



Ely's reedbeds

Reedbed is a nationally scarce habitat which supports a diverse range of wildlife. Prior to their drainage in the 17th century, the Cambridgeshire fens supported vast areas of reedbed and other wetland vegetation.

Today fenland reedbed is restricted to isolated pockets surrounded by arable farming. One such pocket includes the reedbeds of Queen Adelaide beet pits and Roswell clay pits on the edge of Ely. Ely's reedbeds and their associated open waters play a crucial role in supporting a nationally important assemblage of wetland breeding birds including bittern, bearded tit and reed warbler; species which depend on reedbed for their survival. The location of Ely's reedbeds well within 2 miles of the cathedral means that on quiet days in spring and early summer it is quite possible to hear the characteristic booming call of breeding male bittern from the city centre, a rare treat shared with no other British city.

England's newest SSSI

To protect the interests of the wetland birds and additional geological interests, Natural England confirmed the designation of Ely Pits & Meadows Site of Special Interest in February 2009, making the site

England's newest SSSI. With the assistance of local landowners Natural England are now planning creation of additional areas of reedbed within and adjacent to the SSSI. The purpose of these new areas will be to further secure the future of this site for its special wildlife and to provide additional wild spaces for people to enjoy.

Public involvement in creation of new reedbeds

Ely reed day is about public involvement in these aspirations. Natural England, the Local Campaigners for the Protection of Rural Ely and the Wildlife Trust are asking interested volunteers to take away, care for and grow on potted cuttings of our native common reed, *Phragmites australis*. The cuttings will have been harvested on the morning of reed day and offered free to the public later on the day from the LCPRE stand at Ely Market. The intention is that at a future public date (perhaps as much as one year hence), participating volunteers will be invited to plant the reed that they have cared for into a newly created wetland near Ely Pits & Meadows SSSI, and so contribute to establishment of new reedbed.

