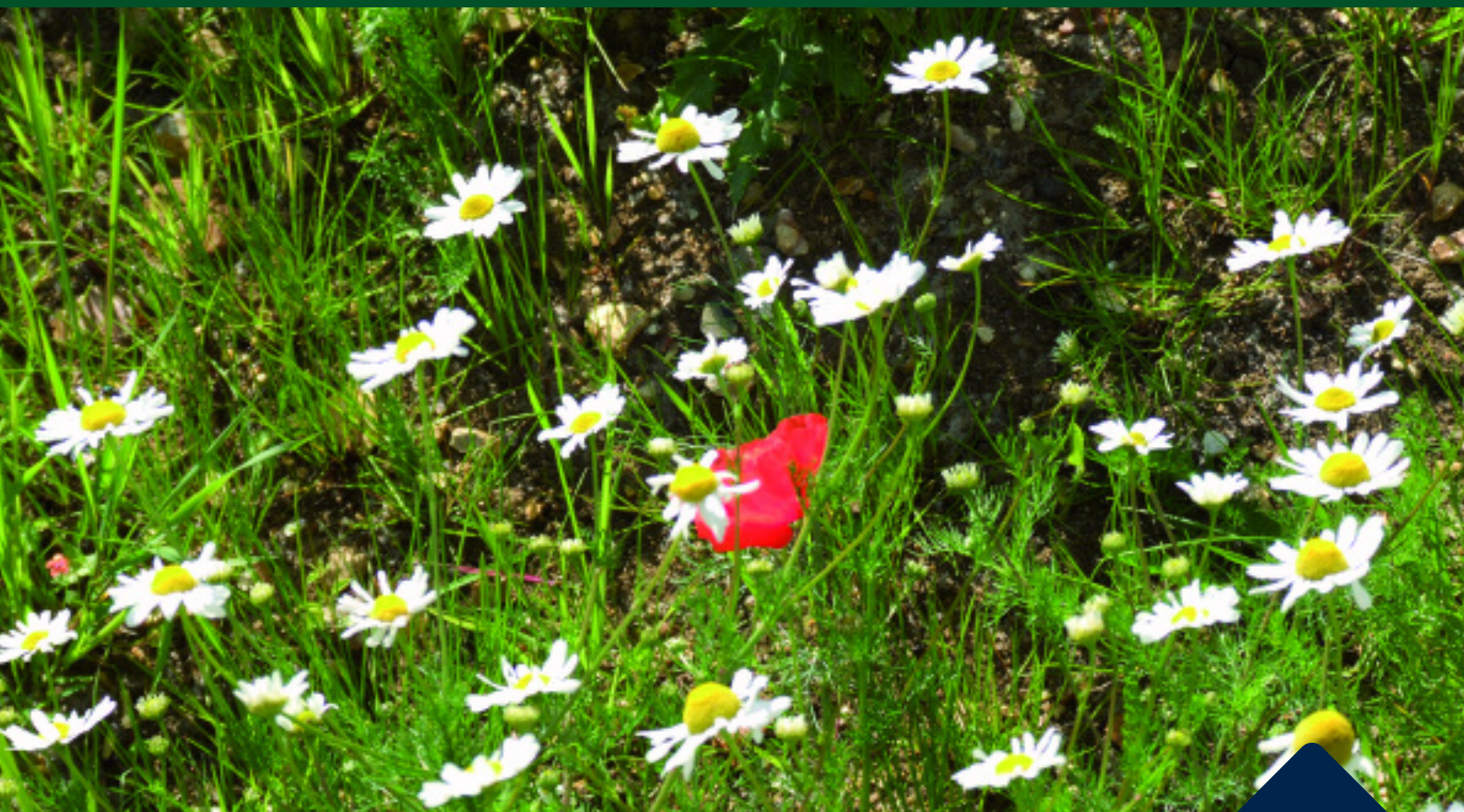


Guided Busway Green Update Winter 2007

This is a special edition of the Guided Busway update, with lots of information about the ecological and environmental work that is happening on the project.

We've got an interview with Ollie Barnett who's the Ecological Clerk of Works for the project and news about how we're protecting plants and wildlife during construction.

But first, here's some information about one of the key ways that the project is putting something back into the environment.



A view across the recently established LEM D



Putting something back

As part of the busway project the Council is creating 16 new areas for ecological habitats and protected species.

In total we are creating 17.5 hectares of species rich grassland with wildlife value. We're also creating 15 new ponds specifically designed for wildlife. These new habitats are designed to go some way to make up for the loss of habitat resulting from construction.

The overall aims and objectives for the new habitats are not just linked to the construction of the busway project however. The habitats will be managed for many years to ensure their targets are achieved and integrated with the Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).



Water plants at Beck Brook

The new areas all have their own particular purpose, including:

- Maintaining the wildlife value of reed beds.
- Maintaining the ecological value of drainage ditches.
- Providing new habitat suitable for grizzled skipper and other invertebrates.
- Maintaining scrub habitats to support key species in the Over Cutting Wildlife site.
- Maintaining continuous populations of nationally scarce flora.
- Maintaining the presence of water voles and otters (where they were recorded) at water courses affected by construction work.
- Providing suitable conditions for great crested newts.
- Encouraging bats to forage and roost along the scheme.

These new areas are known as LEMs, Landscape and Ecological Mitigation areas, and are numbered A to P.

LEM D near Over Cutting was the first area to be completed. We are currently working on LEMs C, G, H and I. Tree and shrub planting will be taking place at these sites this winter.



Wood piling for wildlife to shelter in

Protecting scarce flora along the route of the busway

In October this year, locally important plant species were removed from the busway route and stored, in order to protect them during construction. These plants, wild liquorice & twiggly mullein, were found near Long Road in Cambridge.

The CGB team worked with staff from the Botanical Gardens in Cambridge to arrange for the translocation and storage of the flora at the Botanical Gardens to protect the plants.

The plants were carefully dug up and seed was collected. The seed will be sown at the Botanical Gardens and the plants nurtured to ensure they have the best chance of survival.

During construction a new Landscape and Ecological Mitigation area (LEM) will be created near Long Road for the flora. When it's finished, the flora will be translocated from the Botanical Gardens back to the LEM in autumn 2008. The area will be managed and monitored and experts will try to further diversify the species and composition of the area.



twiggly mullein

Interview with Ollie Barnett, Ecological Clerk of Works for the Guided Busway project

What does your job involve?

I'm responsible for liaising with construction staff about ecological issues. We also have an Environmental Manager. It's our job to make sure construction work is carried out in a way that recognises and protects ecology. We have a Code of Construction Practice that outlines how work can be carried out. I make sure this code is followed in terms of ecology. An important part of my job is encouraging good communication about ecological issues with all of the construction staff.

What are the ecology issues with the Guided Busway project?

We are watching out for a number of protected species along the route including great crested newts, bats, badgers, water voles and reptiles. It's my job to regularly survey for these species and keep a watching brief in ecologically sensitive areas. I also carry out botanical surveys.

How did you get involved with the busway project?

I worked as a scientific researcher for several years and completed a PhD in an ecological discipline. My employer, Arup gave me the opportunity to put theory into practice and, as Ecological Clerk of Works for the

CGB, that's exactly what I get to do - promote practical conservation with real, tangible benefits to local wildlife.

How are you protecting the environment?

We have designed and are creating a number of mitigation areas. In other parts of the scheme we are preserving existing vegetation, enhancing habitats and protecting species. We are trying to enhance the diversity of different species in the grasslands and meadows and we're restoring and creating grassland along several sections of the route. We also monitor ecology and provide advice to the designers and construction staff. It's always a challenge on big construction projects to convince people that ecological and landscape issues are being put first and taken seriously. On the busway project, ecologists and landscape architects have been working since day one and the environmental aspects of the project have always been taken very seriously by the Council and the Contractor.



Protecting wildlife during construction of the busway

There are very strict regulations about how wildlife is protected during big construction projects. The Council's contractor has had to put up temporary fencing to protect water courses, vegetation, great crested newts and badger setts. The Ecological Clerk of Works must also be present during the construction process. The clerk checks for nesting birds during breeding bird season and searches for water vole burrows along ditches. The clerk also educates the workforce on species likely to be encountered on the scheme, and the reasons they are protected.

Some elements of the construction work can only take place at the appropriate time of year, i.e. outside of the bird nesting or breeding season. Other specific activities include wetland planting at Beck Brook near Station Road, Oakington to establish wetland whilst stabilising the bank.

The contractor also has to get appropriate licences to work in areas where there are protected species and follow method statements to ensure wildlife is protected. The overall principle that guides the construction work is to limit disturbance to wildlife present as much as possible.



Great crested newt
exclusion fencing