

# Wet Farming Demonstration

As part of our EU-funded CANAPE project, the Broads Authority is a project partner in a two-year multi-benefit wetland project aiming to test ways to develop a more sustainable future for Broads resources in terms of soil, water and people.

From August 2021 to December 2022 we will create a field trial of wet farming. This new crop will filter water, grow crops for the building industry and for livestock feed. This will result in cleaner water and lock carbon in the peat soil.

Collaboration with the Broads Internal Drainage Board, Environment Agency, Natural England and land manager (Horse Estate) will test the conversion to wetland and, crucially, share lessons learnt with Broads farmers and land managers.

A 1.3 hectare field (about two football pitches) on the Horse Estate will test a new way of farming peatland. The demonstration field will retain water and create connection to the catchment via a controlled slow flow of water through the field, for the first time since land drainage began.

## Background facts

The Broads is a last remnant of a vast wetland habitat that covered much of East Anglia 1,000 years ago, before modern drainage changed the watery wilderness into agricultural fields. Wetlands are significantly threatened places. Since 1700, 87% of global wetlands have been lost, a rate three times faster than natural forests.

There is growing interest in investment for peatlands, nature-based climate solutions and green jobs. This project helps prepare for new government and private investment, protect precious peat soils and water resources.

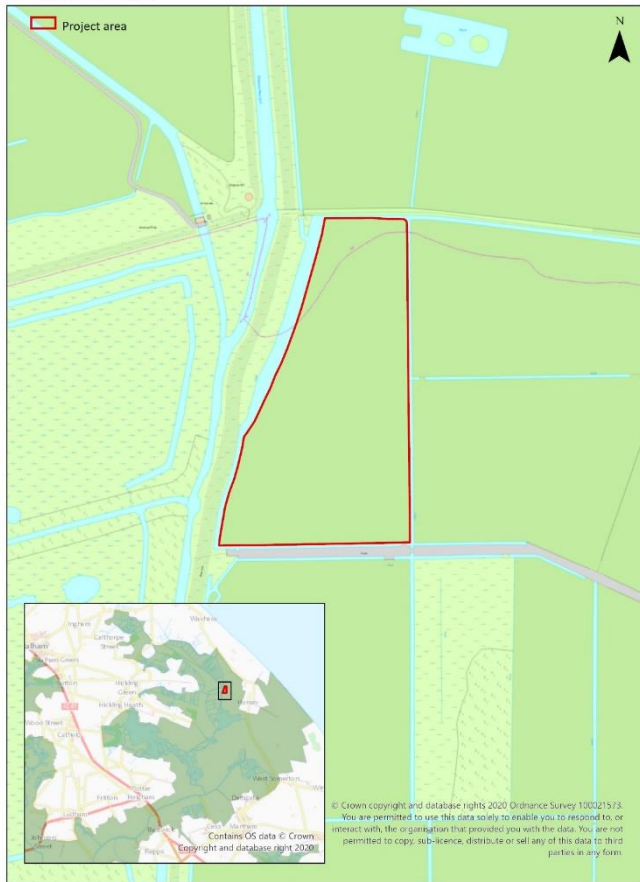
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## Benefits we expect

- the most important element of the project is exchanging knowledge and learning with Interreg project partners in CANAPE (Creating a New Approach to Peatland Ecosystems) who have been trialling such projects for many years
- informing the business decisions of farmers who may want to apply this learning to other areas
- cleaning and purifying water
- rewetting deep peat soil to reduce carbon emissions and help fight climate change
- growing wetland crops, which could be used for bioenergy or building materials, such as thatch or insulation boards
- informing land drainage in the Broads, including the replacement of pumping stations

- working with researchers to produce evidence on wetland plant propagation carbon calculation and wetland farming.

Horsey Wetland Project



Location of the wetland demonstration site

For more information, please contact: Andrea Kelly - Environment Policy Adviser, Broads Authority.

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## Results so far February 2022

- Broads IDB have efficiently constructed the bunds, using a minimal topsoil strip to level the site and installed the water intake and outflow
- Ivel Aquatics have done an amazing job planting the 13,000 healthy plants, supplied by Verdant Solutions,. The reed and typha (reed mace) were planted in challenging conditions, in the midst of the fuel crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, and seem to be rooting nicely into the ground despite it all
- New Energy Farms have supplied are trialling a new way of planting reed, by encapsulated reed in wax bundles of ready to go propagules – we have almost a hundred of their CEEDS™ in the ground
- Horsey Estate and Hirst Farms Ltd have helped prepare the ground and with keeping grazing geese and deer away as best they can – although we are planning further protections
- Monitoring by Exo-Environmental is showing low levels of nutrient in the site, and with water levels high than expected over the winter, we will monitor how this is affecting the young plant growth
- Broads Authority and Horsey Estate have hosted Defra's Lowland Agricultural Peatland Task Force and it's chair Robert Caudwell who are championing the challenges and

opportunities for farming, climate and nature in lowland peatland areas in England and representing these to government

- The British Reed Growers Association have visited the site
- Broads Authority presented information about this wet farming demonstration at the climate conference COP 26 at Glasgow
- As the plants grow more engagement is planned with farmers, thatcher's, land managers and policy developers





