Re-discovering and re-wilding a ‘Lost Landscape’: Lincolnshire’s Ancholme Valley

A Vision for a Wilder and Wetter Ancholme Valley

Part of a once-vast wet landscape covering several thousand square kilometres of east England, the Ancholme Valley was drained in the late 1600s and its river straightened to run due north and discharge to the Humber estuary. Since that time, the valley and its wider countryside have developed into a rich farming resource with community and nature at its heart. However, today problems such as climate change, sea-level rise, increased flood risk (frequency and intensity), ecological extinctions, and both soil loss and degradation threaten major changes. With much of the area already at around sea-level this landscape is vulnerable to major changes in the next fifty years or so. Furthermore, for various reasons the economy of the region from Scunthorpe to Grimsby has been in long-term decline, and the rural tourism economy of the region underperforms badly. Yet the area has many positives with a rich heritage of local farming, a unique history and landscape, amazing potential for wildlife, and vibrant local communities too. Furthermore, there are excellent transport links into the region.

Things are changing and the Ancholme countryside will need to adapt to future challenges and especially to a wetter climate and landscape, and higher sea-level. We can either work with the changes or against them, and it is surely better to anticipate future scenarios and grow a sustainable, resilient countryside and regional economy for the generations to come. Adapting to change and working with nature may mean some lands will be wetter and many areas will be farmed differently. However, this VISION is one of a wetter countryside yes, but also one with a vibrant farming economy and community at its heart. Developed effectively, a wetter Ancholme can be a growth-pole for regional leisure and tourism economies, a wonderful wildlife resource, and an attractive countryside too. As an artery linking the great Humber Estuary, the beautiful Lincolnshire Wolds, the coastal marshes and sand-dunes, and the heart of rural Lincolnshire itself, the Ancholme can be transformational for the region and bring enormous benefits to people, nature, and the economy.

We are seeking opinions, ideas and partners to bring about changes over both the short-term and the longer timeline. The vision harks back to the river’s origins at the core of old Lincolnshire, but is not backwards-facing. This challenge is to look forwards to a vibrant and positive future and to a richer countryside in every way that reflects the farming traditions of a unique region. Furthermore, everyone can take part and though some changes will be large-scale and incredibly exciting, others will be relatively low-key, modest, and yet equally as important. Come along to events, tell us your ideas, and please do get involved.