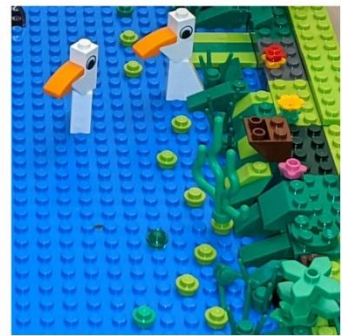
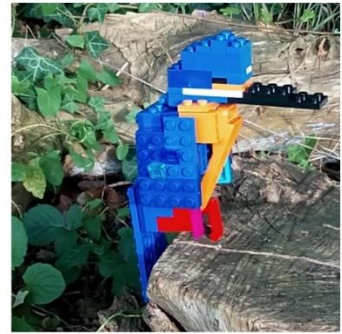


Build the Fantastic Fens

A Fens Biosphere online competition



Report: October 2020



@fensbiosphere



**FENS
BIOSPHERE**

Introduction

In order to engage organisations, local groups and individuals with the idea and aims of a potential Fens Biosphere a series of public consultations were planned for the summer of 2020. The aim of the events was to raise awareness of the idea of the Fens Biosphere and gain insight into what people valued about the Fens landscape.

The Chair of the Fens Biosphere Steering group, a well-known Lego® expert, offered her skills to deliver a series of Lego building events where members of the public would be invited to “Build the Biosphere”. These were planned for the summer of 2020 at five partner venues: Ely Cathedral, WWT Welney, Hinchbrook Country Park, The Great Fen and National Trust Wicken Fen.

At the end of March 2020 Covid-19 restrictions made it obvious that an alternative way of delivering these events had to be found. A decision was taken to move the events online and to make them a competition called “Build the Fantastic Fens”. Cambridgeshire ACRE, as Fens Biosphere lead delivery partner, undertook this work with the support of the five partners initially involved.

The Competition

Entrants were asked to build a Lego® model of something which could be seen in the Fens countryside or towns. [Five videos](#) were made to support the competition with an introduction from each of the five competition partners followed by a tutorial on how to build a specific Lego® model.

To enter the competition entrants had to email a photo of their model to Cambridgeshire ACRE along with an answer to one of these questions:

- 🌱 Under-12's category: “How does your model show how fantastic the Fens are”
- 🌱 Over-12's “How does the subject of your model contribute to the future of the Fens?”

The competition ran from 3 August to 11 September 2020 and was promoted on the websites and social media of partners and the [Fens Biosphere](#); local press releases and local radio. The poster and social media tiles were produced by the Wildlife Trust BCN communications team. Online judging took place on 14 September with a panel of judges from the Fens Biosphere Steering Group plus the People's Postcode Lottery.

It was originally planned to award four Lego® Gift cards as prizes (two £50 and two £75) but the standard of entries was so high that the judges requested an extra two £25 cards be bought and awarded.



FENS BIOSPHERE

Build the Fantastic Fens

Use LEGO® bricks to build a model of something you can see in the fantastic Fens and win a LEGO® gift card!

Open to all ages. Entrants will be split into two age categories, under 12 yrs old and over 12 yrs old.

How to enter: build your model, take a photo send it to us.

Date: 3 August to 11 September 2020.

Prize: two £50 LEGO® gift cards and two £75 gift cards

Terms and conditions apply. Visit Fens Biosphere website for instructions on how to take part and watch videos from our Fantastic Fens wildlife sites to inspire you - fensbiosphere.org.uk

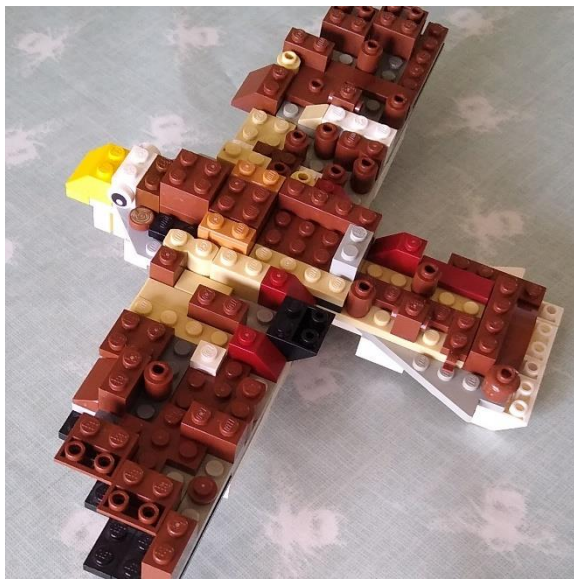


The Fens Biosphere Partnership is hosted by Cambridgeshire ACRE and is supported by funding from the People's Postcode Lottery Postcode Dream Fund as part of the Water Works project awarded to the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. Cambridgeshire ACRE is registered in England as a charity (no.1074032) and a company limited by guarantee (no.3690881).

Competition Entries

- 🌱 67 entries were received: 55 in the under-12's category, 12 in the over-12's category.
- 🌱 There was a clear understanding of the brief to represent the Fens with only two entries not doing so (one was from Brazil; another represented a Norfolk beach).
- 🌱 Traffic to the Fens Biosphere website rose from 591 users in the previous quarter to 1,405 in the competition quarter.
- 🌱 The main Facebook post promoting the competition reached 16,725 (organic reach), was shared 81 times and received 680 engagements.
- 🌱 Facebook followers rose from 372 to 439 : 67 more followers were gained. Twitter followers rose from 470 to 529: 59 more followers gained (over the July-Sept quarter)
- 🌱 Entries were received from postcodes all around the proposed Biosphere area.
- 🌱 All entries answered the questions about how their model represented the Fens giving good insights as to what people value about the area.
- 🌱 The standard of entries was high with a lot of imagination and creativity on show.

Winning entries



Kite: first place under-12's

Judges' comments: a realistic and technically good representation of a Fenland bird which is recolonising the Fens.



Kingfisher: second place under-12's

Judges' comments: clever use of Lego® and very realistic.



The Wonderful Fens: third place under-12's

Judges' comments: captures lots of different elements of the Fens in one model.



Windmill: winner over-12's

Judges' comments: good use of Lego® bricks, technically good and an interesting model.



Waterside: winner of "Shouts out Fantastic Fens!"

Judges' comments: captures the spirit of the Fens with simplicity and humour.

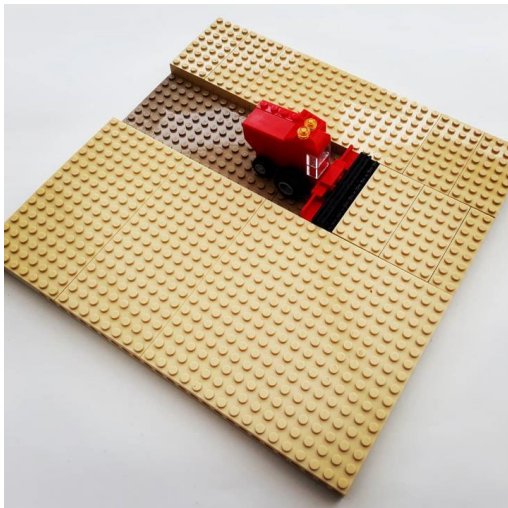


Dragonfly - transformer:
winner of most original
model

Judges' comments: represents
the fens well - a creature of land
and water.



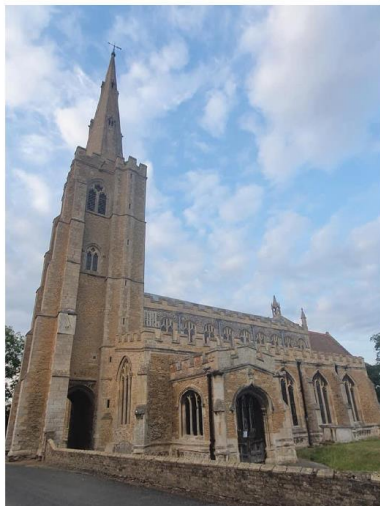
Highly commended



Harvest



A walk in the Fens

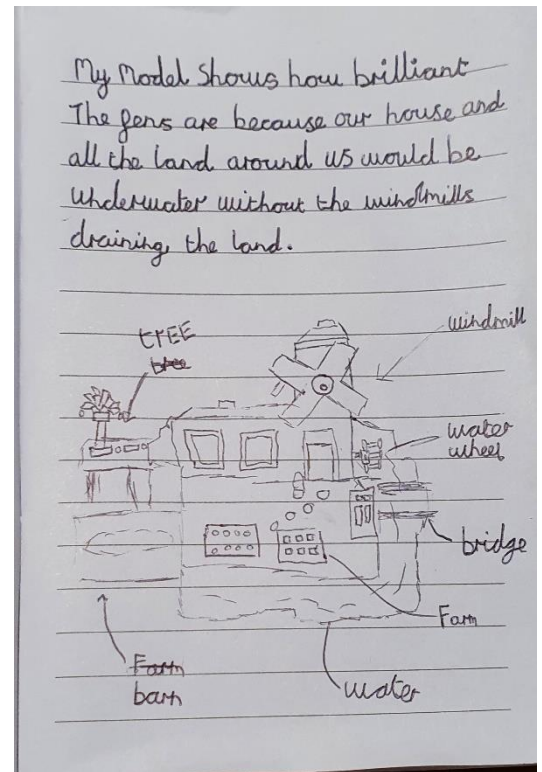
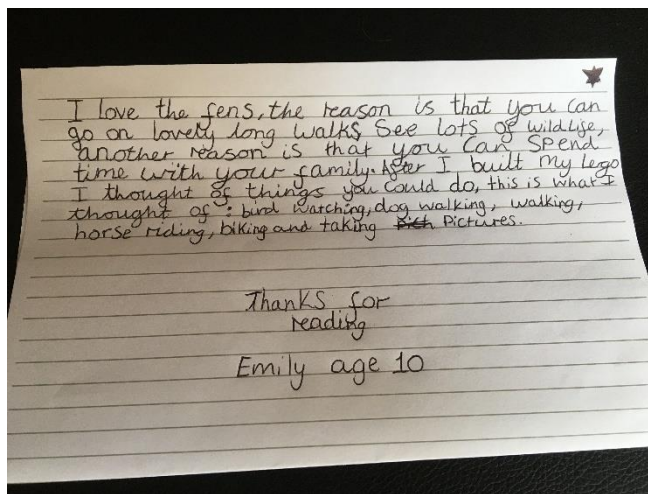


St Wendredas' Church

Consultation questions

- 🌱 Under-12's category: "How does your model show how fantastic the Fens are?"
- 🌱 Over-12's "How does the subject of your model contribute to the future of the Fens?"

It is difficult to determine if some under-12's responses were given help by parents/carers, but the aim was to gain an insight into what people valued about their landscape, so the responses were still useful. Some were clearly original:



Common themes identified:

A place for nature and wildlife

There was a general appreciation of Fens wildlife and of the importance of the Fens landscape as a home for it. Some models were of specific species such as butterflies, bats and foxes but the most popular wildlife subject was birds – with 17 models featuring either robins, swans, birds of prey, bitterns or herons.

"The Fens are fantastic as they are home to lots of wildlife of all shapes, sizes and colours and I love going to visit because if you stand quiet and long enough, every time you can see and experience something new."

"There are lots of rare animals that are all different colours. Because they live in the same environment, they are all connected to each other and we must look after all of them. "

"It is fantastic living in the fens because there is an abundance of wildlife right here on our doorstep for us to step out and enjoy."

" There are lots of fantastic fen creatures and brilliant places to see them. I like to walk and see all the tiny things like butterflies and bats and big animals like the buffalo and horses. You can sometimes tickle spotty pigs and eat blackberries too."

A place for recreation

The fact that there are so many outdoor pursuits in the Fens was mentioned frequently, with going for a walk being the most popular activity (13 mentions) along with cycling, bird watching, fishing, boating and photography.

"We take our dogs for a walk by the river and see people fishing and it's so peaceful. The Fens are Fantastic and I love living here"

"My model shows how fantastic the Fens are because it shows you can do loads of things and young and old people can enjoy themselves there."

"I love the fens, the reason is that you can go on lovely long walks, see lots of wildlife, another reason is that you can spend time with your family. After I built my Lego I thought of things you could do, this is what I thought of bird watching, dog walking, walking, horse riding, biking and taking pictures."

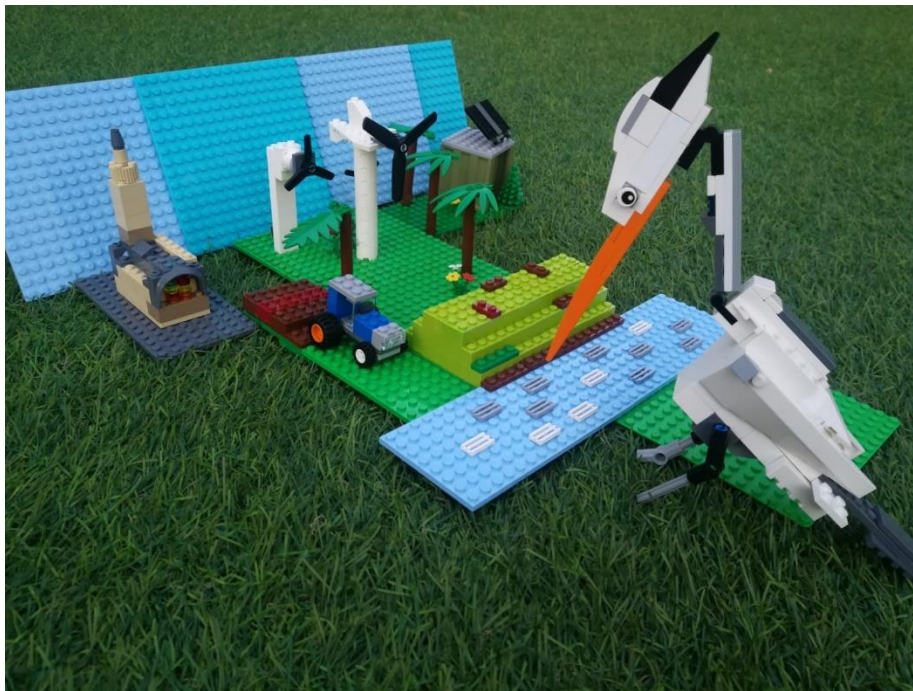
A watery, windy place

Most of the models which depicted the Fens landscape featured water in some form. The value of the water for wildlife and the heritage behind the draining of the land was also recognised. Models of windmills and wind pumps were popular (9 models).

"By restoring and maintaining historical buildings like a mill, it will provide future generations with insight into the history of the Fens."

"My model represents how farmers used windmills, to help drain the land and stop flooding."

"My model shows the Fens are fantastic because the boats are so cool floating down the rivers"



The Nene Washes

A place for farming and food production

Only two models were specifically about farming but as an activity it featured in most models which represented the Fens landscape.

"We have lots of farms around that grow fresh fruit and vegetables we can eat. "

"My model highlights how farming matters in the Fens. Farming will continue to contribute significantly to the Fen economy, supporting local communities, as well as protecting the environment."

"We grow lots of food here even wheat for Weetabix, so I wanted to make a tractor ploughing the fields."

"The Fens are the breadbasket of England and in my model, I have shown a wheat farm with a tractor harvesting, a pumpkin farm, and a horned brown cow grazing, and a small farmhouse. The Fens are full of peat and water and I have shown both in my model. The Fens are fantastic! "

A place to visit

Many of the iconic buildings of the Fens were represented as models : Ely Cathedral, Wicken Fen Wind Pump and the Rothschild Bungalow. People were clearly inspired by visits to these places with many comments about enjoying trips to Wicken Fen, Wood Walton Fen, the Swan feeding at WWT Welney and Ely Cathedral.

Only one cultural activity was mentioned – the Straw Bear Festival.

"The Cathedral will contribute to the future of the Fens by bringing thousands of tourists each year to the Fenland area, who will contribute valuable income to the region and will also visit many other Fenland attractions during a visit, such as Welney and Wicken Fen."

"Wicken Fen and the Mill is one of my favourite places . I have been visiting since I was tiny. My family can cycle to Wicken fen from Ely and enjoy the amazing landscape of the fens."

"I like to walk to Cawdle Fen in Ely where you can enjoy the nature in the fens with the cathedral in the background, and all of this is on my doorstep."



The Straw Bear

And finally: a fragile place

Both young and older entrants recognised the need to protect the Fens as a place for wildlife and from encroaching water. The fragility of the landscape and the need for a sustainable approach to growth were areas of concern.

“Whooper Swans are endangered and migrate to the UK for the winter. The Fens provide a great habitat where they now breed! Helping to protect this beautiful bird will also help to preserve the Fens that they depend upon. A hide on the Fens. Hides are great way of allowing people to get close to wildlife without disturbing them too much. This allows education and increased awareness of the species that rely on the Fens to survive. Hopefully this will help to protect the Fens in the future”

“The Fens is home to a variety of land uses and activities, all of which are crucial in contributing to its future. In my model you'll spot agricultural fields which are such a key part of the local economy, but I also created some wetlands complete with peat soils, gravels and forests that showcase the diverse natural spaces and value of the area. I also included a small representation of the homes, high-tech business and a certain famous landmark that all help make the Fens such a thriving place to live, work and visit”

“It is fantastic living in the fens because of all the wildlife and we have to take care of it for the future”

“The waterways are an important part of the history and future of the fens as without the pumping stations and rivers the fens would be unusable for farmland and they are an important habitat for lots of species of plants, animals, insects and migrating birds.”

Learning

Engagement: it is possible to engage and perform meaningful consultation with communities through an online competition. Prizes help attract entries but awarding them does add an extra layer of complication in terms of ensuring fair play.

Partnership work: the partnership approach worked well with the promotional support offered by partners (poster design, video production) all helping to attract entrants. The involvement of well-known organisations also helped to give the competition status.

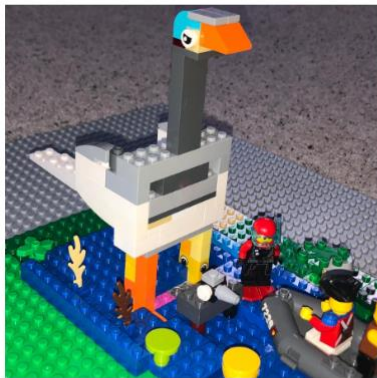
Affect of Covid-19: the competition was designed to be Covid-proof; however, it did impact on partner abilities to promote it. Many partner organisations were dealing with how to open up their sites after lock-down and their communications were focussed getting these messages out to the public.

Inclusivity: the competition was not fully inclusive. It relied upon access to a laptop, internet, Lego, mobile phone/camera and email address. It was also pointed out by the mother of an autistic child that the requirement to answer question in order to be entered into the competition meant that her son could not enter. This was corrected and his model was submitted.

Bias: it was found that the person administering the competition cannot be part of the judging as the act of dealing with email, queries and managing photo submissions means an element of bias could creep in.

Legacy: the competition has left a legacy of photos, quotes, and videos which can all be used to promote the Fens Biosphere going forward.

Some of our favourites....



LEGO® is a trademark of the LEGO Group, which did not sponsor, authorize or endorse this competition.

The Fens Biosphere Partnership is supported by funding from the People's Postcode Lottery Postcode Dream Fund as part of the Water Works project awarded to the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire.

Report by: Rachael Brown, Cambridgeshire ACRE, October 2020

