

Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities	Agenda Item No. 5
27 July 2009	Public Report

Report of the Director of the Greater Peterborough Partnership

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The Langdyke Trust

1. PURPOSE

To make the committee aware of the work of the Langdyke Trust as an example to consider for future establishments of land trusts.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee identify any areas of good practise and make recommendations about the future establishment and benefits to rural communities of land trusts and how these trusts could be supported by the City Council.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Langdyke Countryside Trust is a voluntary, membership based, organisation that through community action aims to preserve and enhance the natural heritage in the area between Peterborough and Stamford, including, where possible, through the restoration of the lost landscapes described by John Clare.

3.2 We have three principal theme areas of activity

1. **Places** – working with landowners, or if appropriate managing land ourselves, to enhance or create habitats in order to increase both the diversity and the numbers of our local wildlife species. In particular, we will focus on the restoration of the lost landscapes as described by John Clare, including areas of limestone grassland.
2. **People** – working with schools and other community groups and wildlife charities, we will offer opportunities for people to learn about and appreciate and support the natural environment on their doorsteps.
3. **Projects from Poems** –we will establish specific programmes of conservation activity designed to support increases in population of certain species that feature in the poetry and writing of John Clare.

3.3 The Trust was established in 1999. It now has over 150 members in the villages west of Peterborough.

3.4 It acquired its first nature reserve at Swaddywell Pit as a community nature reserve in 2003. Swaddywell was the subject of two poems by John Clare and was one of the first nature reserves established by the National Trust at the beginning of the 20th Century. It is a county wildlife site and a regionally important geological site, but in between its lease by the National Trust and the eventual acquisition by the Langdyke Countryside Trust it was ploughed up, quarried, used as a household waste tip and as a venue for the national VW Owners' Club

rallies.

- 3.5 The Trust has also recently announced the creation of a heritage and nature reserve at Torpel Manor Field, Bainton which it purchased using money for green infrastructure projects awarded by Peterborough City Council. This nine acre field was the site of a medieval manor house, owned by Roger de Torpel one of the original feudal knights of Peterborough Abbey. The remains of the manor house can still be seen in the form of a series of high mounds and ditches on the site. It is also a county wildlife site. The Trust will be renovating the stable block on the site and creating a small visitor centre there focusing not just on Torpel Manor, but on all aspects of the Trust's work.
- 3.6 In the last year the Trust has also entered into two management agreements for the creation of two more nature reserves in the area: with National Grid at Bainton Heath, near Bainton fisheries and with Tarmac at Etton-Maxey Pits. This fifty acre reserve lies to the west of the Etton-Maxey Road and is the site of a former gravel extraction quarry. Over the next few years it will be converted into a mosaic of open water, reed-bed, wet woodland and grassland with public access by permit along a nature trail with hides.
- 3.7 The restoration of the land is part of Tarmac's original planning consent with Peterborough City Council. Tarmac has already created a network of small reed beds and pools with thousands of trees planted to create the wet woodland areas. Last year for birdwatchers, a breeding pair of Avocet successfully raised four young – the first record in Peterborough for many years. In addition, the reserve is home to many species of dragonfly and other insects.
- 3.8 In total the Trust now actively manages nearly 130 acres of land in the interests of nature and the local community.
- 3.9 The Trust also runs a monthly programme of nature walks, work-parties and indoor talks and has a large nest box programme around the area, designed to provide habitat for birds, bees and insects. It also has its own flock of Hebridean sheep which graze the grassland at Swaddywell and also at Castor Hanglands.
- 3.10 The Trust is also working closely with a range of partners as part of the John Clare Country project. The idea behind John Clare Country is simple – to get all those involved in the future of the villages and countryside west of Peterborough to work together to preserve and enhance the natural and built heritage of the area, linking this with the legacy of John Clare – uniting people, places and poetry. Our thinking goes far beyond the Trust's usual focus on wildlife and heritage. Much more ambitiously we have developed a simple vision for the rural areas west of Peterborough -

“To create a model of 21st century rural living to the west of Peterborough¹ famous as an exemplar of how to build sustainable rural communities for the benefit of local people and local biodiversity.”

The model would be based on:

- A number of thriving **village communities**, each with easy access to local services and employment opportunities, local community activities and strong, empowered organs of local government
- A green **transport** infrastructure, with a network of cycle paths, footways and 'quiet roads' where priority is given to walkers and riders
- A prosperous **farming** community, profiting from a combination of eco-friendly farming practice, eco-tourism and recreational activities
- A flourishing **local economy** providing local jobs for local people, based on services provided to visitors, plus environmental businesses located in village business centres
- An outstanding **natural biodiversity** created by environmentally friendly farming practice, habitat restoration and a mosaic of smaller wildlife havens.

¹ Roughly the area bounded by the A1, A47 and A16

6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

None.

7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Membership leaflet.

Appendix 2 – Swaddywell Pit leaflet.

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