

## **Fenland SOIL Strategy 2025–2030**

### **‘Keeping the Fenlands in Production’**

#### **Executive Summary**

The Fenlands are one of the UK’s most important food-producing regions, supplying approximately 40% of the nation’s fresh vegetables, arable crops, and horticultural produce. At the same time, it is a landscape of major environmental and climate sensitivity, particularly in relation to peat soils, water management, and carbon emissions.

Fenland SOIL exists to ensure that these realities are properly understood and acted upon. It brings together farmers, landowners, and land managers to provide a credible, evidence-based voice for the region. This strategy sets out how Fenland SOIL will keep the Fenlands productive while supporting greenhouse gas emission reduction and sustainable land management.

The strategy is founded on a simple principle: ‘long-term environmental outcomes in the Fenlands depend on economically viable farming and sustainable food production.’

#### **Our Purpose**

Fenland SOIL’s purpose is:

**‘To keep the Fenlands in production, ensuring continued food security for the United Kingdom while maintaining acceptable greenhouse gas emissions.’**

This purpose reflects the needs of Fenland farmers and expectations of government, supply chains, local communities and society. It recognises that the future of the region depends on maintaining productive land use while mitigating climate change, enhancing biodiversity and improving access to water resources.

#### **Our Strategic Framework**

The Fenlands sit at the heart of several major national challenges: food security, water management, and climate change. Generic national approaches often fail to reflect the unique characteristics of the Fenlands. Fenland SOIL’s role is to ensure that policy and implementation in the fens are based on evidence and long-term sustainability.

Fenland SOIL’s strategy is built around a reinforcing cycle of representation, evidence, and policy, supported by strong enabling structures. Representation gives Fenland SOIL legitimacy. Evidence gives it credibility. Policy engagement ensures that both translate into real-world outcomes for farming, the environment, and the region.

#### **Representation**

Fenland SOIL has built and will continue to grow a strong, representative membership so it can speak with authority for the Fenlands. By June 2030 we will represent a significant proportion of Fenland farmers and landowners, giving even greater influence on government, regulators, and the supply chain. This will be achieved by reviewing membership structures and running a targeted recruitment programme across the region.

## **Evidence**

Fenland SOIL is the trusted source of data on Fenland peat soils, and sustainable land management. Policy and investment must be based on what is actually happening on the ground. The organisation will create an integrated Fenland soil and opportunity map that will function as a tool for Fenland farmers and land managers which will be used to help integrate sustainable land management in the Fens. We are creating a flux tower network across the Fens that will quantify greenhouse gas emissions on deep, shallow, and wasted peat soils. We are also pioneering with academics alternative farming techniques including wetter farming to present how productive agricultural can be balanced with climate change mitigation and biodiversity enhancement. Data gaps will be identified, and research will be conducted with partners to create a robust evidence base for all policy and communications.

## **Policy Engagement**

Fenland SOIL will actively shape the policies that affect the region, working with government, regulators and delivery bodies to ensure policy is workable, proportionate and evidence-based. This will include engagement in the Land Use Framework, regular dialogue with Defra and the England Peat Map team, hosting visits for Ministers, MPs, retailers, international experts, and producing a Fenland Food Production Plan to show how national food security and sustainable land management can be delivered together.

## **Enabling the Strategy**

Delivering this strategy requires strong foundations.

Fenland SOIL will develop a more stable and balanced funding model, combining grants with longer-term sponsorship and partnership income, to support a professional and resilient organisation.

We will strengthen relationships with Tier One stakeholders including farmers, landowners, supply chains, local authorities, Defra, Natural England, and the Environment Agency, ensuring that common goals are understood and pursued collaboratively.

Clear and credible communication will be central to Fenland SOIL's role. The organisation will tell the story of the Fenlands including the Fens' value, challenges, and its contribution to the nation in a way that builds trust and understanding.

Finally, Fenland SOIL will maintain simple, effective governance structures that ensure accountability, measurable outcomes, and delivery.

## **What Success Looks Like**

By 2030, Fenland SOIL will be undoubtedly recognised as the authoritative voice of the Fenlands. The organisation will represent a significant proportion of Fenland farmers, hold the most trusted data on Fenland peat soils, and be a key partner to government and the Fenland supply chain.

Most importantly, the Fens will be the cornerstone of UK food security in this turbulent geo-political climate. Food security is national security.

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