

Nature Recovery Plan for Wicken, Padney and Upware

December 2023

Wicken Parish Council



Nature recovery plan: Wicken, Padney, Upware

December 2023

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Wicken is passionate about reversing the decline of nature, and wants to take action to protect what is special about Wicken, Padney and Upware, create new habitats and get more people involved in caring for and enjoying the natural environment which is all around us.

We have already taken action including:

- No Mow May
- Wildlife meadow on Pond Green
- New Life on Old West: new pond on Rec, Owl boxes at the cemetery and around the village pond, plug plants planted on Pond Green, Maids Head Green and at the cemetery.
- Management of Poors Fen by the National Trust
- Upware Open Space – Upware Residents Association are developing a plan for biodiversity

This nature recovery plan sets out a medium-term plan for the creation of more nature rich habitats in Wicken, Padney and Upware.

This plan sets out what we want to achieve over the next ten years.

To do this, this plan has a double page for each theme we'd like to take action on, setting out what we currently have, where we'd like to get to, and how we are going to get there.

But to be a success, we will need your help! You can help by taking action in your own garden, or perhaps volunteering to help tidy up or manage a public space.

Our Five Point Recovery Plan Objectives

1. To make our Parish an even better place for nature and for local people, recognising that access to nature also helps improve our health and wellbeing.
2. To inform, inspire and encourage the active participation of the community in helping nature to flourish and biodiversity to increase in the Parish.
3. To protect, and where possible enhance, the most special natural environment spaces in Wicken, Padney and Upware
4. To create new habitats
5. To see anecdotal, or measurable if possible, gains for wildlife, such as increases in bird numbers, more sightings of hedgehogs, a richer and more plentiful variety of insects, and an increase in tree cover and hedgerow quality.

Theme 1: Gardens

Introduction

Together, the UK's gardens are larger than all of our National Nature Reserves combined. They play a key role in connecting habitats, especially across urban areas, and provide safe refuges for wildlife in an ever-busy environment.

Gardens do not have to be large to benefit wildlife and less is more when it comes to management. It's not necessary for individual gardens to offer everything a species needs if nearby gardens contribute too, for example a blackbird will nest in one garden but forage and bathe in others.

Gardens: Action Plan

The **Parish Council** will aim to:

1. Encourage home owners to create wildlife friendly gardens
2. Use CIL money to fund nest boxes for declining bird species in the villages (swift, house martin, swallows, House sparrows, starlings) and bats
3. Provided 50 Hedgehog Highways and gave them away to residents to encourage awareness of the decline in Hedgehogs and encourage people to create gaps in their fences and boundaries to allow easier access between areas
4. Have a wildlife sightings page in Around and About and encourage residents to share their findings and photos
5. Organise parish wildlife events – bat walks, bird spotting – potentially in combination with Wicken Fen and Kingfisher Nature reserve. These could be run by members of the parish council and local residents.

As a local resident, ***you can help*** by:

1. Choose native plants whenever possible
2. Choose bee and insect friendly flowering plants
3. Install a bird, bat or hedgehog box
4. Make sure there are small gaps in the boundary wall or fence, so small creatures can roam freely (but not so big that dogs, cats, foxes or larger animals become a problem)
5. Purchase a compost heap, but make sure it is turned regularly to prevent it becoming a home for unwanted pests
6. Put in a small pond or other water feature – even something as little as an old washing up bowl will attract wildlife!
7. Let the grass grow in part of your garden

More reading:

Wild About Gardens – Encouraging wildlife to your garden with RHS and the Wildlife Trusts [Wild About Gardens / RHS Gardening](#)

RSPB – Gardening for Wildlife <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/gardening-for-wildlife/>

National Trust - Nine ways to build a wildlife friendly garden
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/discover/gardening-tips/nine-ways-to-build-a-wildlife-friendly-garden>

Theme 2: Allotments

Introduction

Allotments often have many of the same features as gardens but without the physical boundaries between plots so offer a large area for wildlife to utilise.

What do we have?

Wicken – 2 allotment areas at Butts Lane and Afterway



Allotments: Action Plan

The **Parish Council** will aim to:

1. Survey our current allotment area, identifying what parts of it are good for nature, and what parts have potential for enhancement
2. Each year, provide a certificate or prize to the allotment holder who, alongside growing crops, does so with nature in mind. Add to the Horticultural Show
3. Provide tips and ideas to allotment holders, on what they can do to help the natural environment on their plot. When people sign up for an allotment we will share a 1 page guide on how to maximise the value of their allotment for wildlife and for them. For example:
 - a. Not using peat compost
 - b. Avoiding weed killers to encourage useful natural pest control
4. Encourage more people to take up a plot
5. Ensure that plots are being used, or freed up for others to use

As a local resident, ***you can help*** by:

1. Consider taking up an allotment plot, if one is available, or register your interest.
2. When you have a plot, think about planting flowers that will attract bees or butterflies...or simply leave one or two 'misshapes' or bolting vegetable to flower naturally (for example, don't cut and throw away a bolting leek – let it flower, and it will attract a host of bees and insects)
3. Go organic, rather than use pesticides

More reading:

National allotment society - <https://www.nsalg.org.uk/>

Theme 3: Churches and Their Grounds

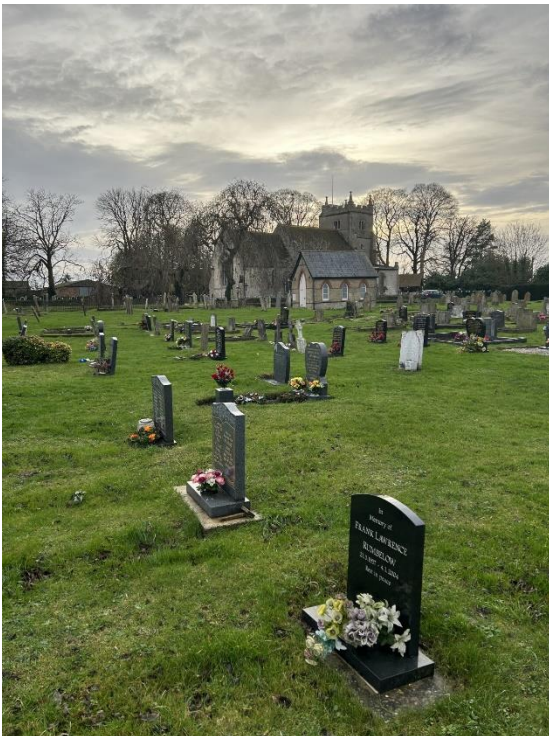
Introduction

Churches have been a focus for communities for thousands of years and, alongside their primary purpose, are refuges for many species. Bats are well known for inhabiting churches due to their open structure and relative quiet.

The ancient stonework can be rich with lichens and mosses while the ledges and roofs can be ideal places for nesting birds. The church grounds have often escaped the damaging effects of fertilisers and ploughs so contain remnants of ancient grassland where fungi thrive and wildflowers flourish.

What do we have?

St Laurence's Church, Wicken – church yard and cemetery



Wicken Methodist Church



Churches and Their Grounds: Action Plan

The **Parish Council** will aim to:

1. Survey the church grounds, to learn more what animals are using them. In particular Swift survey looking for nesting sites
2. Work with those currently responsible for maintaining the churches and their grounds, and see what could be done to improve them for nature
3. Manage the church yard in line with the Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs and Northants Church Conservation Churchyard Awards (Bronze initially, then work our way up to Silver and Gold) which could include a mix of the following:
 - a. Mix of vegetation heights (grass, shrubs, trees)
 - b. Uncut areas for smaller mammals
 - c. Meadows of longer grass
 - d. Nettles retained and managed in sunny areas for butterflies
 - e. Minimal use of chemicals or herbicides
 - f. Log piles and compost heap
 - g. Bird boxes or natural nesting sites
 - h. Bug hotels, no unsympathetic pointing/repairs of stonework that block up insect holes

As a local resident, ***you can help*** by:

1. Visiting the church grounds, and note what you see and hear
2. Help with any survey work or actions set up by the parish council or church

More reading

Caring for God's acre: <https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/>

Bats in churches: <https://batsinchurches.org.uk/>

Theme 4: Amenity Areas

What do we have in?

- Recreation ground – trees and hedges, 2 ponds, short, cut grass and the Millenium Wood
- Village Greens with mature trees, pond, grass planted in places with low level flowering plants and bat boxes installed as part of the New Life in the Old West project
- Pond Green Wildlife Meadow
- Cross Green, The Maid's Head Green, Pond Green and the Mission Hall Green
- Upware Open Space



Pond created in the Millenium Wood as part of the New Life on the Old West project.



The Millenium Wood, The Recreation Ground Chapel Lane, Wicken



Bat box installed as part of the New Life in the Old West project.



Upware Open Space



The Maid's Head Green

Amenity Areas: Action Plan

The **Parish Council** will aim to:

Recreation Ground

Freshwater invertebrates and amphibian survey for recreation pond and encourage residents to join in, especially children

Maintain what is already there, replace like for like (hedges/trees etc)

Plant more trees

Allow hedges to grow wilder, taller and wider to encourage them as nesting site, wildlife shelter and food source for wildlife (and humans) - unless that will impact access, safety or security

Village Greens

Freshwater invertebrates and amphibian survey for main village pond and encourage residents to join in. Encourage newt habitat in the pond

Avoid using chemicals in either pond

Plant wildflower plugs in Pond Green Meadow

Longer grass boundary around village greens 1-2m

Leave grass on village greens long enough for low growing plants to flower

Formulate succession plan for mature trees – willows around pond, lime trees, horse chestnuts etc

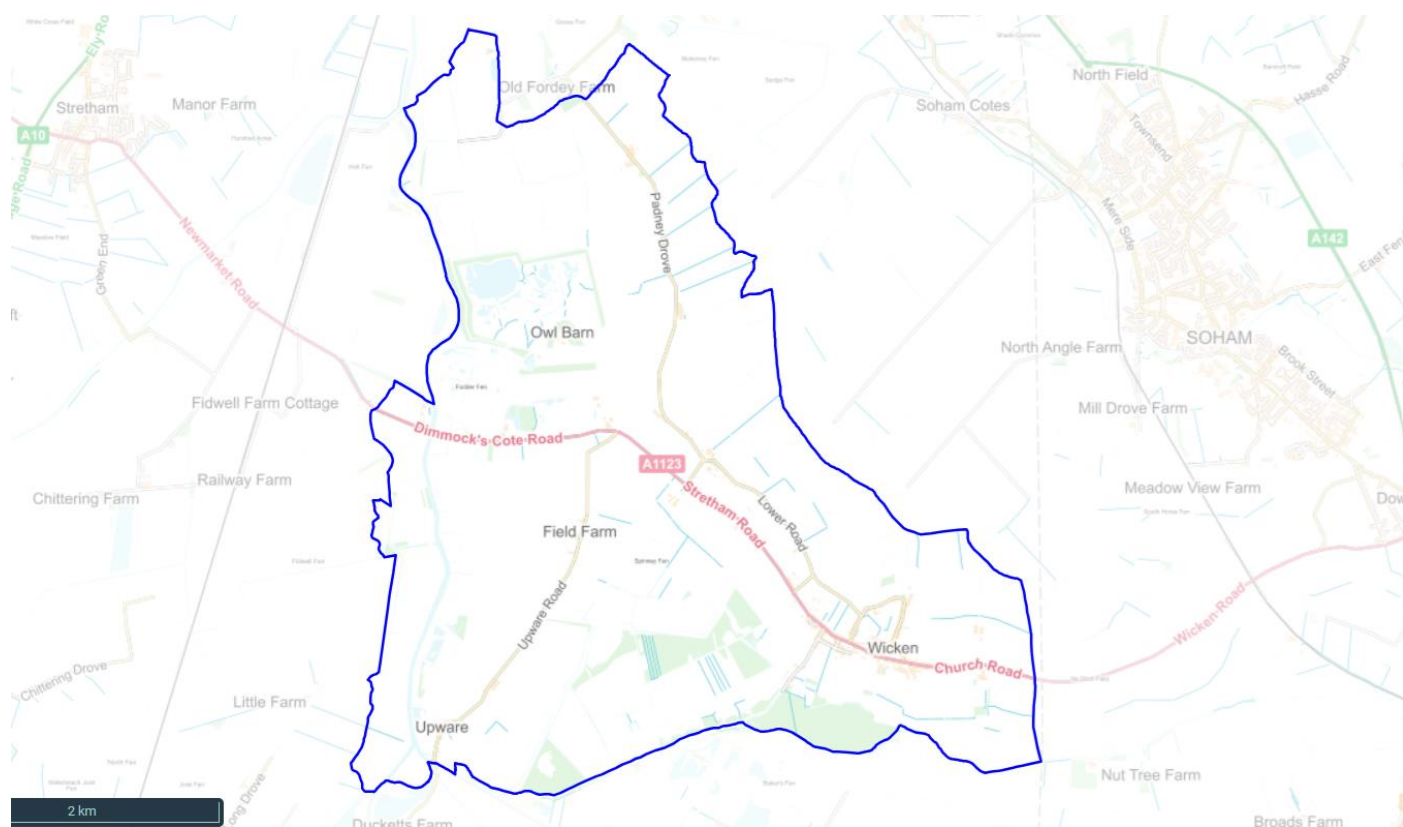
Preserve mature trees - not rush to cut down diseased/dying trees but where safe leave them for rotten wood as habitat for insects/bats

Every tree in village on Parish Council land that has to come down will be replaced by at least one more (continue this existing policy)

Allow Parish Council maintained hedges to grow taller and wilder (unless that will impact access, safety or security)

Encourage planting of trees and hedges along linear features such as footpath, byways, roads. Where possible to facilitate the connection of Wicken Fen and Kingfisher Nature Reserve and the Camb washes

Appendix 1: Map of Wicken



Appendix 2: Summary Action Plan

The following table sets out some of the key actions the Parish Council intends to take over the period 2023-2025

Project	Description	By Who / Cost	Additional comments
Develop, cost and prioritise these actions		Cllrs Robinson and Hill	Present back to the Parish Council and agree timelines
Nest and bat boxes	Fund and encourage putting up of appropriate nest boxes	CIL money	
Allotment	Write a 1 page summary to encourage new allotments users on wildlife friendly gardening	Cllr Hill	Shared with allotment administrator for sending to new allotment holders
Allotment	Encourage Horticultural show to have a wildlife gardening award		Provide a prize out of allotment fees?
Parish wildlife spotting events	Organise parish wildlife events for bird, bat and moth observation	Cllrs Robinson and Hill	
St Laurence's Church	Wildlife survey of church yard, in particular swifts	Cllrs Robinson and Hill	Would require consent from diocese
St Laurence's Church	Adapt church management to apply for bronze Wildlife Trust award	Cllr Robinson	Will include signs to tell people what is being done, a plan for maintenance and will ensure grave areas are kept tidy
Amenity areas – village pond and recreation pond	Freshwater invertebrates and amphibian survey for ponds and encourage residents to join in, especially children Create more amphibian friendly habitats	Cllr Hill	
Amenity Areas – village greens	Longer grass boundary around village greens 1-2m	Cllrs Robinson and Hill	

	Formulate succession plan for mature trees – willows around pond, lime trees, horse chestnuts etc		
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