year has seen a dramatic decline in butterflies in particular, but also dragonflies, across the UK. Although an attempt was made to host an event with a local dragonfly expert, this was not possible this year.

### *Other recorders*

Local recorders for birds, butterflies and dragonflies have all been contacted. All have provided additional records to the group, but none have been able to visit to make additional records.

### *Other taxonomic groups*

As yet, no additional people have put themselves forward as being a specialist in any other taxonomic group in order to help with surveying and records.

## Projects

### *Swift boxes*

At least one household has installed swift boxes in the past year, and another household has successfully attracted nesting swifts to a box which has been in place for a couple of years. It is hoped that these successes will encourage others to install swift boxes. The Gretton School may be willing to allow swift boxes to be installed on their building on the High Street, but this but this has yet to be confirmed.

### *Wildlife-friendly gardening*

The successful restoration of the Hibbert-Ware Garden has raised awareness of wildlife-friendly gardening, and it is hoped that this will encourage village residents to take similar approaches to gardening on their own land.

### *Skylark*

An attempt was made to contact one of the farm tenants within the village to discuss actions to be taken for Skylark, but this was not successful.

### *No Mow Summer*

The LNRP group wrote an advisory paper detailing a three-tiered approach to managing the grass verges and spaces in the village. This was discussed by the Parish Council Environment Committee and reproduced as a policy document but unfortunately it was never ratified by Council before the summer season. With no formal policy in place and difficulties in communicating with the contractors there have been several teething problems with this new approach. Work will be undertaken this winter to provide further context and detail to increase understanding of the suggested approach to the management of greenspaces, and hopefully 2025 will be more successful. One success end of Mayfield Triangle which was managed appropriately allowing the appearance of a Pyramidal Orchid.

A collaboration between the LNRP group and St Andrew's Church resulted in a successful No Mow Summer area in the churchyard, with several grassland indicator species allowed to flower and set seed. It is hoped that this collaboration will continue as the best results are usually obtained after several years of appropriate management.

Six people attended a scything course in August and have since used their skills to cut the grass at Hibbert-Ware Garden and some of Town End Close. It is hoped that a further group of people will be able to learn next year.

### *Tree planting*

New suitable spaces for tree planting have not yet been identified.

## **Sites**

### *Girton Green Team*

Membership of the Girton Green Team has increased and there has also been recruitment of new volunteers specifically for the Hibbert-Ware Garden project. The Team now manages both the Hibbert-Ware Garden and Town End Close Nature Reserve well, but further capacity will be needed if it is to take on additional sites.

Scythes have been purchased for the Green Team's work.

### *Town End Close*

The management plan of Town End Close has been reviewed. The focus is on keeping the peripheral scrub from encroaching onto the grassland and to bring the grassland back into better condition. One aim was to cut three-quarters of the meadow by scythe, leaving one-quarter long as overwintering habitat for butterflies and other invertebrates and small mammals. Unfortunately, the contractor employed to manage the village greenspaces has cut the remaining grass and so no overwintering habitat has been left. This will hopefully be addressed next year.

### *Hibbert-Ware Garden*

Renovation of this garden as a flagship for wildlife friendly gardening practices has been successful. Features include a bog garden, plenty of native plantings, several meadow areas, a Hügeltkultur bed and a laid hedge. In addition, an interpretation board has been installed at the site, and several small information boards have been put in place to highlight the features of the garden. A new management plan has been written which we hope will improve biodiversity further.

### *Girton Wood*

This wood is owned and managed by the Woodland Trust. Having been planted around the year 2000, it is in need of extensive thinning work to open the canopy and create a more diverse woodland structure. To this end, the LNRP group have been in touch with the Woodland trust and have reviewed and commented on its management plan for Girton Wood. Unfortunately, as several new woodlands were planted around the year 2000 there are many also in need of this work and so Girton Wood is not scheduled until 2027.

### *Wellbrook Way*

Several site visits have been undertaken to understand the work which needs to take place. The ponds and meadow areas which were put in place when the development was completed are now dried up and overgrown, respectively. Work is underway to establish who has responsibility for managing the site, and once that is established a funded project by the local Wildlife Trust to restore the ponds should be possible. Further funding will need to be sought to restore the meadows and to add community features such as paths, fencing and benches.

### *St Andrew's Churchyard*

A collaboration between the LNRP group and St Andrew's Church resulted in a successful No Mow Summer area in the churchyard, with several grassland indicator species allowed to flower and set seed. It is hoped that this collaboration will continue as the best results are usually obtained after several years of appropriate management.

## **Other activities**

The LNRP management group has been liaising with the team developing the Neighbourhood Plan in order to advocate for the green spaces within the parish and to make sure they are well represented in the consultation process of the Neighbourhood Plan. Several sites are now under active consideration for designation as 'Local Green Spaces' arising from the recent village survey.

## **Final thoughts and reflections**

It has been a busy year, with several key successes, but also a lot of groundwork which currently has no visible output but puts us in a strong position to get several projects off the ground in the next year. 'Recruitment of people has been slow, both for the Management Group and volunteering for various projects, including practical management of some of the sites, but also, for example, coming forward with suitable locations for the installation of swift boxes. However, the LNRP is now firmly established within the village, and it is hoped that this first year has raised awareness of many of the issues, and what we can do to help address them and we hope to get many more people involved in the next year.