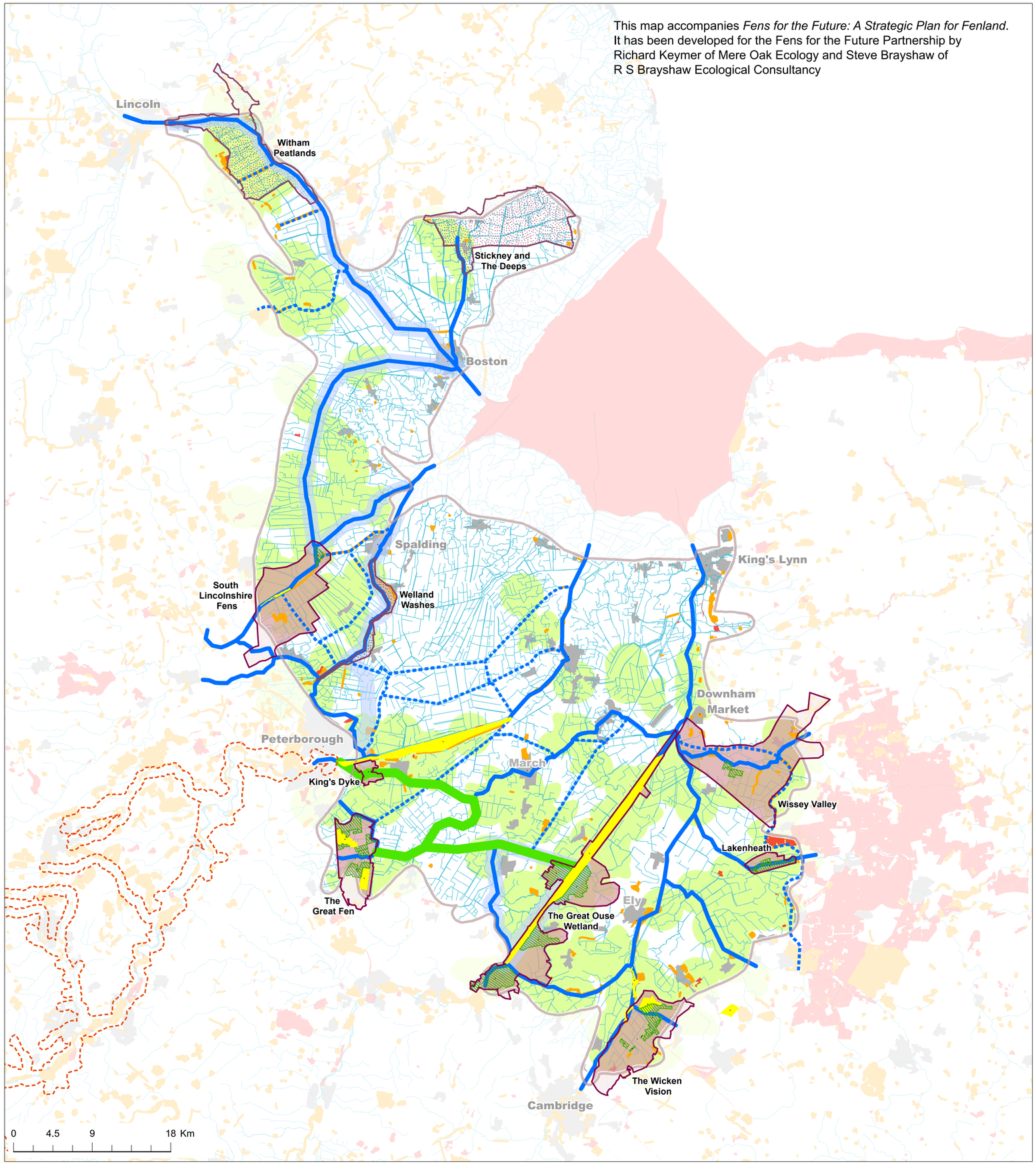
This map accompanies *Fens for the Future: A Strategic Plan for Fenland*. It has been developed for the Fens for the Future Partnership by Richard Keymer of Mere Oak Ecology and Steve Brayshaw of R S Brayshaw Ecological Consultancy



FENS FOR THE FUTURE

A Proposal for an Enhanced Ecological Network for Fenland

This map presents a proposal for the creation and enhancement of an ecological network for Fenland. The plan boundary is based on the Fens National Character Area and comprises the 'Settled Inland Fens' and the 'Open Inland Fens' where associated habitats are dependent on freshwater systems. The 'Open Coastal Marshes' and 'Drained Coastal Marshes', which are coastal in nature and whose conservation has been led by two long-standing partnerships: the *Wash Estuary Strategy Group and the Wash and North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site Partnership,* are omitted.

The proposed ecological network is based on the structure recommended in the Natural Environment White Paper:**The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature,** published in June 2011, which in turn is based on the Lawton Report: **Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network.** The proposed network comprises the following elements: core areas, corridors, stepping stones, restoration areas, buffer zones and sustainable use areas. Full descriptions of each of these are provided in the accompanying report: **A Strategic Plan for Fenland : A Proposal for an Enhanced Ecological Network.**

Core Areas

Areas of high nature conservation value which form the heart of the network. They contain habitats that are rare or important because of the wildlife they support or the ecosystem services they provide. They comprise the remaining areas of fen and the wetland habitats of the Great Washlands. They are all Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and most have international recognition as Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and/or Special Protection Areas (SPA).

Proposed Priority Landscape Corridor

Proposed Landscape Corridors

Proposed Secondary Corridors

Landscape Corridors and Secondary Corridors improve the functional connectivity between core areas, enabling species to move between them to feed, disperse, migrate or reproduce. As it is largely a wetland system the proposed Landscape Corridors comprise the main rivers and main drains, but Secondary Corridors are also identified to provide useful additional connectivity. It is recommended that priority should be given to the development of the proposed **Priority Landscape Corridor** which connects the southern Fens and Ouse Washes to the Great Fen and to the Nene Washes.

Stepping Stones (to be identified)

Connectivity need not come from linear, continuous habitats; a number of small sit may act as Stepping Stones across which certain species are able to move between Core Areas. It is envisaged that smaller, currently isolated, SSSI and Local Wildlife Sites will be the foundation for the development of Stepping Stones.

Restoration Areas

Areas where measures are already underway to restore or create new high value habitats and species populations, and where ecological functions are enhanced.They are often located as extensions to existing Core Areas.

Buffer Zones (to be identified)

Areas surrounding Core Areas, Restoration Areas, Stepping Stones and Corridors, that protect them from adverse impacts from the wider environment. Often Restoration Areas have been planned adjacent to Core Areas and part of their function is to buffer them. However, Restoration Areas will also require buffering from adjoining intensive land uses.

Sustainable Use Areas

Areas within the wider landscape where the focus is on the sustainable use of natural resources and appropriate economic activities, together with the maintenance of ecosystem services. Set up appropriately, they will help to 'soften the matrix' outside the Proposed Ecological Network and make it more permeable and less hostile to wildlife, including self- sustaining populations of species that are dependent upon, or at least tolerant of, certain forms of agriculture. The indicative Sustainable Use Areas identified here are based on areas with the highest assemblages of key farmland birds: corn bunting, grey partridge, lapwing, turtle dove, tree sparrow and yellow wagtail.

Target Areas (some habitat restoration underway)

Target Areas (no current habitat restoration activity)

Areas identified by partners, for habitat creation and restoration. Habitat restoration projects are already taking place in some of the Target Areas, but in others restoration work is yet to get underway.

Plan Boundary

SSSI

Local Wildlife Sites

Fen Waterways Link

Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area

Note. The proposed Enhanced Ecological Network is based on existing ecological important sites and features, in particular SSSI and the main rivers and drains. Local Wildlife Sites will alsobe important components of an enhanced network by providing the focus for the development of Stepping Stones. Although many of these sites and features are visible on the map, many more, including some of the most extensive, are obscured are by the components of the ecological network e.g. although Ouse Washes is an SSSI, but appears as a Core Area on the map. Similarly, many of the main rivers and drains are hidden under the Corridors.

Map Reference:110407

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