

local environment agency plan



OLD BEDFORD

*Incorporating the Middle Level
and Ouse Washes*

Consultation

Report

Summary

May 1997

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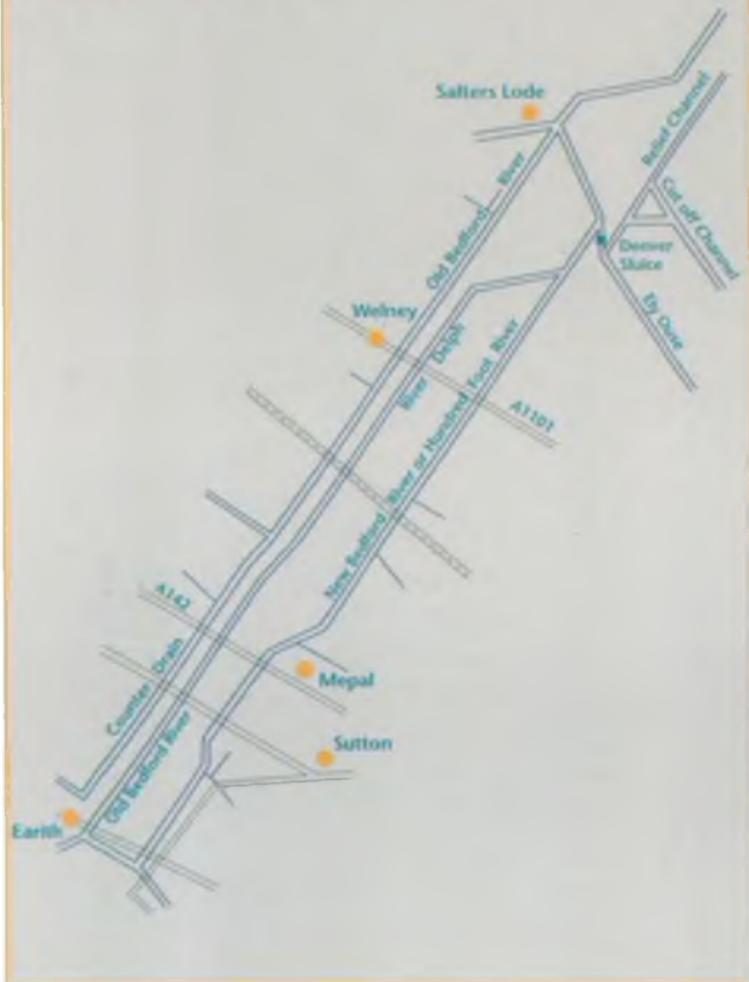
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**ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY**

Time
Consider
Local
Environment

Schematic Map of the Ouse Washes



Issues Facing the Area

The following are some examples of what we believe to be the problems and challenges facing the 'Old Bedford' area:



Protection of the Ouse Washes

Created originally as a defence from flooding, the Ouse Washes are also one of the country's few remaining areas of washland habitat - which supports a large variety of bird life and is highly designated, eg, as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, etc. The Consultation Report describes the complexities of managing the Washes for the benefit of all, eg, ensuring satisfactory water levels in the summer and winter and that habitat management continues, in partnership with landowners, users and English Nature.

Concerns over Maintaining Farming in the Longer Term

Farming dominates the economy in this locality and illustrates how man drained the Fens to create some of the most productive soils in the UK for vegetables and cereals. Production is now geared towards the demands of the market place - high quality and year-round produce. This has meant increased reliance on irrigation and although current water demands are met, increased demands in the future or during droughts cannot be.

Studies have shown that the peat soils are shrinking and will eventually down grade causing changes to cropping. Future farming policy needs to ensure that soil and water resources are not exhausted and that consumers are educated as to the impact of food production, to maintain farming and the local economy.





If You Want To Know More:

A fuller account can be found in the Consultation Document and also in a "Fact File" covering the Old Bedford area. Both are available on request as is a whole range of other publications and information from your local Customer Service Centre on **0645 333111**





Development and Land Use Considerations

Development is the most significant impact on the environment. The control of land use, development and Town & Country planning is the responsibility of the local authorities. The Agency is a statutory consultee in that process and will give its opinion on the impacts associated with developments such as causeways crossing the Ouse Washes, increasing landfill capacity or 1300 new dwellings in Ramsey.

Sewage Treatment Impacts upon Water Quality

Although the majority of discharges from Anglian Water's Sewage Treatment Works (STW) are of good quality, there are a number which need to be closely monitored so that river water quality targets are met. Whilst Whittlesey STW is a candidate for future improvements, Somersham STW has secured funding to lessen its impact on the Cranbrook drain.

There is also public concern over the impact combined sewer overflows are having on the old course of the River Nene - visible in March town centre. Management options are given in the full report.

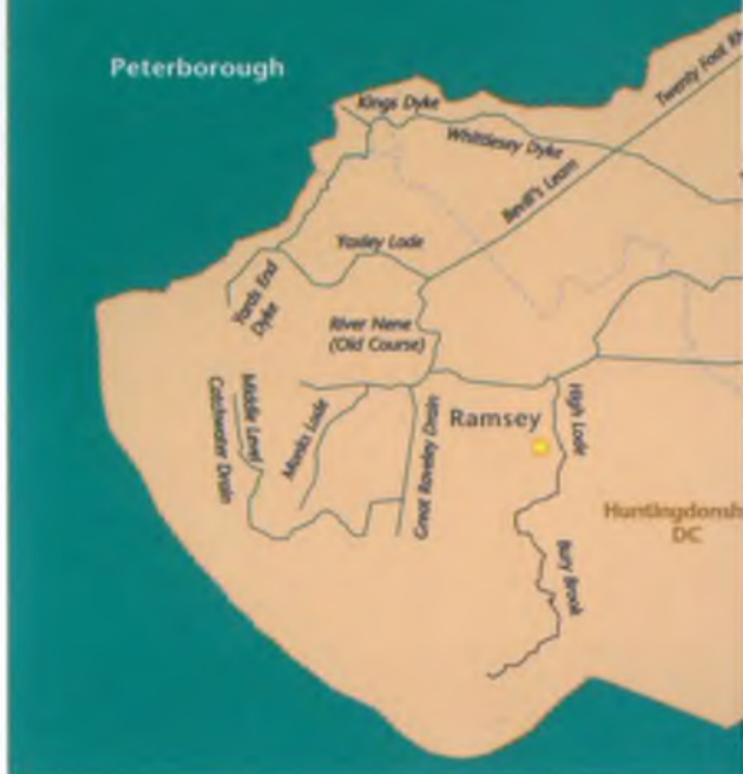
Recreation

There are considerable problems associated with navigating in the Old Bedford, a statutory navigation; principally siltation and water levels. Your views are sought on how this situation could be best remedied.

In addition to the above, the consultation report deals with issues where we still don't know enough, especially in the field of biodiversity, eg. numbers of various animals dependant on rivers or why fish survival is not as good as we expect.

The report also highlights the need to continue to restore and enhance the environment, eg. through wetland creation.

Map of Plan Area



Your Views

If you wish to receive a copy of the full Consultation Report document please contact:
Customer Services Manager,
Old Bedford LEAP
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We want to receive your views on the contents of this leaflet and the document itself, in particular whether we have identified all the major issues and options for resolving them.



Introduction

Thank you for picking up this leaflet. Its aim is to raise awareness of the types of problems which are facing the environment in this locality and introduce a process whereby you can contribute your views towards protecting and improving the 'Old Bedford' area. This process is known as Local Environment Agency Planning.

What is Local Environment Agency Planning?

Our environment- Air, Land and Water, supports a variety of habitats, flora and fauna including ourselves. Man "uses" the environment in a number of ways; for the supply of drinking water, production of food crops, disposal of waste products and for recreation and enjoyment etc.

These demands sometimes conflict and we use Local Environment Agency Planning as a tool to manage the environment in an integrated and balanced fashion.

A Consultation Report covering this locality has recently been produced. The report gives a detailed description of the state of the local environment and provides a focus for working in partnership with other organisations such as local councils, English Nature and drainage authorities, etc.

After all the responses to the Consultation Report are considered, an Action Plan is produced (**due February 1998**) which will describe the work that the Agency and others will undertake to maintain and enhance the environment over the next five years.

Area Overview

Rural, fenland area found mainly in Cambridgeshire - where issues concerning the management of the water environment dominate.

Take **Time**
to **Consider**
your **Local**
Environment

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- Regional Boundary
- Area Office
- ▲ Regional Headquarters



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For general enquires please call your local Environment Agency office. If you are unsure who to contact, or which is your local office, please call our general enquiry line.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY GENERAL ENQUIRY LINE

0645 333 111

The 24-hour emergency hotline number for reporting all environmental incidents relating to air, land and water.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY EMERGENCY HOTLINE

0800 80 70 60



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