

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: 6th September 2024



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?

- The seventh Green Skills course has been confirmed for October 2024 at our newest park, [Berman Park](#)!



Want to help improve your local green space, work on your mental health, and achieve a **City & Guilds Level 1 Award in Practical Horticulture?**

- > Start date: 2nd October 2024
- > Gain careers advice and support
- > 10am-3pm Wed - Fri, for 8 weeks, Age 19+
- > Engage with nature and increase your conservation knowledge
- > £50 voucher upon course completion and PPE provided!
- > Improve your confidence, motivation, and well-being



If you are interested in finding out more: drop by Huntingdon Jobcentre on the 2nd, 17th, 19th, 23rd of September!

Or call, text, email Eve: T: 07736132497 E: eve.lucas@groundwork.org.uk

[Or apply here!](#)

- Read about all the latest Green Skills Case Studies recently uploaded to our website here - [Green Jobs and Skills - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/green-jobs-and-skills)

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 diverse array of species. Thousands of invertebrates depend on deadwood for both sustenance and shelter, forming an ecosystem for various species, including bats and birds. Deadwood also serves as excellent nesting sites for various species. Standing deadwood support lichens and moss and over time contributes rich 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: HINCHINGSBROOKE 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, bath 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?

- 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.

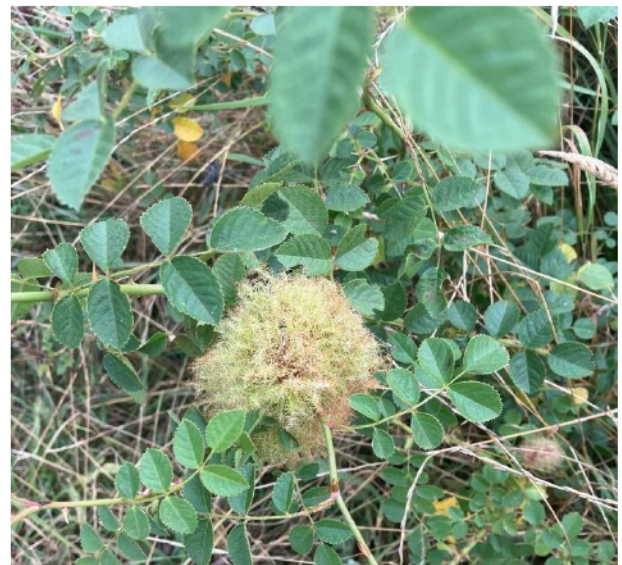


Other Work on Key Sites:

- Our Graduate Ecologist, Lola, ran a training session for data collection volunteers at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park this week so that we can measure how well our [ALM \(Alternative Land Management\) sites](#) are doing vs control sites, which are managed as amenity grass. Working parties will be using quadrants to sample the diversity in areas across the district in coming weeks.
- 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 m²) 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 amount 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).



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](#).
- Further grant funding has been approved for the Pilot Round and sent to recipients including Ramsey Town Council. The grant will enable Ramsey Town Council to improve biodiversity at their [King George V Playing Field](#). They plan to increase scrub areas, which will significantly improve Biodiversity and plant native bulbs to support pollinators. They will also install bat and bird boxes and host a community engagement day to explain how the changes will benefit both nature and the community. Ramsey Town Council will organise a community planting day in October and will have children helping to plant some bulbs. Men in Sheds are also due to meet with the Town Council about the bat / bird box making and they continue to liaise with the designer of the site's interpretation board! All very exciting plans in place, with HDC's Operations team also getting involved to help with the delivery work on site due to the Town Council's shortage in skills and resources.



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.

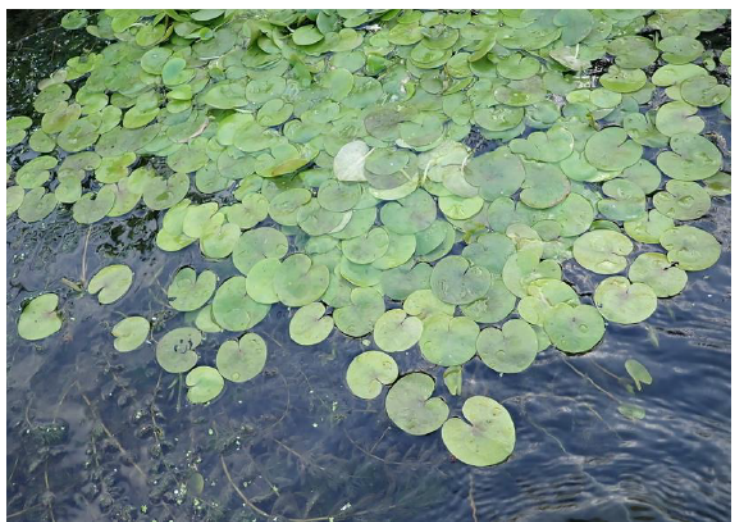
What has been achieved this week:

- iNaturalist statistics – In the past two weeks, observations have increased by **109** to an overall total of **14,170** and identified species have increased by **16**, totalling **2,205**. There are currently **1,083** Huntingdonshire residents signed up to log observations through the iNaturalist app.
- This week, observers found (amongst many!):

Robin's Pincushion Gall Wasp



Frogbit



- Don't forget to download the iNaturalist app to log your species findings across the district!

A promotional banner for the iNaturalist app. The background is a vibrant green with a butterfly perched on a leaf. The text reads: "What is iNaturalist? Citizen Science. Every observation can contribute to biodiversity science, from the rarest butterfly to the most common backyard weed." There are three QR codes: one for the 'seek by iNaturalist' app, and two for downloading the iNaturalist app from the App Store and Google Play. The iNaturalist logo is prominently displayed in the center.