

GREAT FEN PROJECT WELCOMES NEW PARTNER

Middle Level Commissioners become partner of Great Fen Project

The Middle Level Commissioners, who operate the area's flood protection and water management system and manage the navigable waterways of the Middle Level area, have become a partner of the Great Fen Project.

The Great Fen Project – a habitat restoration project to create over 9,000 acres (3,700 hectares) of fenland – covers a large area of the Middle Level.

The Middle Level is the central and largest section of the Great Level of the Fens, reclaimed by drainage during the mid-17th Century. Its river system consists of over 120 miles (190 kilometres) of watercourses and has a catchment of just over 170,000 acres (70,000 hectares).

The Great Fen Project already plays an important and inherent part in the Middle Level's flood prevention planning. Currently, Woodwalton Fen is used to store floodwater at times of high flow in the Middle Level System.

As the Great Fen Project progresses and more land is restored to fenland habitat, it will seek to enhance flood protection by increasing flood storage areas within the Great Fen. This will compliment the Middle Level Commissioners' work to further protect land and property in the area.

As a partner, the Middle Level Commissioners will offer their advice and expertise on the most efficient and effective use of water management throughout the Project area and on the potential for access to the Great Fen by water. They have already advised on some of the Project's work to restore habitat.

The addition of the Middle Level Commissioners highlights just one of the many benefits the Project provides for the surrounding area.

Chris Gerrard, Great Fen Project Manager, said:

“The Great Fen Project partners are delighted to welcome the Middle Level Commissioners onboard. They have already played an invaluable part as a member of the Great Fen Project steering group, advising us on management of the project area and working together towards an efficient water management infrastructure. We look forward to working further with them in the future to continue to create a project that enhances flood protection and benefits fenland wildlife and people.”

Iain Smith, Chief Executive of the Middle Level Commissioners was also delighted:

“The Commissioners’ roles, encompassing flood defence, navigation, water level management and conservation duties correlate well with the aims and aspirations of the Great Fen Project. Having been involved with the Project from the beginning, we are therefore pleased to now be able to increase our involvement to that of a full partner and look forward to working in that capacity with the existing partners.”

The efficient operation of the Middle Level System is vital to the safety and prosperity of over 100,000 people who live and work in the area. If the water levels were not efficiently managed, much of the fen land would be under water for much of the year, access from higher ground would be cut-off and many of the present land uses would be impossible.

Thus, the Great Fen Project partners are delighted to welcome the Middle Level Commissioners onboard and help in their effort to enhance flood protection throughout the area.

The Middle Level Commissioners become the fifth Great Fen Project partner, alongside the Environment Agency, Huntingdonshire District Council, Natural England and The Wildlife Trust.