The Site
120 hectares of SSSI, SPA and Ramsar gravel pits and grassland in the Nene valley NIA. SSSI Designation for overwintering and breeding wetland birds. Sand and gravel was dug in the 1970s and from 1998 - 2002.

The Issues
The site has had little management for 12 years. Water levels are controlled entirely by the Environment Agency. A recently constructed cycle-path creates a dam causing grassland to be waterlogged for months at a time.

The Solutions
Willow cutting to re-connect lakes and grassland, Installing a channel across the cycle path to allow water to leave site more quickly. Digging a system of foot drains to get water off the grassland and into the lakes more quickly.

The site has a wide range of habitats including areas of dense fringing willow and scrub, broad hedges, wet willow woodland, small reedbeds, ditches and ponds as well as the lakes and grasslands. The main SSSI management focus is to increase numbers of overwintering wetland birds such as wigeon, teal, gadwall and tufted duck, as well as encouraging breeding of wetland species such as snipe and lapwing.

After 12 years of neglect 10m high willow was fringing most of the lakes and the grasslands were largely covered in a dense thatch of sedge and Deschampsia cespitosa. Some of the grassland areas are bowl shaped which causes flood water to sit for prolonged periods on the heavy clay. Antisocial behaviour and inappropriate use of the site have been an issue. Ground nesting birds are discouraged by overhead cables.

We plan to cattle-graze the site. In the mean time we have topped some of the grassland areas and removed scrub whilst getting consent for fencing. An area of scrapes will create wader habitat as well as removing a bank which will allow water to drain off the grassland more quickly. Managing access and working with the police has reduced antisocial behavior and Western Power are in the final stages of work to put overhead cables underground.