

# The Lea Catchment

## Restoring the river from countryside to capital city

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## Nature Improvement Areas

- NIA is the new name for Ecological Restoration Zones proposed in the 'Making space for nature' review chaired by Professor Sir John Lawson
- Competition launched by Natural England on behalf of Defra in mid 2011
- 12 NIA's across England to receive a share of £7.5 million



# Nature Improvement Areas

NIAs should contain all these components of an ecological network:

- core areas, especially existing wildlife sites (National Nature Reserves (NNRs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) etc);
- corridors and stepping stones;
- restoration areas, where priority habitats are created to provide (in time) more core areas;
- buffer zones, that reduce pressures on core areas;
- surrounding land that is managed, including for sustainable food production, in a wildlife friendly way.



# The Lea Catchment NIA – some TLC for the River Lea

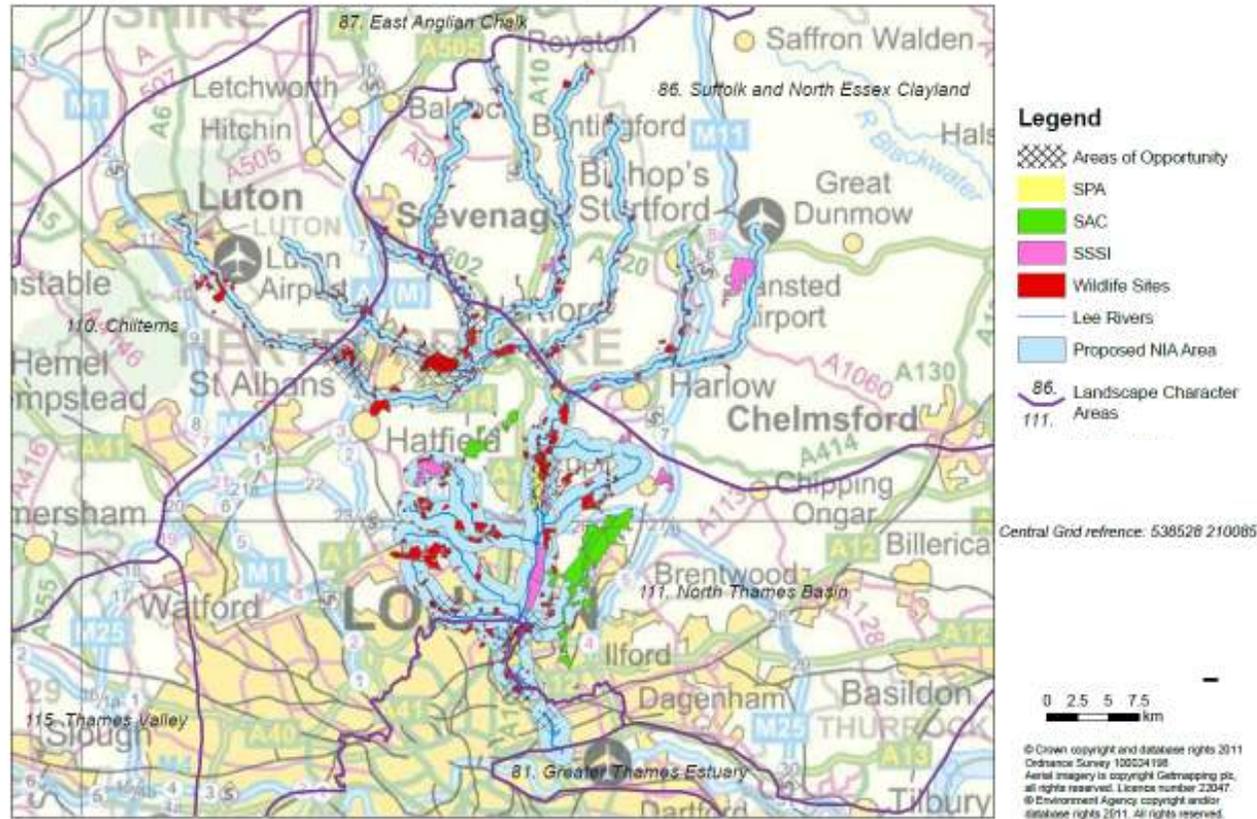
- Includes the Lea and its tributaries – a total river catchment of 404km, a total area of 43,619ha.
- Builds on the strength of existing partnerships
- Assists in the delivery of regional strategies
- Identify and where possible part-fund projects
- Influence planning policy
- Actively engage with the range of landowners
- Secure local political engagement in the NIA
- Lead delivery of ecological gains





# Core ecological assets of the Lea Valley

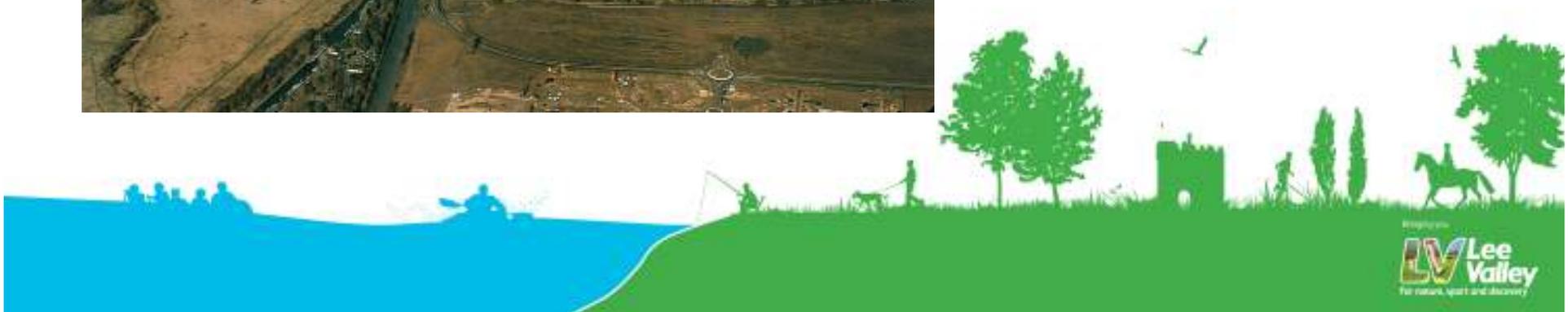
Lea Valley NIA - Core Ecological Assets and Areas of Opportunity



## Core ecological assets in the Lea Catchment



Lea Valley  
Special Protection Area





Sites of Special Scientific Interest



Sites of Importance for  
Nature Conservation



## Issues within the Lea Catchment



Over-abstraction on the Chalk Rivers





Long sections of culverted rivers



Poor riparian land management





Hard edging



Pollution



## Objective one

To restore, recreate and link characteristic ecological, hydrological and landscape features to fully integrate the Lea floodplain corridor.



## Objective two

To improve the ecological management of designated sites within the Lea Valley



## Objective three

Enhance and enlarge key biodiversity sites in the Lea Valley



## Objective four

Begin to achieve good ecological status of the River Lea and tributaries



## Objective five

To increase awareness and understanding of the biodiversity of the Lea Valley and to activate participation in its conservation.



# Delivery

- £648,000 sought from the NIA funding
  - In-kind contributions £243,300
  - Match funding £2,152,179
- Wide-ranging partnership including representatives from local government, private landowners, charities, local groups, water companies
- 11 key delivery partners

LVRPA

Herts CC – Countryside Management Service

HMWT

University of Hertfordshire

Thames 21

London Wildlife Trust

RSPB

British Waterways

LB Enfield

Essex Biodiversity Partnership

Groundwork Herts



# Outputs

31 projects which will deliver:

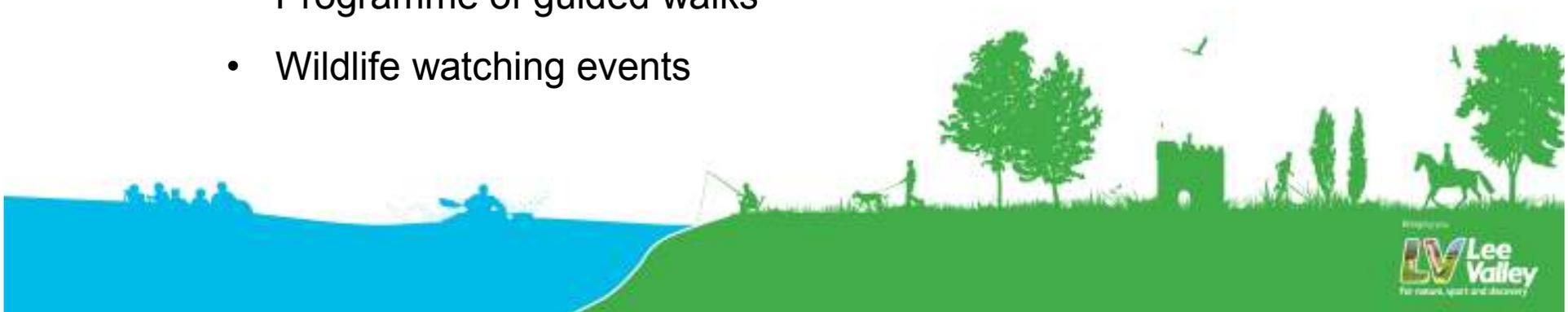
- 105.5 ha restored on core sites
- 45 wildlife sites improved
- 27.7km of river corridor enhanced

Wide ranging volunteer programme

- at least 500 days of volunteer survey work
- at least 1550 volunteer practical conservation days
- 30 training events

Community outreach

- Programme of guided walks
- Wildlife watching events



# The Announcement

The first 12 NIA's were announced by Defra in Feb 2012

- Birmingham and the Black Country Living Landscape
- Dark Peak
- Dearne Valley Green Heart
- Greater Thames Marshes
- Humberhead Levels
- Marlborough Downs
- Meres and Mosses of the Marches
- Morecambe Bay Limestones and Wetlands
- Nene Valley
- Northern Devon
- South Downs Way Ahead
- Wild Purbeck



## The way forward

- Partners meeting to look at the next step
- No longer able to be called an NIA
- Further funding from Defra - £30K per annum for 3 years
- Additional funding through Natural England - £70K for year 1



## Year one

Further funding from Defra - £30K per annum for 3 years

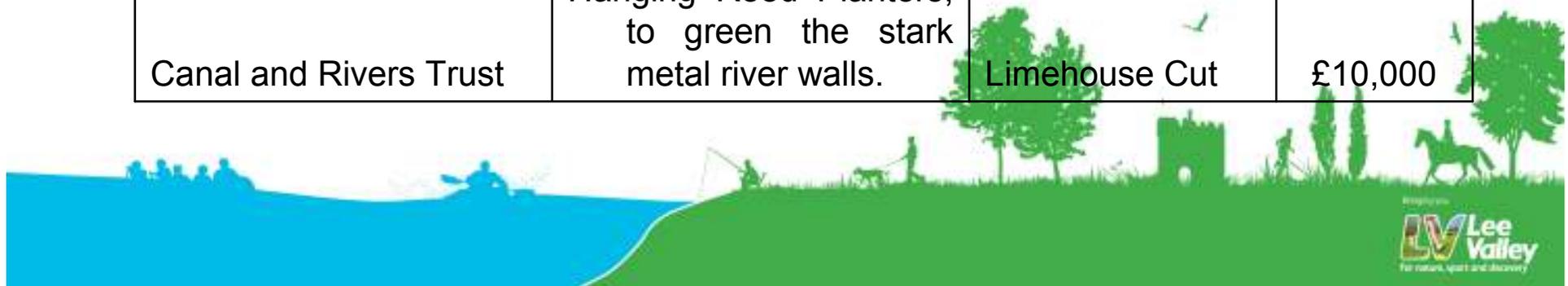
- Habitat opportunity mapping for the entire catchment - £13K
- Restoring the River Mimram - £17K
- Funding strategy
- Engagement
- Strengthening the partnership



# Year one

- Additional funding through Natural England - £70K for year 1

Essex Biodiversity partnership	Backwater enhancements	Sawbridgeworth Marshes	£15,000
HMWT	River Beane Restoration	Waterford Heath	£6,500
RSPB	Reedbed Improvements	Rye Meads	£10,000
Groundwork Herts	Habitat enhancement	Lewsey Park	£10,000
HMWT	Restoring the River Mimram	Singlers Marsh	£10,000
LVRPA	Wet grassland restoration	Patty Pool Mead and Sewardstone Marshes	£8,500
Canal and Rivers Trust	Hanging Reed Planters; to green the stark metal river walls.	Limehouse Cut	£10,000



## The future

Defra produced guidance in September 2012 regarding the recognition of NIA's by the Local Nature Partnership

**'Criteria for Local Authorities, Local Nature Partnerships and others to apply when identifying Nature Improvement Areas'**

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13824-nia-criteria.pdf>

