

WETLAND AT LITTLE PAXTON MILL
(Report by the Countryside Services Manager)

1. INTRODUCTION

This report recommends that the District Council accept the offer of two acres of wet grassland beside the River Great Ouse at Little Paxton Bridge.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 This parcel of land was bought by the property company, Fasha Property Holding Limited, and is surplus to their requirements.

2.2 The wetland is to the north of St Neots Common, which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It has had substantial wildlife interest, but this has been degraded over recent years through illicit grazing. This has caused concern to many residents.

2.3 There is no commuted sum with the transfer of this land, but it is expected to generate income of £160 per year from grazing (based on St Neots Common) and £100 from the fishing rights on the river. There is also the potential to raise revenue from mooring rights.

2.4 English Nature have offered a grant of £7,000 towards interpretation boards, habitat management and fencing. These tasks will be undertaken by volunteers.

3. CONSULTATION

3.1 Local Community Groups such as The Friends of Paxton Pits and The St Neots Bird and Wildlife Club have visited the site and are very enthusiastic to help with the management. Ward Councillors for Priory Park and Little Paxton have been kept informed of the proposals and approve of the overall plan.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The limited income from the site will enable a volunteer group of local residents to be involved in the management of the site so that there is no net cost to the District Council.

4.2 The main work of the volunteers will be in the first 3 years when fencing and habitat management will need to be undertaken.

4.3 The volunteers will be supervised and supported by Countryside Services and additional support is expected from the Wildlife Trust.

5. RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet authorises the transfer of the land to the District Council.

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