

Example: A 50-year Vision for Alton Mere National Nature Reserve

Alton Mere is supplied by nutrient-poor water from a catchment sustainably managed to reduce nutrient and sediment inputs. The lake contains clear water, a rich population of aquatic plants and a healthy, balanced fish population, which in turn provides a food source for other wildlife and sport for local anglers. The surrounding reedbeds act as a buffer between the Mere and adjacent farmland and provide an important wildlife habitat in their own right, supporting thriving populations of reedbed birds and mammals such as otter.

The extensive wet meadows which surround the Mere are grazed by traditional breeds of grazing animals, providing a suitable grassland sward for breeding birds and a wide variety of wetland plants and invertebrates. The quality meat produced by the grazing animals is sold under a local brand, through local outlets, where it commands a premium.

The land surrounding the NNR is well-served with footpaths and bridleways, providing low-key access over a wide area and easing visitor pressure on the reserve itself. There are good pedestrian and cycle routes to Newport, a series of small car parks for the less-mobile and a good public transport system providing easy access to the site from further afield. A series of viewpoints and observation hides provide vistas of the landscape and its wildlife, supported by easily-understood interpretation explaining the area's rich natural and cultural history. Access on the reserve itself is zoned and is restricted in some areas to provide sanctuary areas for wildlife and privacy for the Estate owners and residents.

Extensive use is made of the NNR for scientific research and the site is regularly used for educational purposes by local schools and colleges. The reserve is also used for the demonstration of sustainable methods of wetland habitat management.

The ecological and socio-economic importance of the site is recognised by all stakeholders and the integrated approach to management involves a forum of site owners and users who have a shared responsibility for the management of this internationally important wildlife site.