

URGENT BUSINESS AND SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Executive

2 July 2018

Agenda Item Number	Page	Title	Officer Responsible	Reason Not Included with Original Agenda
6.	Pages 1 - 72	Urgent Business Valuing the Natural Environment for People and Wildlife	Assistant Director: Communities	Item included on work programme but inadvertently omitted from agenda due to administrative error

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Cherwell District Council

Executive

2 July 2018

Valuing the Natural Environment for People and Wildlife

Report of Assistant Director: Communities

This report is public

Purpose of report

In fulfilling its duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and comply with its obligations relating to important wildlife sites, habitats and species under European and national legislation as well as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Cherwell District Council has had a Biodiversity Action plan and received an annual progress report. This report seeks to update the policy framework for this area of work and promotes the move to a Community Nature Plan underlining the importance of partnership working with a range of statutory and voluntary partners.

1.0 Recommendation

The Executive is recommended:

- 1.1 To approve the proposed Community Nature Plan 2018-2020 (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 To approve the endorsement of the Wildlife Trusts' guidance "Homes for people and wildlife – How to build housing in a nature friendly way" (Appendix 2) for use as guidance in planning.
- 1.3 To approve the production of specific guidance on biodiversity accounting and the identification of projects for biodiversity offsetting in order to deliver net biodiversity gain.
- 1.4 To approve support for the proposed Environmental Investment Plan for Oxfordshire with advice and collaboration (Appendix 3).

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Delivery of a Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has been a specific objective in the Council's Business Plan for many years. The Corporate BAP demonstrates how the Council will fulfil its duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and comply with its obligations relating to important

wildlife sites, habitats and species under European and national legislation as well as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). As there is a wealth of evidence that the natural environment, its wildlife and green spaces are crucial to community health and wellbeing as well as a thriving economy, the Corporate BAP has been refreshed and updated as a Community Nature Plan (CNP) (see Appendix 1).

- 2.2 Protecting and improving the natural environment, as well as good quality connected green spaces, are essential elements of sustainable development. New guidelines published by the Wildlife Trusts, “Homes for people and wildlife”, demonstrate how new housing developments, built in the right way and in the right place, can make a positive contribution to the natural environment and to the health and wellbeing of people who live there. The National Planning Policy Framework requires planning policies and decisions to provide net gains for biodiversity where possible; and the adopted Cherwell Local Plan Policy ESD10 seeks a net gain in biodiversity from development proposals and also states ‘development proposals will be expected to incorporate features to encourage biodiversity and retain and where possible enhance existing features of nature conservation value within the site.’ The document, “Homes for people and wildlife’, provides useful guidance on how to incorporate biodiversity within developments and therefore would support the delivery of the Council’s existing planning policies.
- 2.3 Ecological reports are required to demonstrate that development proposals will deliver a net gain in biodiversity. The Council’s adopted Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides additional guidance on how biodiversity impact should be assessed. The Council’s approach is to seek on-site gains to mitigate the impact of development but, where on-site mitigation and compensation cannot achieve biodiversity net gain, to secure contributions towards schemes that closely offset the impact of the development and meet the planning aims of the Council’s Community Nature Plan. At present this approach is challenging as there is not an identified range of local opportunities for offsetting or guidance that sets out how offsetting should be achieved. To ensure a more consistent and rigorous process, guidance on biodiversity enhancement and offsetting and the identification of specific schemes is required and will assist in speeding up the planning process.
- 2.4 Natural Capital Investment Plans are being produced by a number of local authorities and nature partnerships. These plans recognise that economic benefits flow from the natural world and extend the use of biodiversity net gain approaches to wider natural capital benefits such as fresh air, clean water and community health and wellbeing. Initial funding has been secured for an Environmental Investment Plan for Oxfordshire, to be undertaken by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC). A broad group of stakeholders has been asked to raise awareness of the proposal and to support funding bids for the plan including all the Oxfordshire District Authorities. This work would help to identify the wider values of land in terms of its natural capital benefits and help inform future decisions and the mitigation that could be required if land use changes.

3.0 Community Nature Plan

3.1 The purpose of the Community Nature Plan is to demonstrate –

- The importance of the natural environment, specifically its green spaces and wildlife, to community health and wellbeing and a thriving economy.
- How the Council complies with its obligations relating to important wildlife sites, habitats and species under European and national legislation as well as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- How the Council will fulfil its duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Section 40 of this Act states that - “Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”

3.2 The Community Nature Plan recognises the value of the natural environment for the health and wellbeing of both people and the economy. Green space has a key role to play in the drive to increase levels of physical activity and there is a wealth of evidence that time spent in natural environments promotes a positive outlook on life and enhances our ability to cope with, and recover from, stress, illness and injury. Recent work carried out in Bicester - ‘The value of green space in Bicester to local people’ - presents strong qualitative evidence, gathered by the University of Oxford, that Bicester’s green spaces provide benefits for health, wellbeing and community cohesion - www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan. The results have been used to draw up a list of options for improving the provision of green space in the town (Appendix 4).

3.3 The delivery of the Community Nature Plan will rely heavily on partnership work with town and parish councils, local groups and a number of key organisations. The Council supports six organisations with annual funding in accordance with service level agreements. These are Warriner School Farm, the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT), Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre, Wild Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The Community Nature Plan (Appendix 1, page 11) provides more detail about the services that these organisations deliver and progress reports can be found on the website www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan

3.4 The Community Nature Plan includes key objectives relating to the recommendations in this report as well as aims, actions and targets relating to Council services, most importantly Planning Policy, Development Management, Communities and Landscape. For example:

- Include more detailed Development Management policies relating to the natural environment in Local Plan Part 2 and relevant Supplementary Planning Documents
- Support BBOWT with ‘healthy for wildlife, healthy for people’ events and projects across the District
- Promote funding opportunities for local wildlife and access projects and provide support for community project development
- Support primary school/youth group nature visits to Warriner School Farm as well as outreach work in Banbury Brighter Futures Wards
- Work in partnership to deliver biodiversity improvements on Council owned and managed land, for example, with the development of the Cherwell Country Park and Burnehyll Community Woodland

- Extend the green infrastructure work with Oxford University - 'Tools for Planning and Evaluating Urban Green Infrastructure: Bicester and Beyond'

3.5 The Community Nature Plan summarises the Council's commitment to protecting and enhancing the natural environment for wildlife and people within the Cherwell District as follows:

- A Community Nature Plan will be produced every two years to set out and monitor the Council's compliance with the NERC Act Duty and other legislative and policy requirements; to demonstrate the multiple benefits of the natural environment; and to ensure delivery of projects that are healthy for wildlife and people
- TVERC, Wild Oxfordshire, BBOWT, RSPB, Warriner School Farm and OPFA are key partners in the delivery of the Community Nature Plan. Partnerships will be maintained in accordance with Service Level Agreements
- The Council's key policies relating to green spaces, biodiversity and the natural environment will be included in the Local Plan and related documents
- The Council will accord with the Wildlife Trusts' guidance 'Homes for People and Wildlife'
- Additional resources will be secured to provide the specific guidance that is required on biodiversity accounting and offsetting
- The Council will participate in partnership working with the Oxfordshire natural environment sector and relevant projects will be supported

4.0 Wildlife Trusts' Guidance – Homes for People and Wildlife

4.1 The Wildlife Trusts have set out that the natural environment must be placed at the heart of planning in order to give the government a chance of meeting its commitment to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it, and to build new homes and communities that people enjoy living in.

4.2 The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) is the local Wildlife Trust covering the Cherwell District area and it was very involved in producing the guidance. BBOWT has provided a letter of support relating to the proposal to endorse The Wildlife Trusts' guidance document (Appendix 5).

4.3 This report recommends endorsement of the Wildlife Trust's document as it contains useful guidance to supplement the Council's existing planning policy approach contained in the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1). It is proposed that Cherwell District Council agrees to use this guidance as a useful elaboration of existing policy and its practical application to development sites.

4.4 The guidance states that a good nature-rich housing development provides:

- Connectivity between wild places – enabling both wildlife and people to move through the landscape, and for natural processes to operate effectively.
- Real, measurable gains for wildlife, as all new developments make a demonstrable, positive contribution to nature's recovery
- Improved health, wellbeing and quality of life for people living and working nearby

- Easy access to high quality, wildlife-rich, natural green space for everyone, providing daily opportunities to experience wildlife
- Effective water management, pollution and climate control provided by green spaces and water courses, sustainable urban drainage, green roofs, trees, woodlands, wetlands and other natural features.

4.5 Housing developments designed with environmental sensitivity and green infrastructure at their heart can deliver multiple social, environmental and economic benefits for everyone – from developers to home-owners (see page 8 & 9 of Appendix 2).

4.6 Guidance principles state that all housing developments must result in:

- Measurable improvement for wild species and habitats through avoiding any loss or damage of wildlife sites; designing in existing habitats; creating new habitat; and more than compensating for any habitat that is lost (net gain).
- All residents having lasting access to nearby nature, which mean providing wildlife on the doorstep; ensuring our natural spaces are well managed; empowering communities; and engaging civil society

4.7 The guidance states that these principles can be ensured by:

- ***“Creating ecological network maps – such maps should be built from local, up to date, data with the active involvement of civil society. They should be the basis for deciding where new housing is (and isn’t) located, and how close it is to existing natural areas and wildlife habitats.***
- ***Developing within environmental limits – decisions about the planning, design and construction of new housing must be based on a thorough understanding of the natural environment’s capacity to meet the demands placed on it.***
- ***Using ecological expertise – we would not try to run a health service without trained doctors and nurses, and we can’t expect to sustainably manage our use of land, or build new developments, without trained ecologists and access to high quality environmental data.”***

4.8 The Council complies with many aspects of these principles but more could be done with additional approaches and resources:

- ***“Creating ecological network maps”(Wildlife Trusts’ guidance)*** – The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) and Wild Oxfordshire are key partners who supply high quality, up to date habitat, species and site data as well as manage the Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) Project. This information is used as an evidence base for the Local Plan process and for the ecological assessment of planning applications. CTAs represent the areas of greatest opportunity for biodiversity improvement in the District and so are relevant to establishing strategic ecological networks. Both TVERC and Wild Oxfordshire engage with civil society through their support and training of volunteer recorders and organisation of citizen science projects. TVERC has also mapped habitat connectivity in more detail across the District which the Council is funding as part of its 2018/19 service level agreement. This additional information can be used to target conservation action and influence planning decisions to improve habitat connectivity.

- **“Developing within environmental limits”(Wildlife Trusts’ guidance)** – Those who live, work, visit or conduct business in the District draw multiple benefits and value from the natural environment. The impact of development on the environment is taken into account in planning policy making and development management decisions including through the use of Strategic Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment. However, it is important to recognise natural capital value through more use of tools and techniques which quantify this value. A naturally richer District needs investment to secure the continued provision of these benefits. The proposed Environmental Investment Plan for the County (Section 6 below) will inform a greater understanding of the District’s natural capital and strategic investment opportunities.
- **“Using ecological expertise”(Wildlife Trusts’ guidance)** – The Council has access to high quality data and ecological expertise. However, the District is experiencing a high level of major planning proposals stretching existing resources and so additional capacity is required by the Council to provide the specific guidance that is required on biodiversity accounting and offsetting.

5.0 Biodiversity Accounting and Offsetting

- 5.1 Biodiversity is an important consideration in the planning process and must be integrated from an early stage into the design of any development. Development can have negative impacts on biodiversity (net loss) which can be significant and lead to the decline of important habitats and species in the District. Development can also have positive impacts for biodiversity (net gain), especially for sites where there is little wildlife, by integrating new habitats into buildings and adjacent spaces.
- 5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework requires policies and decisions to provide net gains for biodiversity, and Cherwell Local Plan Policy ESD 10 (protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment) specifically supports securing net biodiversity gain on development sites. The adopted Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides additional guidance on how policy ESD10 should be applied, and how biodiversity impact should be assessed. Planning applications are required to be accompanied by relevant habitat and species surveys and reports to measure the biodiversity impact following the locally adopted Defra Offsetting Metrics, and identify opportunities to deliver biodiversity enhancements.
- 5.3 Net biodiversity gain on development sites must always be the primary objective but when this cannot be achieved, offsite projects are required to enable the creation, enhancement and restoration of habitats which are impacted onsite. The Council’s Developer Contributions SPD states “Where on-site mitigation or compensation cannot be achieved contributions may be sought towards a scheme that closely offsets the impact of the development, and which also meets the aims of the Council’s BAP”. A small number of biodiversity improvement projects are identified in the Council’s Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and many of these relate to Conservation Target Areas which provide the greatest opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. However, the production of additional guidance and the identification of specific schemes on a more comprehensive basis would be beneficial in providing clarity for developers on how contributions would be used and ensuring that net biodiversity gain is achieved and targeted in the most effective way. The

guidance should also speed up the planning process by making sure developers are aware of the requirements and can ensure their submissions provide the information needed.

- 5.4 The development of guidance relating to biodiversity net gain, impact assessment and offsetting and the production of a portfolio of potential offsite projects will require additional approaches and increased ecological advisory resources. The employment of these approaches and resources is currently being investigated.

6.0 Environmental Investment Plan for Oxfordshire

- 6.1 The District is experiencing a high level of major planning proposals and County growth. This is likely to continue and that there will be challenges to ensure that future growth is sustainable and planned in a way that positively responds to the environment. An Environmental Investment Plan (EIP) will provide some answers to these questions and will help to ensure that changes in natural capital are measured and valued in corporate and national accounts and reflected in decision making processes (see Appendix 3 for the outline report).
- 6.2 The proposed EIP for the County will inform a better understanding of strategic natural capital and investment opportunities. The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) and Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) are now working in partnership to take this project forward. TVERC has the data and analytical skills required to deliver the project. TOE has expertise in funding and stakeholder relations. Both organisations share a wealth of invaluable local knowledge.
- 6.3 Initial funding for the EIP has been provided by Oxfordshire County Council to scope the project and start engaging stakeholders. The proposal was considered by the Executive Officers Group of the Oxfordshire Growth Board in May 2018. As a result, the EIP's value as an evidence base for the preparation of the Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP) that has commenced following the agreement of the Oxfordshire Growth Deal. The JSSP will set out the strategic framework for the growth of the County up to 2050 and a comprehensive environmental evidence base is fundamental to ensuring a sustainable approach is taken through the development of the JSSP, senior Officers will be involved in the development of the EIP in an advisory and collaborative capacity.

7.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1 'Valuing the Natural Environment for People and Wildlife' is a crucial element of important development and economic decisions. Failure to recognise and assess the multiple benefits of the natural environment will affect community health and wellbeing, important habitats and species and future economic growth. This report seeks approval for recommendations which support plans and guidance that will enable the Council to invest wisely in the District's natural environment and ensure that it remains healthy for people and wildlife.

8.0 Consultation

- 8.1 Adrian Colwell, Executive Director for Place and Growth
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director: Communities
David Peckford, Deputy Manager, Planning Policy and Growth, Growth Strategy team
Jenny Barker, Bicester Delivery Manager, Eco Bicester Team
Paul Almond, Manager, Street Scene and Landscape Team
Paul Seckington, Senior Manager, Development Management, Development Control Team

9.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 9.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To reject the Community Nature Plan 2018-20 and the recommendations in the report. This is not proposed as, without the Plan, the Council would not be able to clearly demonstrate that it is meeting its NERC Act biodiversity duty and complying with its obligations relating to important wildlife sites, habitats and species under European and national legislation as well as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Option 2: To amend the Community Nature Plan 2018-20 and the recommendations in the report

10.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 10.1 Delivery of the Community Nature Plan in 2018-19 is contained within approved revenue estimates. Continuing delivery in 2019-20 will be subject to the approved revenue estimates for that year.
- 10.2 Delivery of the work required to produce guidance on the delivery of net biodiversity gain is contained within approved revenue estimates.

Comments checked by
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Legal Implications

- 10.3 The Council has a duty under Part 3 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 when exercising its functions, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of its functions, to conserving biodiversity. A Community Nature Plan should enable the Council to demonstrate that these requirements are being met. Failure to do so will leave the Council open to challenge.

Comments checked by:

11.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: No

Community Impact Threshold Met: No

Wards Affected

All wards

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

The **Council's Joint Business Plan 2018/19** includes the performance measure 'Reduce our Carbon Footprint and Protect the Natural Environment'; and the Communities Business Plan 2018/19 includes the objective 'Develop a Natural Environment and Communities Plan with a focus on wellbeing'

The **adopted Cherwell Local Plan (2011-2031) (Part 1)** includes policies specifically relating to Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity and the Natural Environment (ESD 10), Conservation Target Areas (ESD 11) and Green Infrastructure (ESD 18)

Lead Councillor

Councillor Andrew McHugh, Lead Councillor for Health and Wellbeing

12.0 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Community Nature Plan 2018-2020
Appendix 2	The Wildlife Trusts' guidance "Homes for people and wildlife – How to build housing in a nature friendly way"
Appendix 3	Environmental Investment Plan for Oxfordshire (TVERC, funded by OCC, February 2018)
Appendix 4	'The value of green space in Bicester to local people', Environmental Change Institute, Oxford University
Appendix 5	BBOWT letter of support
Background Papers	
None	
Reference Documents	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Guide to Biodiversity 2020 2) Natural Environment White Paper and Local Authorities 	

- 3) State of Nature in Oxfordshire – highlights report
- 4) BBOWT's 'Strategic Plan 2016-2021: Be part of nature's recovery'
- 5) Wildlife Trusts' Towards A Wilder Britain: Creating A Nature Recovery Network
- 6) Biodiversity and Planning in Oxfordshire 2014
- 7) Conservation Target Areas - <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/biodiversity/conservation-target-areas/>
- 8) 2017 Partners Reports
- 9) 2017 Cherwell Swifts Conservation Project Report

Appendices and Background Papers are available as downloads at www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan

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A Natural Environment for Wildlife and People

Community Nature Plan 2018 – 2020

‘A Natural Environment for Wildlife and People’

**COMMUNITY NATURE PLAN
2018-2020**

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**Bat/bird boxes and bricks, Gardener’s Close. Bicester
(credit Cherwell Build team)**

Corporate Vision

To work with partners to protect and enhance Cherwell's natural environment for its intrinsic value; the services it provides; the health and wellbeing of people; and the economic prosperity that it brings.

'A Natural Environment for Wildlife and People'

A healthy and stable natural environment is vitally important to economic prosperity and the District's desirability as a place to live, work and visit. It has value for agriculture and timber production and provides the basis for many tourism and recreational activities. Fertile soils, clean water, carbon storage and flood prevention are all crucial services provided by the natural environment. There is also substantial evidence that access to nature and green space can make a major contribution to improving people's health and well-being.

Electronic Document

This document is designed to be read online. Clear links are made to the Community Nature Plan pages of the Council's website for further information. As much of this online information is subject to change, the most recent publication date will always be given – see www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan
Hard copies of this document can be provided by contacting the Council's Community Development Partner-Rural & Countryside: email sue.marchand@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk or phone 01295 221707



Old Hedge Trees in a Local Wildlife Site (credit BBOWT)

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Community Nature Plan is to demonstrate how the Council will fulfil its duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and comply with its obligations relating to important wildlife sites, habitats and species under European and national legislation as well as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Section 40 of the NERC Act states that - "Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity"

Biodiversity is a term used to describe the variety of life including all plants, animals, their habitats and the natural systems that support them.

The Plan also demonstrates the importance of the natural environment, specifically its green spaces and wildlife, to community health and wellbeing as well as to a thriving economy.

The **Council's Joint Business Plan 2018/19** includes the performance measure 'Reduce our Carbon Footprint and Protect the Natural Environment' and the Communities Business Plan 2018/19 includes the objective 'Develop a Cherwell Natural Environment and Communities Plan with a focus on wellbeing'.

1.2 COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The value of the natural environment for the health and wellbeing of both people and the economy is well recognised. Green space has a key role to play in the drive to increase levels of physical activity and there is a wealth of evidence that time spent in natural environments promotes a positive outlook on life and enhances our ability to cope with, and recover from, stress, illness and injury. Recent work carried out in Bicester - 'The value of green space in Bicester to local people' - presents strong qualitative evidence, gathered by the University of Oxford, that Bicester's green spaces provide benefits for health, wellbeing and community cohesion - www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan. The results have been used to draw up a list of options for improving the provision of green space in the town.

Natural Capital Investment Plans are being produced by local authorities and nature partnerships. These plans recognise that economic benefits flow from the natural world and extend the use of biodiversity accounting approaches to wider benefits such as fresh air, clean water and community health and wellbeing. Initial funding has been secured for an Environmental Investment Plan for Oxfordshire - www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan. This proposed work will help to identify the wider values of land and so inform future investment decisions that are required to maintain and improve natural benefits to all who live and work in the County.

1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND STRATEGIES

DEFRA's '**A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' (2018)** recognises the government's ambitions for a major increase in housebuilding and sets out what needs to be done to put the environment at the heart of planning and development. The Plan focuses on the natural environment in its "Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes" chapter, includes strong backing for the **Natural Environment White Paper 2011** and a commitment to publishing a strategy for developing a **Nature Recovery Network** (see paragraphs below).

Biodiversity 2020 is the national strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services which was published in August 2011. It sets out the Government's ambition to halt overall loss of England's biodiversity by 2020, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people. A summary of this document emphasises the importance of **local conservation projects** to the delivery of the national strategy's outcomes – www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan

This national strategy builds on important elements of the **Natural Environment White Paper** (also referred to as the Lawton Report – Making Space for Nature). Published in June 2011, the Lawton Report aims to improve the quality of the natural environment across England, halt the decline in habitats and species, and strengthen the connection between people and nature. The proposals are directly linked to comprehensive research that shows the strong economic arguments for safeguarding and enhancing the natural environment. DEFRA has published a briefing note explaining the implications of the White Paper for local authorities - www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan

The **State of Nature in Oxfordshire** report, produced by Wild Oxfordshire in 2017 (www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan), follows on from the UK State of Nature 2016 report which highlights the urgent need for investment in nature and wildlife and conservation action to help recover species and habitats. Both reports emphasise the necessity of achieving the principles set out in the Lawton Report - More, Bigger, Better and Joined. These principles focus attention on the **Conservation Target Areas** (CTAs) which identify the most important areas for wildlife conservation in the County and where targeted action will have the greatest benefits see Figure 1 and 3.2). The main aim within these areas is to restore biodiversity at a landscape scale through the maintenance, restoration and creation of priority habitats.

The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust's (BBOWT) '**Strategic Plan 2016-2021: Be part of nature's recovery**' (www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan), has ambitious targets for 8% of land across the three counties to be rich in wildlife by 2020 and restoring 10% of unprotected land to wildlife-rich habitats by 2030. The strategy aims to embed nature into people's lives, giving them more natural green spaces to explore and discover their local wildlife.

The Wildlife Trusts collectively have produced more recent guidance – **Homes for People and Wildlife – How to build housing in a nature friendly way'(2017)** (www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan), which sets out a vision for new homes which are inspiring places to live and where people and nature can thrive together. Following on from the 2018 DEFRA 25 Year Environment Plan, the Wildlife Trusts have also produced new proposals for a **Nature Recovery Network** to protect, join up and enhance the fragments of nature that remain for both people and wildlife (www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan).

1.4 LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is a cross cutting issue with strong links to all other sustainable development issues. Important wildlife and environmental **legislation** applies directly to local government, most notably the duties under the NERC Act 2006 and the Conservation Regulations 2010, particularly relating to European protected species.

There has also been rapid change in **policy drivers** for biodiversity action over the last few years with the publication of the Natural Environment White Paper, the 2013 National Planning Policy Framework (an updated and revised NPPF is currently being consulted on), the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and guidance relating to biodiversity net gain, accounting and offsetting.

Also, guidance on conserving biodiversity in a changing climate has emphasised the need to manage land on a landscape scale to improve ecological networks, rather than just protecting special sites which are unlikely to sustain wildlife in the long term.

A comprehensive guidance document – “Biodiversity and Planning in Oxfordshire”- is available which details biodiversity legislation and planning policy and how these apply to important sites, habitats and species - www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan

1.5 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN, ACCOUNTING AND OFFSETTING

Biodiversity is an important consideration in the planning process and must be integrated from an early stage into the design of any development. Development can have negative impacts on biodiversity (net loss) which can be significant and lead to the decline of important habitats and species in the District. Development can also have positive impacts for biodiversity (net gain), especially for sites where there is little wildlife, by integrating new habitats into buildings and adjacent spaces.

An updated and revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is currently being consulted on which has the overall aim of facilitating the delivery of more new homes. Although there are concerns about its content relating to aspects of the natural environment, this draft NPPF includes the requirement for planning policies and decisions to provide net gains for biodiversity.

The adopted **Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1)** sets the broad planning framework for meeting the future needs of the District. It includes strategic biodiversity, conservation target area and green infrastructure policies. The next Cherwell Local Plan will include additional and more detailed policies and planning guidance.

Local Plan Policy ESD 10 (protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment) specifically supports securing net biodiversity gain on development sites. The adopted Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides additional guidance on how policy ESD10 should be applied, and how biodiversity impact should be assessed.

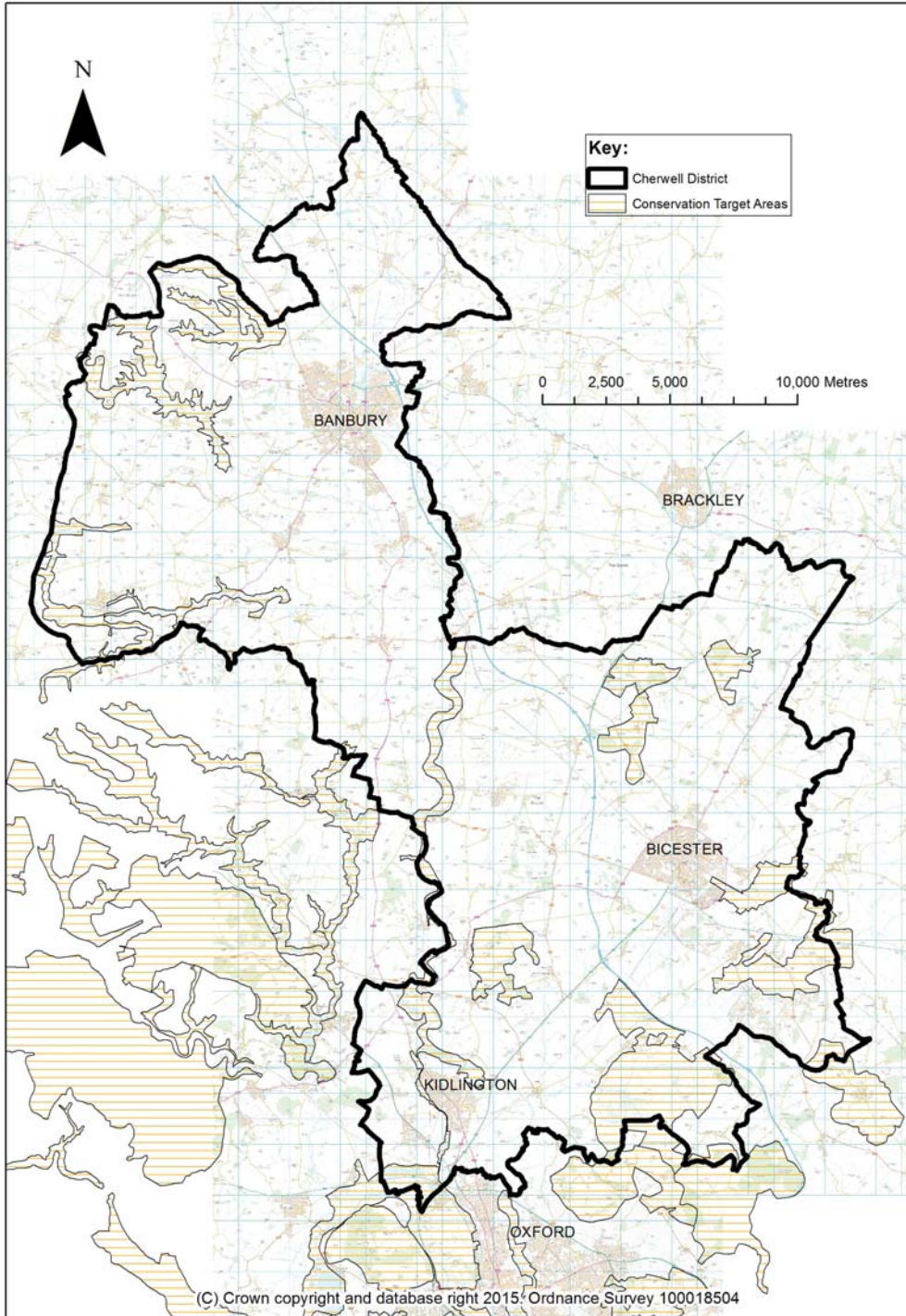
The Council’s approach is to seek on-site gains to mitigate the impact of development but, where mitigation and compensation cannot achieve biodiversity net gain on-site, to secure contributions towards schemes that closely offset the impact of the development and meet the planning aims of the Community Nature Plan.

A small number of biodiversity improvement projects are identified in the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan and many of these relate to Conservation Target Areas which provide the greatest opportunities for biodiversity enhancement (see Figure 1 and 3.2). However, the production of additional guidance and the identification of specific schemes on a more comprehensive basis would be beneficial in guiding developers and ensuring that net biodiversity gain is achieved and targeted in the most effective way. The guidance should also speed up the planning process by making sure developers are aware of the requirements and can ensure their submissions provide the information needed.



**Wildflower Meadow, Bure Park
(credit Bicester Delivery Team, 2017)**

Figure 1 – Conservation Target Areas (May 2015)



3. CHERWELL'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

3.1 The Cherwell District contains many areas of high ecological value including sites of international and national importance. The District is also home to many legally protected species as well as priority species and habitats. Much of this biodiversity resource is mapped by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre so that it can be used as an information source by local authorities and conservation organisations. This biodiversity resource mapping within the District is generally illustrated in Figure 2. This does not include District Wildlife Sites (DWSs) which are generally sites which have potential wildlife value but do not meet Local Wildlife Site status. These are currently being surveyed and assessed against appropriate designation criteria and will be mapped if their DWS status is confirmed.

3.2 Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) have been identified which include some of the most important areas for biodiversity in the District and provide a focus for coordinated action (see Figure 1 and www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan). This focus is now being integrated with a river catchment based approach, led by the Environment Agency and aimed at improving water quality to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.

3.3 Cherwell's biodiversity resource is also part of its Green Infrastructure (see Figure 3). Green Infrastructure (GI) consists of the network of accessible multifunctional green space in both urban and rural settings and delivers environmental, social and economic benefits. Such benefits include conserving and enhancing habitat connectivity, improving community health and wellbeing and economic prosperity through attracting investment into the area. Conservation Target Areas form an important component of the green infrastructure network of the District. Securing adequate green infrastructure is crucial to achieving sustainable communities.

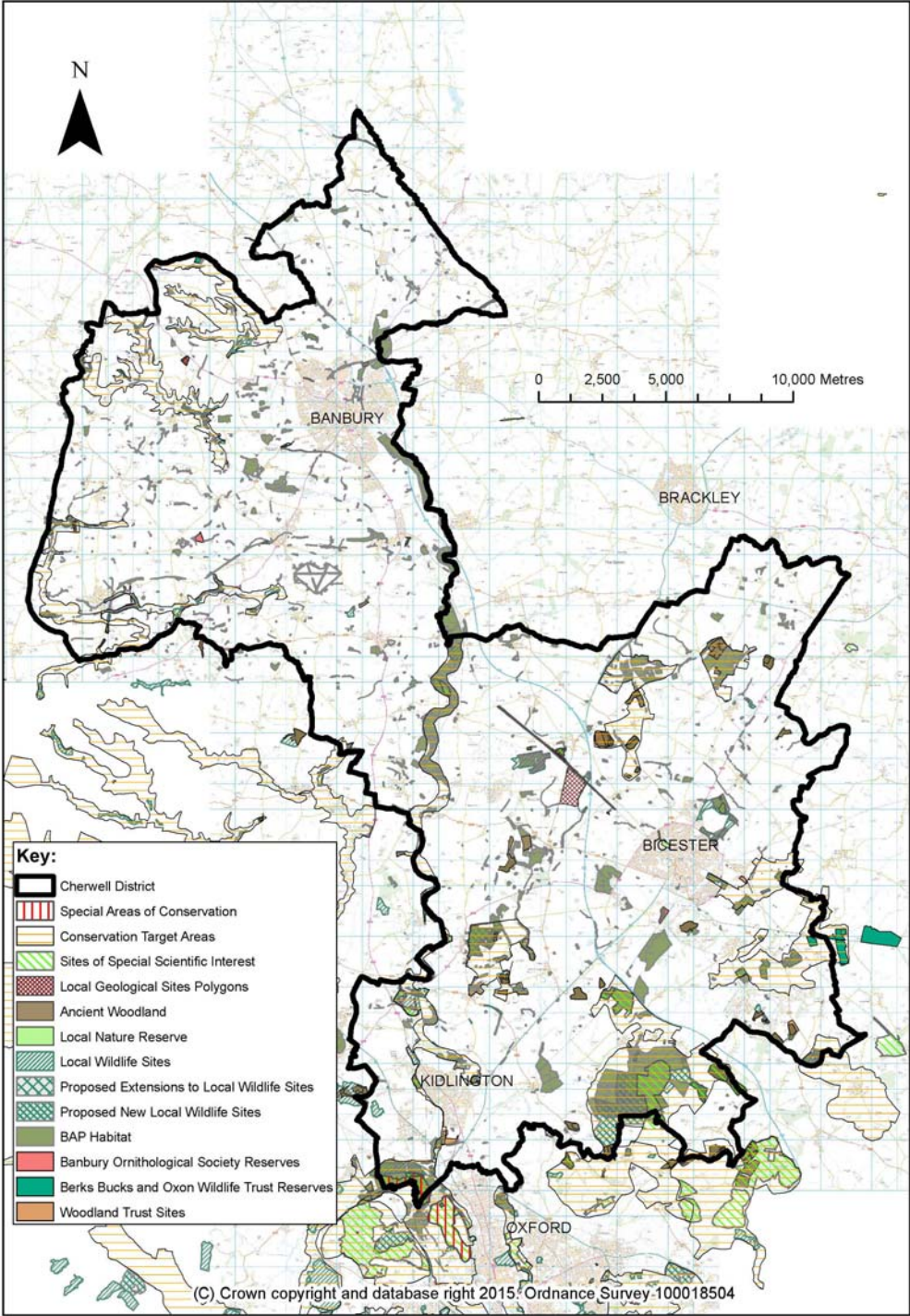


Bluebell Wood (credit David Rees)

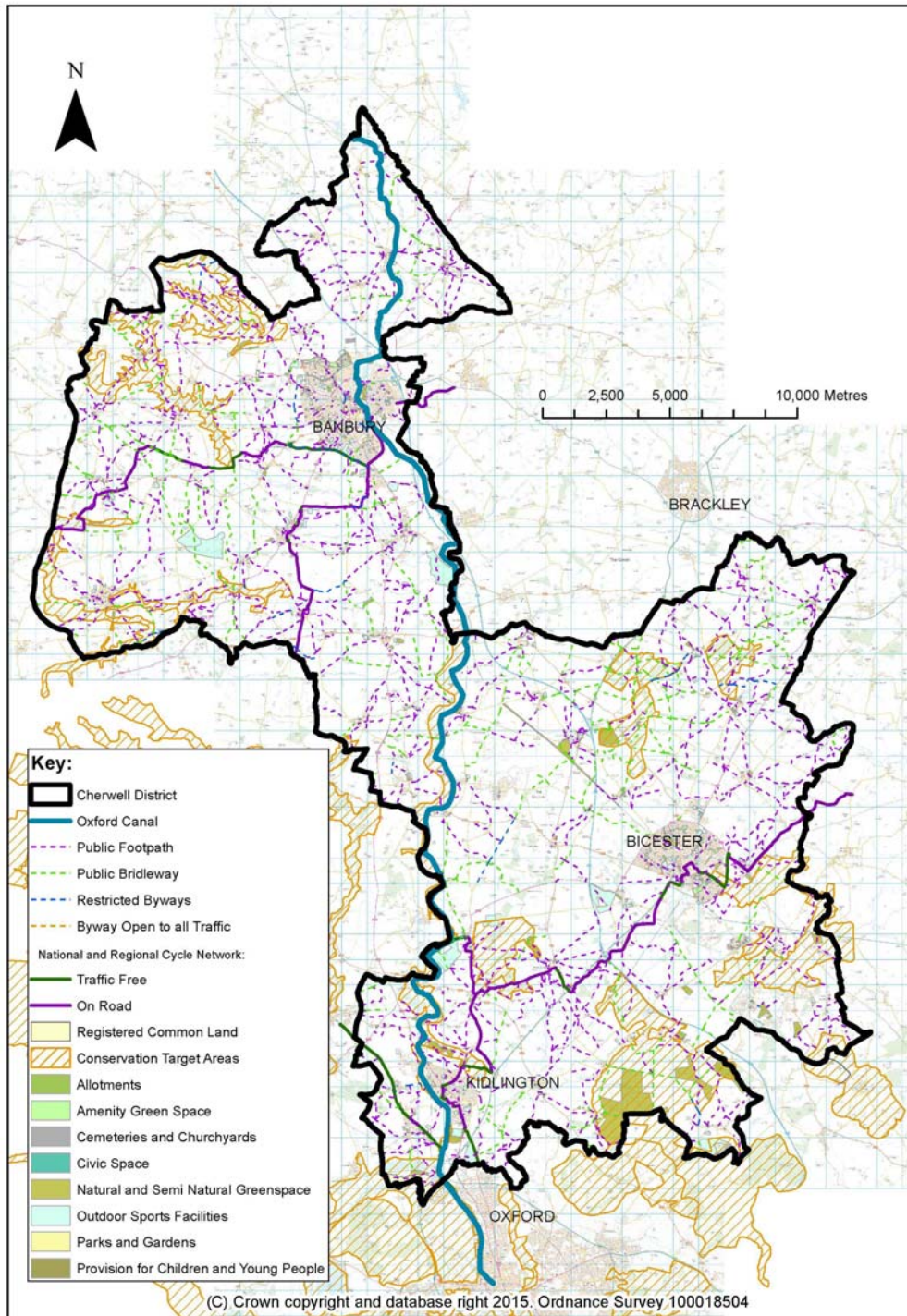


Swift in flight (credit Roger Wyatt)

**Figure 2 – Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1)
Biodiversity Theme Map (July 2015)**



**Figure 3 – Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1)
Green Infrastructure Theme Map (July 2015)**



4. PARTNERSHIPS

4.1 The delivery of the Community Nature Plan relies heavily on partnership work. The Council supports six key organisations with annual funding in accordance with service level agreements. These organisations provide progress reports which are published on the Council's website - www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan

4.2 **The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC)** supplies high quality, up to date habitat, species and site data that is required as an evidence base for the Local Plan process and for the ecological assessment of planning applications. TVERC's service involves intensive mapping work to assess habitat condition. TVERC also reports on Local Plan indicators, information which is required for the Council's Annual Monitoring Report; and provides the survey element of the Local Wildlife Site Project – see 4.3. Local communities use TVERC data for neighbourhood planning and volunteer recording groups are supported by the organisation.

4.3 **Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)** provides land management advice to Local Wildlife Site (LWS) owners/managers. LWSs are sites of substantive nature conservation value or geological interest which are protected by planning policy. The advice helps to improve site value and maintain the robustness of the LWS designation. BBOWT also leads on the Wild Banbury project which is all about enhancing urban habitats for wildlife and bringing people into contact with nature. It also supports a North Oxfordshire volunteers group which monitors a number of bat box projects that the Council has initiated and helped to fund.

4.4 **Wild Oxfordshire** supports community wildlife groups and activities as well as citizen science projects and events. It also leads on partnership work to focus on the maintenance and improvement of the District's Conservation Target Areas which are used as a planning focus for wildlife improvement. In 2017, it produced the Oxfordshire State of Nature Report, a comprehensive review of the current situation for wildlife across the breadth of the County.

4.5 **RSPB** provides land management advice to landowners/managers within the Cherwell and Ray river valleys on wetland habitat creation, restoration and maintenance. Such habitat is a national priority which supports birds and other wildlife which are national priority species. The RSPB also supports volunteer training and facilitates projects involving volunteers and landowners.

4.6 **Warriner School Farm** delivers a programme of primary school and youth group visits about the importance of the natural environment as a food source, for its health benefits and for its intrinsic value.

4.7 **OPFA** (Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association) engages with local community organisations to promote and support the provision, retention and viability of community outdoor recreation space which meets local needs, including opportunities for habitat improvements.

4.8 The Council also supports partner organisations, conservation projects and community groups with advice and promotion. For example, with the help of local people throughout the District, the **Cherwell Swift Conservation Project** successfully continues to find, look after and create new nest sites with the help of local people and enlightened developers such as Cherwell Build – see the Project's 2017 report - www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan

5. A NATURAL ENVIRONMENT FOR WILDLIFE AND PEOPLE

The Council's commitment to protecting and enhancing the natural environment for wildlife and people within the Cherwell District is summarised below:

- A Community Nature Plan will be produced every two years to set out and monitor the Council's compliance with the NERC Act Duty and other legislative and policy requirements; to demonstrate the multiple benefits of the natural environment; and to ensure delivery of projects that are healthy for wildlife and people
- TVERC, Wild Oxfordshire, BBOWT, RSPB, Warriner School Farm and OPFA are key partners in the delivery of the Community Nature Plan. Partnerships will be maintained in accordance with Service Level Agreements
- The Council's key policies relating to green spaces, biodiversity and the natural environment will be included in the Local Plan and related documents
- The Council will accord with the Wildlife Trusts' guidance 'Homes for People and Wildlife'
- Additional resources will be secured to provide the specific guidance that is required on biodiversity accounting and offsetting
- The Council will participate in partnership working with the Oxfordshire natural environment sector and relevant projects will be supported

6. CORPORATE BAP REVIEW - 2016-2018 HIGHLIGHTS

Aims, actions and targets within the 2016-18 Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan were divided into **five main themes**. Some highlights are listed below.

6.1 Planning and Sustainable Development

a) Planning Policy

- Biodiversity and green infrastructure policies included in the Partial Review of Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 – Oxford's Unmet Housing Need. Relevant projects included in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- Relevant guidance included in Developer Contributions SPD and draft Cherwell Design Guide

b) Development Management

- Expanded ecology service provided by Warwicks CC (to cover maternity leave) involving increased biodiversity net gain work. Biodiversity Impact Assessments were recommended on 14 applications and 15 pre-apps
- Progress made by Bicester delivery team on potential allocation of North West Bicester's section 106 farmland bird offsite compensation
- Updated digital datasets for protected and notable species, priority habitats, Local Wildlife Sites and swifts data were made available to Planning Officers for use as an evidence base

6.2 District land and buildings management

- Key partners have continued to influence the management of District land and buildings for wildlife and people – see website for progress reports www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan
- BBOWT's management of the Local Wildlife Sites and Wild Banbury Project
- RSPB's work with landowners in the Cherwell and Ray river valleys
- Cherwell Swifts Conservation Project engagement with local people and developers

6.3 Council owned and managed land/buildings

- Cherwell Build has included provision for wildlife in most of its projects
- As part of the Local Wildlife Sites Restoration Project, some small scale management works involving clearance of sedge were undertaken by the Oxford Conservation Volunteers at Enslow Marsh (leased by the Council from the Canal and River Trust). Volunteers are also involved in a tree sparrow monitoring project on the site.

6.4 Green Infrastructure

- Open Space Assessment and Strategy - work relating to aspects of the District's GI evidence base is on-going with an updated district wide open space assessment and strategy due for completion by autumn 2018. This will help to inform the preparation of Local Plan documents and decisions on planning applications
- Final reports have been produced on the work carried out by Oxford University looking at, and testing tools for, evaluating green infrastructure. The tools do a variety of things including looking at the value of land for ecosystem services, financial value and ecological networks
- Funding bid submitted to SEMLEP (South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership) relating to green and blue infrastructure projects in and around Bicester
- Wild Oxfordshire has continued to manage and progress the Conservation Target Area Project

6.5 Health, Wellbeing, the Economy and Education

- Continuing funding support towards encouraging and facilitating community engagement has been given to the "Wild Banbury" Project based in Spiceball Park which is being led by BBOWT in partnership with Banbury Town Council - <http://www.bbowt.org.uk/wildbanbury>
- Successful primary school and youth group biodiversity visits to Warriner School Farm were supported as well as a 'Young Birdwatching Course'

7. COMMUNITY NATURE PLAN 2018-2020 AIMS, ACTIONS AND TARGETS

THEME 1: HEALTH, WELLBEING AND THE ECONOMY

- There is a wealth of evidence that the natural environment, its wildlife and green spaces are crucial to community health and wellbeing
- Public understanding and education are vital. BBOWT's **Strategic Plan 2016-2021 Be part of nature's recovery** aims to embed nature into people's lives, giving them more natural green spaces to explore and discover their local wildlife
- Natural Capital Investment Plans recognise that economic benefits flow from the natural world and extend the use of biodiversity net gain approaches to wider natural capital benefits such as fresh air, clean water and community health and wellbeing.

AIM

1. Support and promote initiatives to encourage involvement in the natural environment and to improve public understanding of nature

Actions

- Support organisations, projects and sites involving important habitats and species and community engagement opportunities
- Support community events through the provision of nature based activities
- Promote funding opportunities for local wildlife and access projects and provide support for community project development
- Signpost individuals and groups to wildlife engagement opportunities

Targets

- Support BBOWT's Wild Banbury Project (based in Spiceball Park); TVERC's training of volunteer wildlife recorders; Wild Oxfordshire's citizen science projects; RSPB's volunteer/landowner events; Warriner School Farm's programme of visits and outreach for young people; and OPFA's community engagement work
- Support the Cherwell Swift Conservation Project with advice and promotion
- Support Wild Oxfordshire's work with local groups and community sites
- Contribute nature based activities to community events such as fundays, school projects and local greenspace activities
- Work with Grants Officer and Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment to assess and deliver local wildlife and access grant funded projects
- Protect, improve and promote urban green spaces in Bicester to support Healthy New Town initiatives and Placemaking
- Produce a new 'Discover Cherwell's Great Outdoors' webpage to include access to the countryside opportunities
- Explore opportunities for local hedgehog projects

AIM

2. Engage with strategic partnership work relating to valuing the natural environment

Actions

- Support the proposed Natural Capital Investment Plan for Oxfordshire

Targets

- Facilitate involvement of appropriate Officers with the Natural Capital Investment Plan initiative
- Apply and extend Oxford University's work on evaluating green infrastructure - 'Tools for Planning and Evaluating Urban Green Infrastructure: Bicester and Beyond'

THEME 2: PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- The adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) includes strategic policies relating to biodiversity and the natural environment, green infrastructure and conservation target areas that will contribute to, and help ensure, sustainable development.
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) indicates that planning authorities should enhance as well as protect biodiversity and, where possible, provide net gain. It also recognises the importance of good evidence and data for decision-making
- Where it is likely that a proposal will impact on any protected or priority species, designated site, important habitat or other biodiversity feature, appropriate surveys and reports will need to be provided with any planning application.
- Creating ecological network maps is a key principle of BBOWT guidance **'Homes for people, homes for wildlife'**
- Conservation Target Areas, Local Wildlife Sites and proposed District Wildlife Sites are all important components of the District's green infrastructure network

AIM

1. Ensure protection, management and opportunities for enhancement and extension of biodiversity are taken into account in the preparation and implementation of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) and associated documents

Actions

- Include policies, proposals and guidance relating to biodiversity, green infrastructure (GI) and conservation target areas (CTAs) in all relevant Local Plan documents
- Support the provision of high quality, up to date biodiversity information and evidence required by the Local Plan and Development Management process through funding biodiversity partners

Targets

- Policies, proposals and guidance to be included in the next Cherwell Local Plan
- Publish Open Space Assessment and Strategy
- Support TVERC to collate, analyse and supply data associated with the Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report and constraint GIS layers required for planning projects and site assessments
- Support TVERC to achieve approval for the proposed District Wildlife Site (DWS) selection criteria and the processing of 20 sites

AIM

2. A net gain in biodiversity will be sought when considering proposals for development by protecting, managing, enhancing and extending existing resources

Actions

- Screening of all planning applications with regard to their impact on important sites, habitats and species
- Assessment of those that impact upon important sites, habitats and species with regard to relevant biodiversity legislation/policy
- Production of specific guidance on the delivery of net biodiversity gain

Targets

- Ecology Officer to be consulted whenever important sites, habitats and species are affected and advice to be provided within required timescales
- Preparation of internal standing advice relating to biodiversity and planning applications
- Production of specific guidance covering biodiversity impact assessment and offsetting and a portfolio of potential offset projects

AIM

3. Support the establishment and development of green and blue infrastructure networks and ecological connectivity throughout the District

Actions

- Support partners and deliver projects that can help protect and enhance green and blue infrastructure

Targets

- Deliver SEMLEP projects in Bicester (funding yet to be confirmed)
- Apply and extend Oxford University's work on tools for evaluating green infrastructure - 'Tools for Planning and Evaluating Urban Green Infrastructure: Bicester and Beyond'
- Support TVERC to provide habitat connectivity mapping
- Support Wild Oxfordshire to facilitate the Conservation Target Area (CTA) Project

THEME 3: LAND AND BUILDINGS MANAGEMENT

- The Council has specific responsibility for maintaining and enhancing land and property for people and wildlife on its own estate and on sites that it manages.
- It can also influence the management of land and property throughout the District by supporting key environmental organisations
- Conservation management should not just be left to land managers and nature conservation organisations. It needs to involve many sectors of society and people in all walks of life

AIM

1. Secure improved management of parks, open spaces, buildings and associated external environments for people and wildlife on the Council's estate and sites that it manages

Actions

- Encourage important habitats and species at appropriate Council owned/managed sites;
- Work in partnership with others to deliver biodiversity improvements associated with the development of Cherwell Country Park
- Provide Council guidance on biodiversity and the built environment

Targets

- Work in partnership with the BBOWT to improve Enslow Marsh and Trow Pool
- Cherwell Build team to include biodiversity protection and enhancement measures within its projects
- Liaise with stakeholders with a view to protecting/enhancing biodiversity and improving access within Cherwell Country Park
- Biodiversity guidance to be included in Sustainable Buildings in Cherwell Supplementary Planning Document

AIM

2. Support environmental organisations that manage, or provide advice on the management of, land in the District

Actions

- Continue to fund the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) towards its Upper Thames Wader Project
- Continue to fund the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) towards the Local Wildlife Sites Project and the Wild Banbury Project
- Support conservation projects in the active Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) of the District, particularly the Ray and Cherwell Valleys

Targets

- RSPB and BBOWT to provide a report twice a year to demonstrate delivery in accordance with funding agreements
- Any funded projects in the CTAs to provide a report to demonstrate delivery of objectives

AIM

3. Support local communities and groups to fulfil their biodiversity obligations and to improve management of land and buildings for habitats and species

Actions

- Support local projects that involve land/building management for important habitats and species

Targets

- Support three local projects

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www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan



Call **01295 221707**
or visit **[www.cherwell.gov.uk/
communitynatureplan](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan)**

Community Services JB04297

The information in this document can be made available in other languages, large print braille, audio tape or electronic format on request. Please contact 01295 227001

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać. 01295 227001

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Homes for people and wildlife

- How to build housing in a nature-friendly way -

Everyone deserves
to live in a
**healthy,
wildlife-rich**
natural world

Homes for people and wildlife: a vision for the future

The Government's ambition is for one million new homes to be built by the end of 2020, and a further half a million more by the end of 2022. It has also made a commitment to be the first generation to leave our environment in a better state than we found it. Some might argue that these are conflicting objectives, at a time when nature is in deep trouble. Over the past century we have lost natural habitats on an unprecedented scale. Yet contact with the natural world makes us feel good, and we depend on the things that it gives us.

This document sets out The Wildlife Trusts' vision for new homes that are inspiring and beautiful places to live, and where people and nature thrive together. To achieve this, we need a new approach that puts the natural environment at the heart of development and planning. The focus needs to move to *where* and *how* we build houses, not just how many we need to build. Imagine if the starting point for decisions about housing was to map our woods, meadows, parks and river corridors and identify where new habitats are needed; and then locate and design new housing around this. This is exactly what we need to do.

Our proposals are built on decades of experience of working with planners and housing developers. Not only do we engage very actively with local authority planning and decisions about their strategies, but we work with developers and policy-makers to get the best outcomes for wildlife. Every year, Wildlife Trusts influence thousands of planning applications so that they benefit both wildlife and people. We have influenced the design of new developments like Cambourne in Cambridgeshire and Woodberry Wetlands in London. We also provide expert advice to developers at all stages of planning and construction.



The challenge

More and more people live their lives with little or no contact with nature. This disconnect affects mental health, contributes to obesity and even has an impact on life expectancy. Integrating nature into the built environment can help to address these problems, but developments have often missed opportunities to make neighbourhoods more natural, and damaged what was already there.

We have lost 97% of our beautiful lowland meadows in England and Wales since 1930¹. And the loss goes on. Recent reports show that over the last fifty years, 56% of our wild plants and animals have declined, and 15% are at risk of disappearing from our shores altogether². Much of this loss has been due to intensive agriculture, but built development continues to be a major contributor – often unnecessarily. This has reduced the space left for wildlife and disrupted ecological processes such as natural floodwater storage in river

floodplains. As farmland has become less hospitable to wildlife, so the importance of our urban natural areas has increased. Yet, in towns and cities, many gardens and small incidental natural spaces have been converted into buildings and hard standing – leading to creeping, but large-scale reductions in the naturalness of many urban landscapes.

Continuing development in this way, but on a bigger scale, is not sustainable for wildlife, wild places, the character of neighbourhoods and the people who live there.

But developments don't have to squeeze out wildlife. The benefits are clear: trees in urban areas improve the view, aid privacy, provide shade and help reduce pollution and flash flooding; community green spaces bring people together; and local parks and woods are valuable places for people to walk, play and unwind in.

The solution – Homes for people and wildlife

Built in the right way, in the right place, new housing developments can make a positive contribution to nature and to the health and wellbeing of people who live there. There are two stages to this:

Location – new housing should be located in areas that are already well served by infrastructure and should avoid harm to the existing environmental assets of an area. Housing should be targeted at places where it can have a positive environmental impact to help achieve landscape restoration and recovery. This requires an up-to-date and well-informed ecological network map, which identifies existing natural features

and habitats, alongside areas where new habitats are needed to restore ecosystems and help wildlife recover.

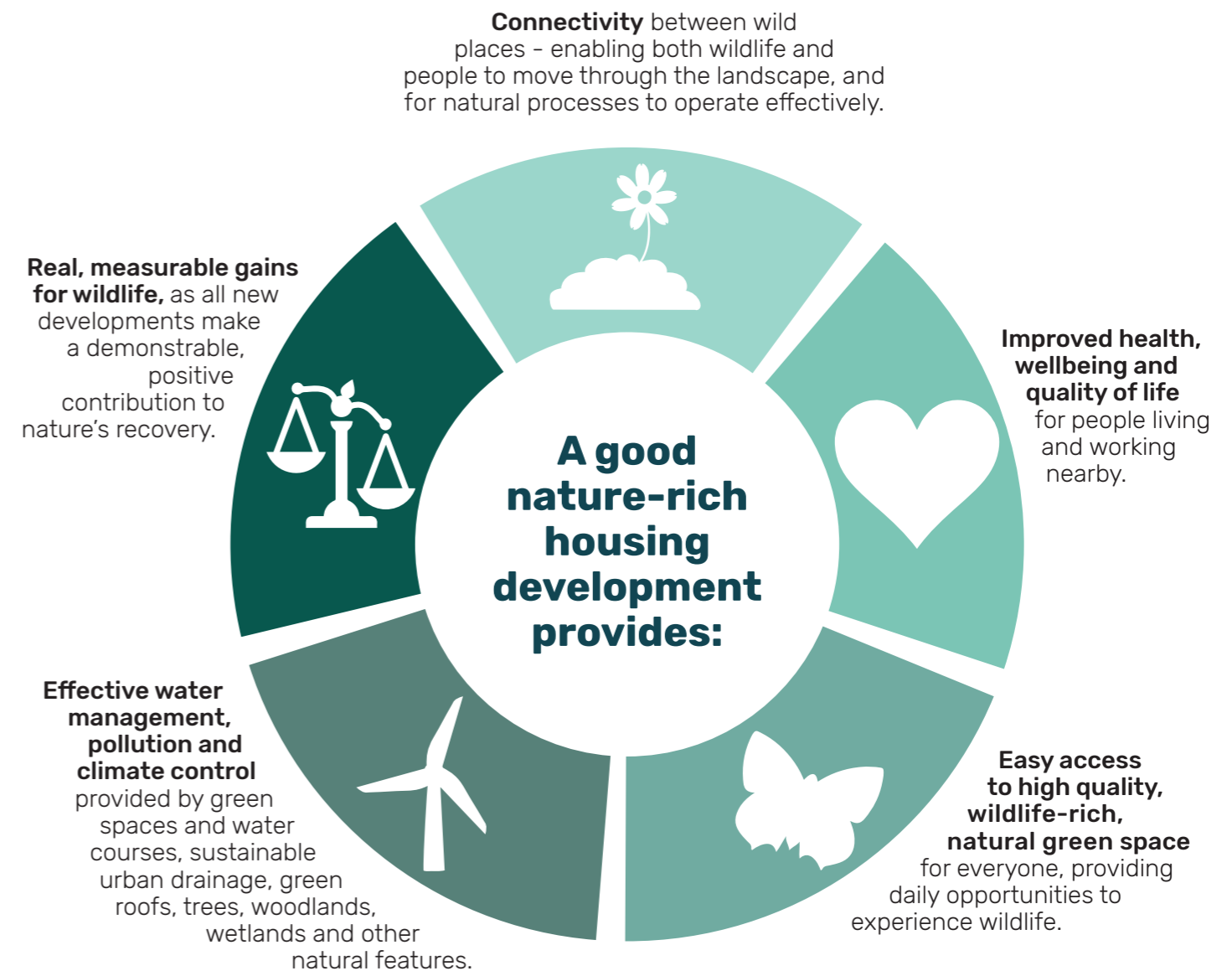
Design – new housing developments and houses themselves should be designed to integrate space for both wildlife and people, as well as to reduce carbon emissions and minimise water usage.



What a good, nature-rich housing development looks like

A good nature-friendly development retains existing meadows, wetlands, hedgerows, trees and woods, and joins them up with wildlife-rich gardens, verges, amenity green space, cycle paths and walkways. The result is a network of natural green and blue corridors weaving through the development and beyond, into the surrounding urban or rural landscape and contributing to the wider ecological network.

This approach improves air quality, reduces surface water flooding and makes developments greener and more attractive places to live. Residents have easy access to safe, beautiful, natural spaces for exercise, play and social interaction. Wildlife becomes part of everyday life.



Building with wildlife in mind

Housing developments can provide accessible natural areas close to people's homes, designed to complement the wider local landscape and linking up large, nature-rich open spaces with a network of green and blue corridors. Long-term, well-funded management of these wild, open spaces would provide an environment perfect for both people and wildlife. Features could include:

- 1 Permeable driveways to help reduce flood risk
- 2 Trees, hedgerows, water and other habitats integrated with development
- 3 Wildflower verges along roads and formal open spaces
- 4 Lighting designed to avoid disturbing wildlife
- 5 Sustainable urban drainage, swales and raingardens for wildlife and flood relief
- 6 Bat roosts, bird boxes and other wildlife features designed into buildings
- 7 Renewable energy and water efficiency built in from the outset
- 8 Safe, attractive, connected pedestrian and cycle routes
- 9 Features and corridors to help invertebrates, reptiles, hedgehogs and other mammals
- 10 Wildlife-friendly green roofs and walls
- 11 Native, wildlife-friendly plants of local origin used in gardens and landscaping
- 12 Wildlife-permeable boundaries between gardens and open space
- 13 Allotments and community orchards for local food
- 14 Street trees for wildlife, shade and improved air quality
- 15 Interpretation panels to help people understand the needs of wildlife and the environment



The benefits of housing for people and wildlife

Housing developments designed with environmental sensitivity and green infrastructure at their heart can deliver multiple social, environmental and economic benefits. Nature-rich housing can provide benefits for everyone – from developers to home-owners.

Benefits for wildlife

- **No loss of key wildlife sites** – Local Wildlife Sites and sites of national and international importance for wildlife should be protected, enhanced and well-managed as part of the development.
- **Much more space for wildlife** – the development should generate additional funding and resources, for example Section 106 agreements and conservation covenants, to allow an overall increase in the abundance and diversity of wildlife by habitat creation and restoration, and an improvement of soil and river catchment health.
- **Improved connectivity of wildlife habitats** – both within developments and linking to the wider landscape and ecological networks beyond.
- **Buildings that are more wildlife-friendly** – with bird and bat boxes, pollinator and insect-friendly structures and connected spaces for hedgehogs.
- **Reduced emissions** – reducing carbon emissions, pollutants and water use to help minimise environmental damage and threats to wildlife.

Benefits for residents

- **Daily enjoyment of nature** – people can experience and benefit from the joy of wildlife and wild places in their daily lives, because there is wildlife around them near to home.
- **Improved health** – accessible natural green spaces for fresh air, exercise and quiet contemplation improve health and wellbeing, for example by helping to lower levels of heart disease, obesity, stress and depression.
- **Protection against extremes of climate** – natural green spaces and trees within urban areas help stabilise temperature and reduce pollution.
- **Safer transport routes** – networks of natural green spaces can provide safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle routes.
- **Sense of community** – natural green space in and around housing areas can provide a shared space for the local community to come together and socialise – reducing isolation³.

Benefits for the economy & wider society

- **Cost-effective environmental protection** – providing green space in and around housing is a cost-effective and sustainable way of increasing environmental resilience, for example by reducing surface water flooding⁴ and improving air quality.
- **Employment** – when communities get involved in the planning and management of the natural green space where they live, it can provide jobs, employment and volunteering opportunities.
- **Space for local food** – networks of natural green space in and around housing areas provide opportunities to grow food and even, locally, keep bees.
- **Attracting investment** – high quality developments rich in natural green space can attract further investment from business and visitors⁵.
- **Reduced health-care costs** – people living in developments with more green space are likely to place fewer demands on the NHS, as they enjoy better health and a higher quality of life^{6,7,8,9}.

Benefits for developers

- **Satisfied customers** – houses and developments set in natural green space are more desirable to buyers^{10,11}.
- **Higher market value** – houses in greener developments can have a higher market value^{10,11,12}.
- **Enhanced brand value** – developers that take a lead on nature build their brand, and change the attitudes of the sector as a whole.
- **Improved high-calibre skills recruitment** – developers that show a genuine commitment to the environment are also more likely to attract up-and-coming graduates.
- **Improved environmental performance** – higher ranking in sustainability and natural capital indices will build long-term value.
- **Happier communities** – new houses designed to retain existing natural features with high quality greenspace are more acceptable to existing residents.

These multiple benefits are supported by a wealth of evidence (see references and bibliography). There are also some very good examples of new and existing developments that have already integrated wild places for wildlife and people into the design – examples can be found on The Wildlife Trusts website¹³.

What principles should guide the approach?

All housing developments must result in:

A measurable improvement for wild species and habitats, which means:

- **Avoiding any loss or damage of wildlife sites** - new housing must not damage or destroy important national and Local Wildlife Sites. Our natural environment is finite. These sites are remnants of a rich past and essential to our future.
- **Designing in existing habitats** - new housing must work with as much existing habitat as possible. For example, retaining existing woods, copses, hedges and streams as integral parts of new developments, and enhancing and managing them.
- **Creating new habitat** - habitat creation should be a standard feature of all new housing development, wherever it is.
- **More than compensating for any habitat that is lost** - where damage to existing habitats is unavoidable, mitigation must bring about an overall gain in habitats. This should be assessed objectively using an improved version of the Defra biodiversity metric.

All residents having lasting access to nearby nature, which means:

- **Providing wildlife on the doorstep** - space for wildlife must be designed into new development, much of this should be easily accessible to people.
- **Ensuring our natural spaces are well managed** - maintaining local green spaces should be seen as just as essential as maintaining roads, power and other important infrastructure. Financial planning should account for this at the outset, through a service charge or capital endowment.
- **Empowering communities** - for major housing developments provision should be made to empower the local residents to come together to maintain shared spaces, grow food and understand the area they live in.
- **Engaging civil society** - local charities and social enterprises have skills and experience that will be vital to ongoing community engagement, and sustaining well-managed natural green space near to people.

This can be ensured by:

- **Creating ecological network maps** - such maps should be built from local, up to date, data with the active involvement of civil society. They should be the basis for deciding where new housing is (and isn't) located, and how close it is to existing natural areas and wildlife habitats.
- **Developing within environmental limits** - decisions about the planning, design and construction of new housing must be based on a thorough understanding of the natural environment's capacity to meet the demands placed on it.
- **Using ecological expertise** - we would not try to run a health service without trained doctors and nurses, and we can't expect to sustainably manage our use of land, or build new developments, without trained ecologists and access to high quality environmental data.

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INVESTING IN OXFORDSHIRE'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

The goal of an Environmental Investment Plan for Oxfordshire is to place the environment, through the concept of natural capital, at the heart of a developed economy in Oxfordshire. This note aims to create a framework to identify how this could be achieved and is a first step to enable local Government, business and civil society monitor and improve the condition of Oxfordshire's natural environment.

This aim is consistent with:

- (1) The Government's commitment that this should be *"the first generation to leave the natural environment of England in a better state than that in which we found it since the industrial revolution."*¹
- (2) The Government's 2020 mission to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.²
- (3) Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan³ which will use a natural capital approach to meet its aims and states that *"making the vision of a healthier environment a reality requires solid foundations: comprehensive, reliable data; strong governance and accountability; a robust delivery framework, and everyone to play a role."*
- (4) The State of Nature in Oxfordshire⁴ which highlighted the necessity of achieving the principles set out in the 2010 Making Space for Nature Report⁵ in order to improve the natural environment in Oxfordshire. These four principles are More, Bigger, Better, Joined.
- (5) OxLEP's 2015 Strategic Environmental and Economic Improvement Plan (SEEIP)⁶ which expressed the wish to address this "immense" challenge and stated that Oxfordshire is "a true living laboratory of environmental innovation" and as such has the potential to be an exemplar.
- (6) Oxfordshire County Council's vision of *"thriving communities for everyone in Oxfordshire"*⁷.

¹ Environment Secretary speaks at State of Nature report launch – 14th September 2016

² Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiversity-2020-a-strategy-for-england-s-wildlife-and-ecosystem-services>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

⁴ The State of Nature in Oxfordshire. Coordinated by Wild Oxfordshire with input from a wide range of environmental organisations. 2017.

⁵ Making Space for Nature, Lawton 2010

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130402154501/http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature.pdf>

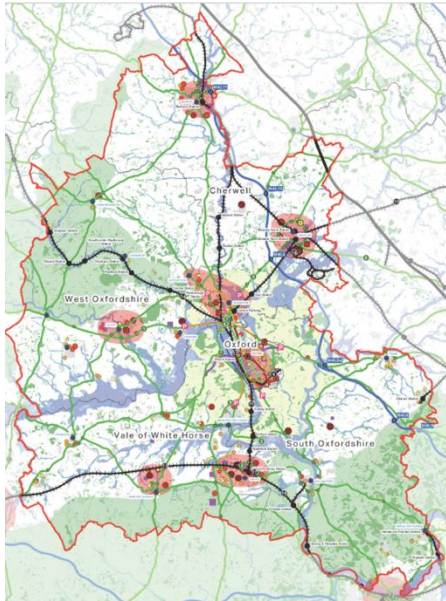
⁶ Creating the Environment for Growth - Strategic Environmental and Economic Investment Plan for Oxfordshire.

⁷ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/our-vision-0>



WHY AN ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTMENT PLAN?

Natural capital has been defined as “the elements of the natural environment which provide valuable goods and services to people”. It is now well understood across all sectors that the effective management of natural capital is an environmental necessity that underpins a thriving economy with Defra setting “long-term goals” to halt “decades of decline”.⁸



Oxfordshire is currently home to around 661,000 people and supports around 381,000 jobs. In addition, the county contributes £15.5 billion annually to national output¹. The Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS)⁹ provides a view of emerging development and infrastructure requirements to support growth and includes significant increases in Housing, Employment, Roads, Rail, Transport (other) and Utilities. Oxfordshire authorities are forecast to build 123,500 homes between 2016 to 2040 which would require building 5,100 dwellings per annum.

SEEIP and The State of Nature in Oxfordshire both identified that the extent and condition of many of the county’s natural capital assets have been declining over the course of decades, with major challenges including air and water pollution, land contamination, fragmentation of habitats and a decline in biodiversity¹. We know that planned development will impact on our natural environment and the benefits we derive from it. But we need to know:

- **What will the impact be?**
- **What is required to mitigate the impact?**
- **How much that will cost?**

An Environmental Investment Plan (EIP) will provide answers, in line with Natural Capital Committee¹⁰ recommendations, that changes in natural capital should be measured, valued, reflected in corporate and national accounts, and taken into account in decision making processes.

⁸ Decline of England's natural environment 'hits economy'. BBC. 27 January 2015

⁹ Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS) AECOM. September 2017.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/oxfordshire-growth-board>

¹⁰ The Natural Capital Committee (NCC) was set up in 2012 and provides expert, independent advice to Government on the state of England’s natural capital and how action to protect and improve natural capital should be prioritised.



HOW WILL WE DO ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTMENT PLAN FOR OXFORDSHIRE?

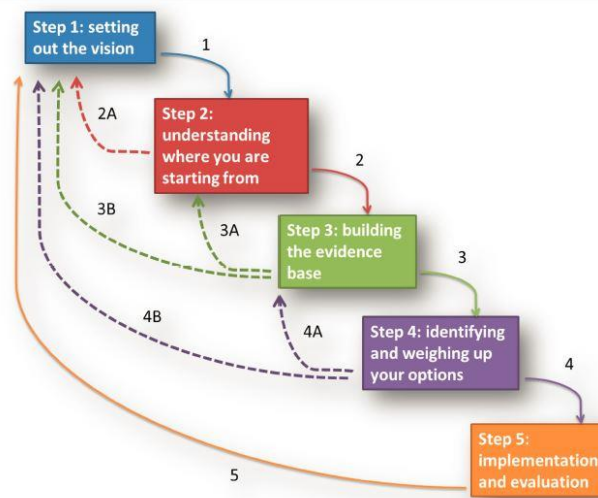
WHO'S INVOLVED

We are privileged in Oxfordshire to have many skilled and well-respected individuals and organisations working in the environmental sector¹¹. Their involvement is essential to ensure a robust assessment is carried out, with pragmatic outcomes which can be integrated into strategic plans and policies.

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) will lead the work as they have the knowledge¹², skills¹³ and capacity to carry out a scientifically robust assessment. TVERC holds the environmental data for Oxfordshire, so will ensure the results are relevant and specific. TVERC have good working relationships with the local and national environmental sector.

NATURAL CAPITAL COMMITTEE WORKBOOK

In April 2017, the NCC published a workbook¹⁴ for how to use natural capital approaches in making decisions about the natural environment. It is intended to support decision makers, including planners, communities and landowners, but has particular relevance for place-based decisions. The workbook advocates a five-step process for managing a defined area's natural capital.



¹¹ Centre Ecology and Hydrology, Oxford University, Sylva, TOE2, BBOWT, Local Authority ecologists and planners, Natural England, Environment Agency, Environmental Change Institute, Earth Trust, CPRE, Chilterns AONB, Cotswolds AONB, North Wessex Downs AONB, Ox-LEP, Forestry Commission, Wild Oxfordshire, RSPB, Freshwater Habitats Trust.

¹² DC has attended BES Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Sustainability conference in March 2017, attended NE workshop on Natural Capital, Ecosystem Knowledge Network natural capital seminar, numerous net gain meetings, NE/EKN natural capital meeting in December, ALERC conference on Natural Capital, Bicester/Oxford Uni Natural Capital meetings

¹³ <https://www.linkedin.com/company/thames-valley-environmental-records-centre/>

¹⁴ Natural Capital Committee - How to do it: a natural capital workbook - Version 1 (April 2017)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/608852/ncc-natural-capital-workbook.pdf



STEP 1 – SETTING OUT A VISION

There isn't currently an agreed vision for Oxfordshire, but one could be set out by stakeholders based on some or all of the following:

- OxLEP's SEEIP: *"Our vision is for Oxfordshire to benefit from a high quality, resilient environment which supports economic growth, development, health, wellbeing and prosperity for all"*.
- BBOWT's Strategic Plan 2016-2021 *"Our vision is an environment rich in wildlife, valued by all."*
- Wild Oxfordshire's *"a vision for Oxfordshire's environment to be rich in nature, healthy and sustainable for the benefit and enjoyment of all."*
- Natural England's vision to *"establish a natural environment, on land and at sea, which is: healthy, resilient and functioning properly and recognised as the foundation for sustainable economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing"*
- Oxfordshire County Council's vision for *"thriving communities for everyone in Oxfordshire"*
- Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan *"Our vision for the natural world of the future is one in which economic growth, development and environmental protection go hand in hand"*

As the EIP process progresses, input from stakeholders will be essential in developing and refining the vision. TVERC would welcome offers from other organisations to lead on setting an agreed vision, if anyone wished to take on this facilitation role.

STEP 2 – UNDERSTANDING WHERE YOU ARE STARTING FROM

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre¹⁵ already holds high-quality data on species, sites and habitats. Additional information is also available, including that collected for Oxfordshire State of Nature, Conservation Target Areas, Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, Access to Natural Greenspace Standards, modelled habitat connectivity for woodlands and grasslands. However, much of what we already know is quite narrow in scope, mainly focussed on biodiversity and green infrastructure and does not address Natural Capital in its entirety. The information we currently have does not quantify the need or help to prioritise investment or answer the question of where to invest.

There are tools and methods already available, along with audits and reviews¹⁶. We need to ensure we pick the right tools and methods to fit the data we have and the answer the questions we are asking.

TVERC will work with technical experts¹⁷ to devise a detailed method outlining how we will carry out a EIP for Oxfordshire. This method will be shared and discussed with the wider environmental sector to ensure the method is robustly peer-reviewed and will stand-up to scrutiny.

Once a detailed method has been approved, TVERC will carry out the natural capital assessment.

¹⁵ <http://www.tverc.org/cms/content/tverc-data>

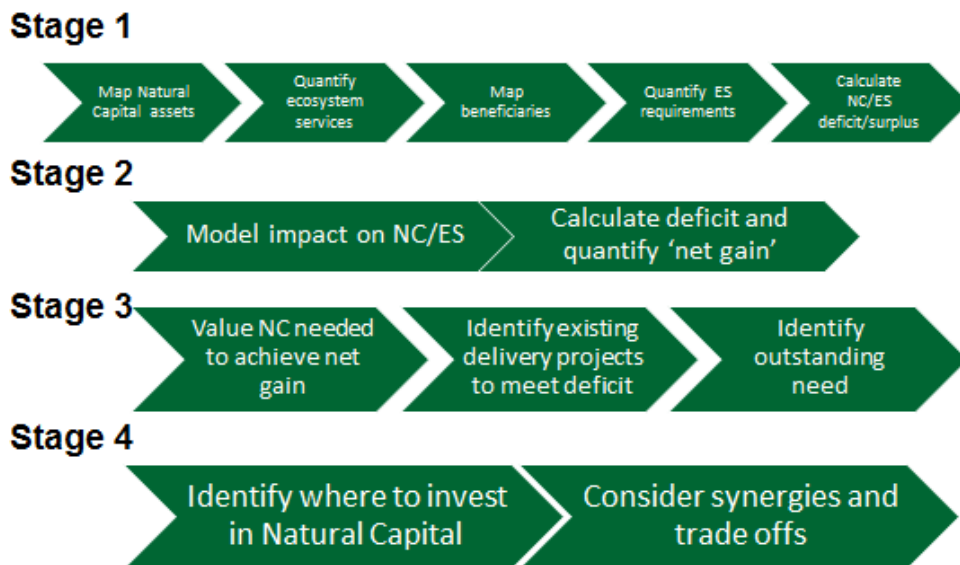
¹⁶ <https://ecosystemsknowledge.net/resources/guidance-and-tools/tools/tool-assessor>

¹⁷ Charlie Stratford, Wetland Hydrologist (Centre for Ecology & Hydrology); Alistair Yeomans, Forester (Oxford University); Richard Harding, Biogeochemist (Centre for Ecology & Hydrology)

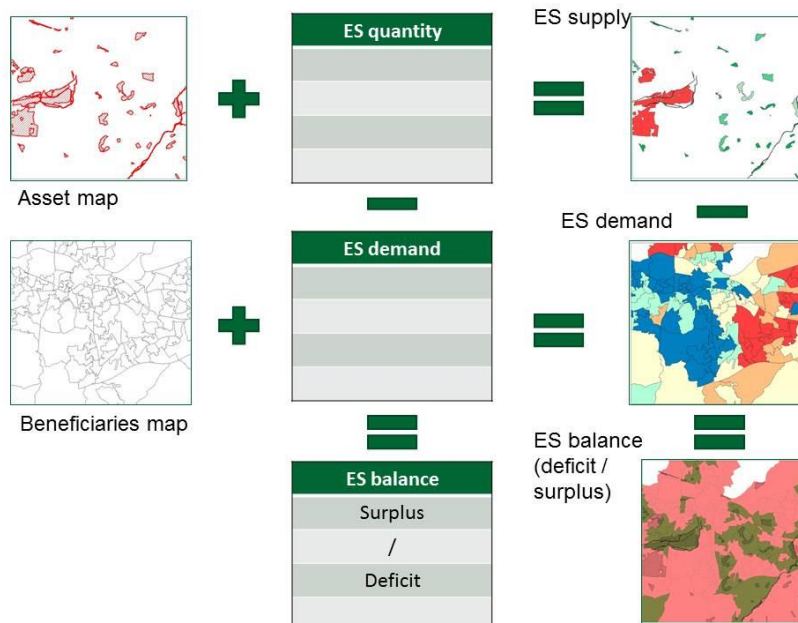


STEP 3 – BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

The method for building the evidence base for Oxfordshire is split into four stages. Stage 1 is to audit natural capital, the ecosystem services they provide and demand for these ecosystem services. Stage 2 is to model the impact of change (proposed development, climate change, etc.) on natural capital and ecosystem services. Stage 3 is to calculate the cost, and value the benefits, of meeting the natural capital need and identify projects to deliver the identified need. Stage 4 is to identify where to invest in natural capital.



TVERC will use both spatial and non-spatial data to map the demand and supply of ecosystem services and identify which of these are in surplus or deficit. TVERC will then model the impact of change on natural capital and calculate the resulting surplus or deficit that results.





STEP 4 – IDENTIFYING AND WEIGHING UP YOUR OPTIONS

The EIP will need to be spatial in order to identify where the best places are to put new natural capital.

Some projects have been identified to deliver natural capital gains (projects collected for the SEEIP, spreadsheet started by OxonCC and now held by Wild Oxfordshire, woodland and scrub management and monitoring projects collected for the National Rail offsetting fund, projects from 'In a Nutshell', River Catchment Partnership projects). But these have not been prioritised, or assessed for how well they meet the requirement to deliver a net gain in natural capital.

The involvement of the environmental sector will be essential at this stage of the EIP process to help identify where to invest in natural capital, and to consider synergies and trade-offs.

STEP 5 – IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Crucial to the success of the EIP in achieving its aim of improving our environment, is that the results are seamlessly and fully integrated into all relevant spatial plans and policies in Oxfordshire, in particular the Joint Strategy Plan. This will require all those involved in the production and implementation of such plans and policies to proactively ensure that natural capital is fully considered at all stages of the process. The EIP will also need to be monitored to show that investments in natural capital are successful and the aims of the EIP are being delivered. This will require a robust monitoring system to be put in place and delivered over the lifetime of the EIP.

FUNDING

The production of this document, and the work associated with it has been funded by Oxfordshire County Council.



The value of green space in Bicester to local people

Summary

This note presents evidence on the value of Bicester's green spaces to local people, which was gathered by the University of Oxford using two different methods:

1. A public survey in summer 2017, using interviews, a focus group and an online app;
2. A new online tool called ORVal that estimates the welfare value of green spaces for recreation anywhere in England.

The public survey reached 136 people and gathered strong qualitative evidence that Bicester's green spaces provide benefits for health, wellbeing and community cohesion. It also collected information on factors that block delivery of these benefits, ranging from familiar problems such as litter to more general issues such as loss of green space to development, or lack of joined-up routes. The ratio of benefits to 'blocking factors' averaged 2.5 to 1, but ranged from a high of 4.7 to 1 in Bicester East and Launton to a low of just 1.7 to 1 in Bicester North and Caversfield.

The ORVal tool estimated that the green space in Bicester provides welfare benefits worth over £1.5 million per year, based on the expected number of visits per year.

We have also mapped the straight line distance of people's houses from the nearest green space using the Natural England Accessible Natural Green Space standards (ANGSt). This shows a lack of accessible natural green space in Bicester. Only 13% of properties in Bicester are within 300m of a natural green space over 2 hectares (Bure Park and Charbridge Way), and no properties are currently within 2 km of a large (20 hectare+) natural green space.

These results have been used to draw up a list of options for improving provision of green space in Bicester. This includes improving wildlife habitats in the larger amenity green spaces (Langford Meadows, Southwold and Launton Road) so that they provide more 'natural' green spaces, enhancing the Skimmingdish Lane green spaces to fill a gap in provision in north-east Bicester, protecting / enhancing smaller green spaces in the Avon Crescent / Shakespeare Drive area, tackling problems with litter and pollution in certain areas, and improving links between green spaces including by providing road crossings at key points. The proposed community woodland at Burnehyll, together with the new country park and nature reserve in NW Bicester, could provide access to a large natural green space (within 2km) for 59% of the households in Bicester. There is a gap in provision for households in east Bicester which, could in theory, be met if access could be provided to the local wildlife site at Gavray Meadows.

About the study

This work is part of a project called "Tools for Planning and Evaluating Urban Green Infrastructure: Bicester and Beyond", which runs from February 2016 to April 2018. It is funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and is being carried out by a partnership including the University of Oxford, Forest Research, Cherwell District Council, Bicester Town Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Bioregional and others. The study aims to find simple and practical tools that local authorities can use to assess the value of the green space in their areas and plan how to protect and enhance it.

The term 'green infrastructure' in the title of the study just refers to all the different types of green and blue space that provide services to people both in the town and the wider countryside. This includes parks, woodlands, churchyards, playing fields, playgrounds, allotments, grass verges, footpaths, cycle paths, rivers and lakes, as well as 'engineered' green and blue infrastructure such as green roofs, green walls and sustainable drainage systems such as swales and balancing ponds.

We have tested a range of different tools for mapping and assessing the many services provided by green spaces, including air quality regulation, flood protection and wildlife habitat, but this note focuses purely on the value of green space for recreation and other cultural benefits. This was assessed using two approaches: a public survey, and a free online evaluation tool called ORVal.

The public survey

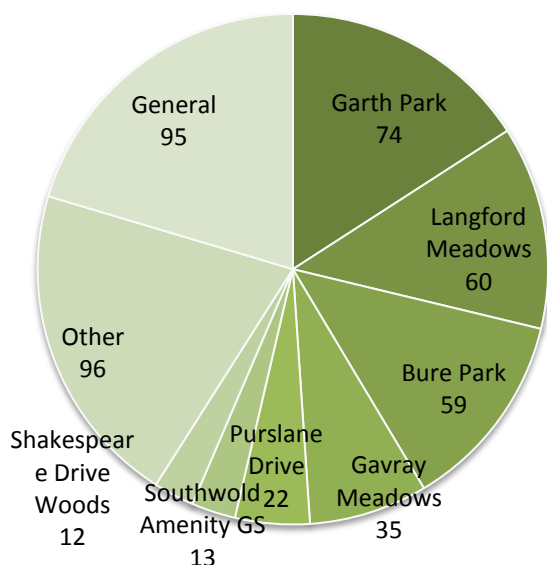
Public views on green space in Bicester were gathered using various methods:

- semi-structured interviews at the Bicester Big Lunch (4 June 2017);
- semi-structured interviews during a week-long drop-in consultation at Bicester Library (8-14 July 2017);
- a focus group workshop at the library (15 July 2017);
- an online questionnaire using the Map-Me app (July 2017).

The interviews, focus group and app were led by Helen Mason, as part of her MSc thesis. She asked people what green spaces they used, what activities they did there, what benefits they got from the green space and whether anything about the green space could be improved.

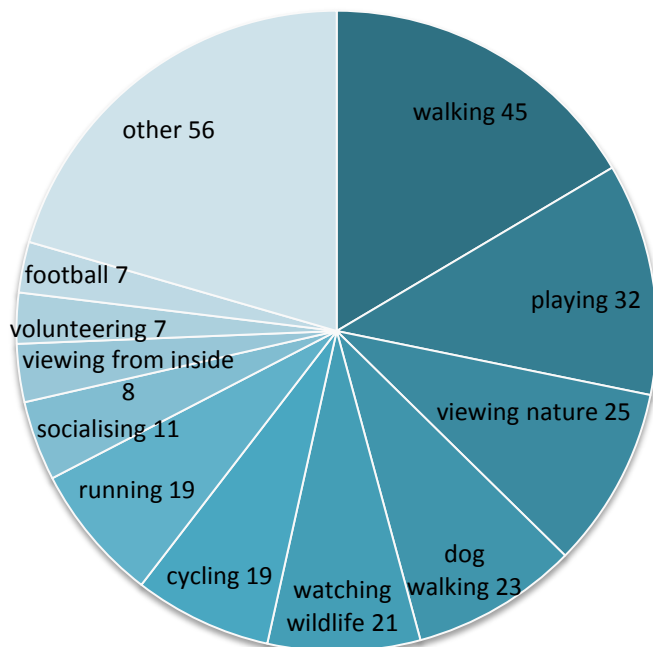
In total, 136 people were surveyed including 109 from the interviews, six at the focus group workshop and 21 via the online app. All the responses were entered into a database that recorded details of the person responding (age range, gender and electoral ward where they live) and the green space they were referring to. Helen then classified the comments according to the type of activity (e.g. walking, cycling, playing), the type of benefit (e.g. health, social connection, local identity), and whether the comment referred to a positive benefit or a negative (blocking) factor. If comments referred to more than one activity or benefit then they were split into separate responses. This produced a dataset of 540 responses related to 64 specific green spaces, as well as 104 comments on green space in general (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of responses related to different green spaces in Bicester



People said they used Bicester’s green spaces for 33 different activities including walking (45 people), playing with children (32), viewing nature (25), dog-walking (23), watching wildlife (21), cycling (19) and running (19) (Figure 2; see Appendix Table 1 for full list).

Figure 2: What do people use Bicester's green and blue spaces for?



The results show that Bicester’s green spaces deliver a wide range of benefits, with local people reporting 390 examples of benefits across 28 categories (Figure 3). The most frequently reported category of benefits was for health and wellbeing, mainly from physical activity and recreation but also from relaxation, ‘calm and quiet’ and ‘escape and freedom’. The next most often reported category was from connection to nature, mainly from seeing wildlife but also from just being in a natural green landscape. Other commonly reported benefits included attractive views of nature (aesthetic value), opportunities for social connections, and a sense of local identity and heritage.

... the small playgrounds are a lifeline for single mums... [Female, 45-64, Avon Crescent]

Fantastic for wildlife - has been left wild and unmanaged - perfect! [Male, 65+, Skimmingdish Lane balancing pond]

Garth Park is always filled with locals and has a friendly atmosphere. People stop for a chat – there’s a sense of community [Male, 18-24]

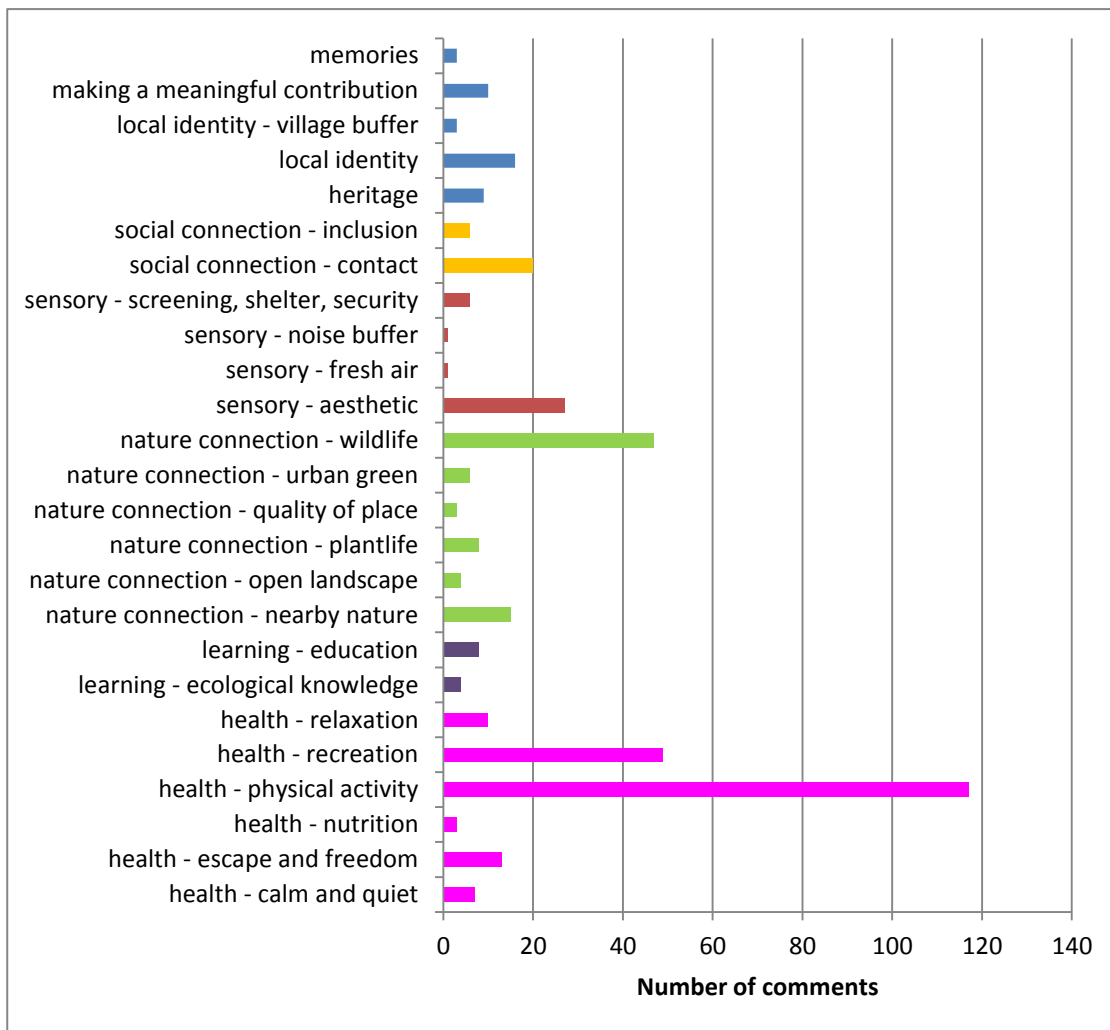
There is a lovely natural view from my house [Female, 45-64, Blenheim Drive]

We do an estate 'playground crawl' - these small spaces are often overlooked by the council but we use them loads! [Female, 25-44]

Gavray meadows is nice and wild-looking [Female, 45-64]

My son names all the parks - "can we go to Spider Park today?" - he sees Bicester as a series of places to play, explore, see wildlife - not a group of buildings! [Female, 25-44]

Figure 3: Benefits of green spaces in Bicester from the public participatory mapping exercise



These benefits apply to all types and sizes of green space, with 60 examples in Garth Park, 53 in Langford Meadows, 42 in Bure Park and 19 in Gavray Meadows, but also many benefits from smaller amenity green spaces, play areas, cemeteries, churchyards, allotments, playing fields, cycle paths, street planting, flowers on roadside verges and even a roundabout that is “a lovely dash of green” (Southwold).

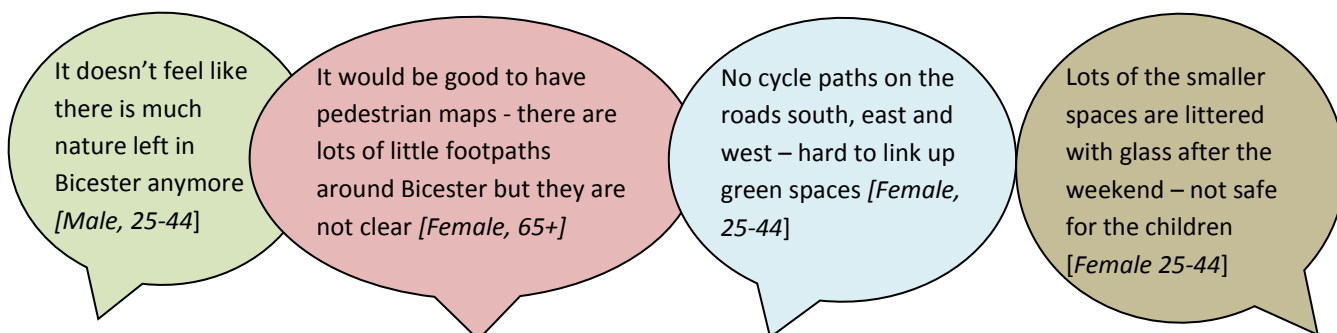
The survey reveals interesting detail and differences in views. For example, several people reported that they value the numerous small playgrounds in West Bicester, but this view was not shared by everyone - one focus group participant said that a larger play area was needed, with equipment suitable for children of different ages, and more space for picnics and meeting friends.

Although the survey shows that green spaces have the potential to deliver a wide range of benefits for health, wellbeing, social connections and local identity, people also mentioned factors that block or reduce the delivery of these benefits. These factors include widespread concern over the degradation and loss of green space and trees due to development, both large-scale development and also smaller scale (e.g. felling of trees in the Avon Crescent area by a private developer hoping for planning permission). There were 147 reported examples of factors blocking delivery of benefits, including:

- footpaths and cyclepaths being overgrown, badly surfaced, not signposted and not mapped;
- poor footpath access out to the surrounding countryside and villages; access to dog walkers being restricted at the airfield;
- conflicts between walkers / cyclists / quad bikes / dog-walkers / children / wildlife / fishermen;

- lack of seating / shade / interpretation signs / appropriate play equipment in certain locations;
- problems with litter, needles and broken glass in a few places, including Shakespeare Drive and Charbridge Way;
- lack of accessible woodland, with people looking forward to opening up access to Graven Hill and planting the new Burnehyll Community Woodland at Chesterton;
- lack of large areas of green space, with 40 out of the 136 respondents mentioning that they travelled out of Bicester to visit green space;
- general lack of wildlife, and the Bure Park Nature Reserve being “too manicured”;
- lack of access to the Wetland Reserve and to Gavray Meadows;
- poor water quality and silting up of Langford Brook;
- the concrete water play area in Garth Park was felt to be unsafe (sprinklers would be better).

There were many comments about the connectivity of footpaths and cycle paths in and around Bicester. The existing network was appreciated, e.g. the cycle paths in Langford Village, the new ‘blue line’ 5km health walk and especially the Skimmingdish Lane cycle path, because of the screen of trees providing a buffer from the road. There was demand for more paths like this, especially along Howes Lane, and also demand for safer crossing points at Middleton Stoney Road. Many people felt ‘trapped’ in Bicester, with a circle of busy roads and lack of links to the wider countryside – they wanted to be able to go on longer walks, runs or bike rides away from traffic, and to get to and from the villages more easily and safely.



Across Bicester as a whole, there were more than twice as many benefits as blocking factors, with an overall ratio of 2.3 to 1. However, this ratio varied from over 4.0 for those living in Bicester East and Launton to as little as 1.7 in Bicester North and Caversfield (Figure 5 and Figure 6). In other words, people living in Bicester North and Caversfield appear to experience more negative factors blocking their enjoyment and use of green spaces compared to people in Bicester East and Launton.

Figure 4: Number of reported benefits and 'blocking factors' in different wards of Bicester

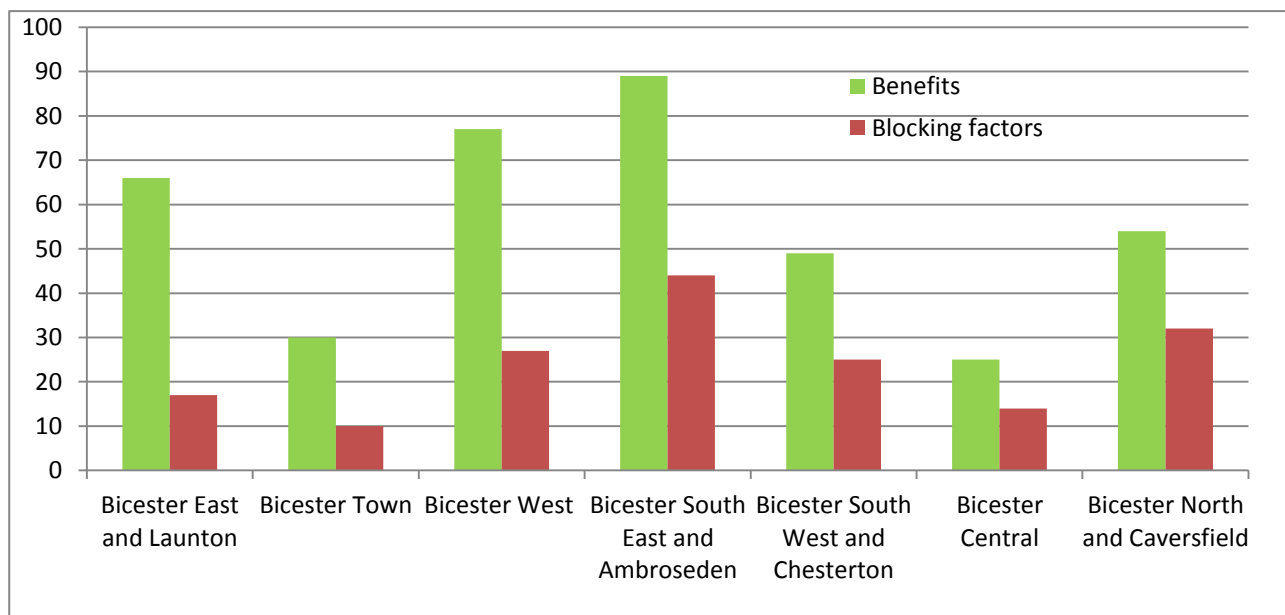


Figure 5: Ratio of benefits to 'blocking factors' in different wards of Bicester



Figure 6 shows the ratio of benefits to blocking factors for all the green spaces that had at least four responses, and this is also shown on a map in Figure 7. Most spaces had far more reported benefits than blocking factors, but some reported more blocking factors than benefits. These included:

- Gavray Meadows: restricted access, overgrown paths, poor signposting, lack of permission for conservation volunteers to maintain the habitats; threats from development; pollution in the Langford Brook upstream.
- Graven Hill Woods: currently no access - people hope that access will be opened up as part of the new development; concern over loss of green space to development; perceived loss of nightingales that used to be in the woods.
- Pingle Fields: part has been lost to development including a wetland area and the rugby club pitches (people now have to drive out of town to train).
- Shakespeare Drive Amenity Space: problems with litter, broken glass; too many dog walkers.
- Charbridge Way: Langford Brook silting up; quad bikes not good for wildlife.

Figure 6: Number of reported benefits and blocking factors for each green space

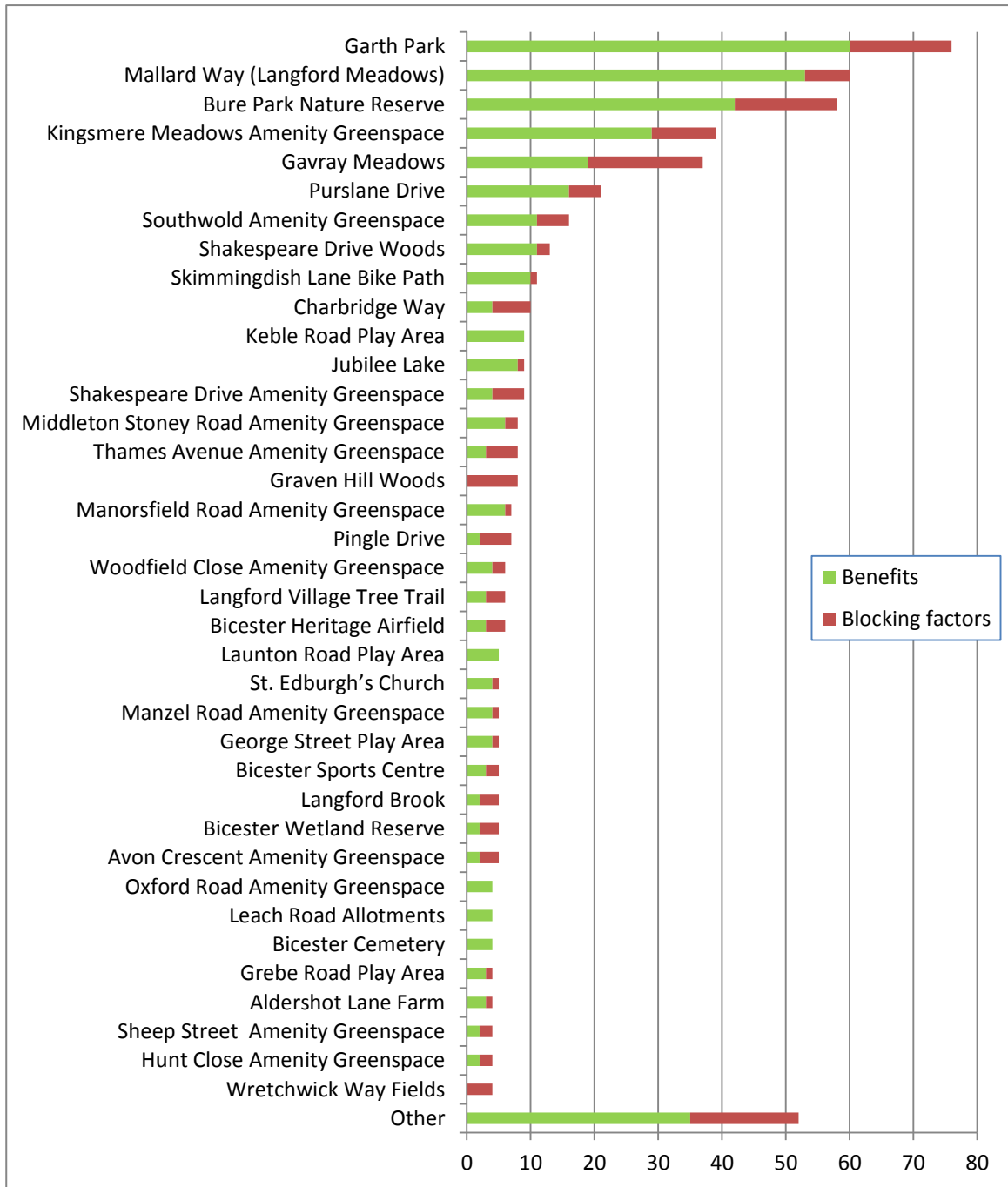
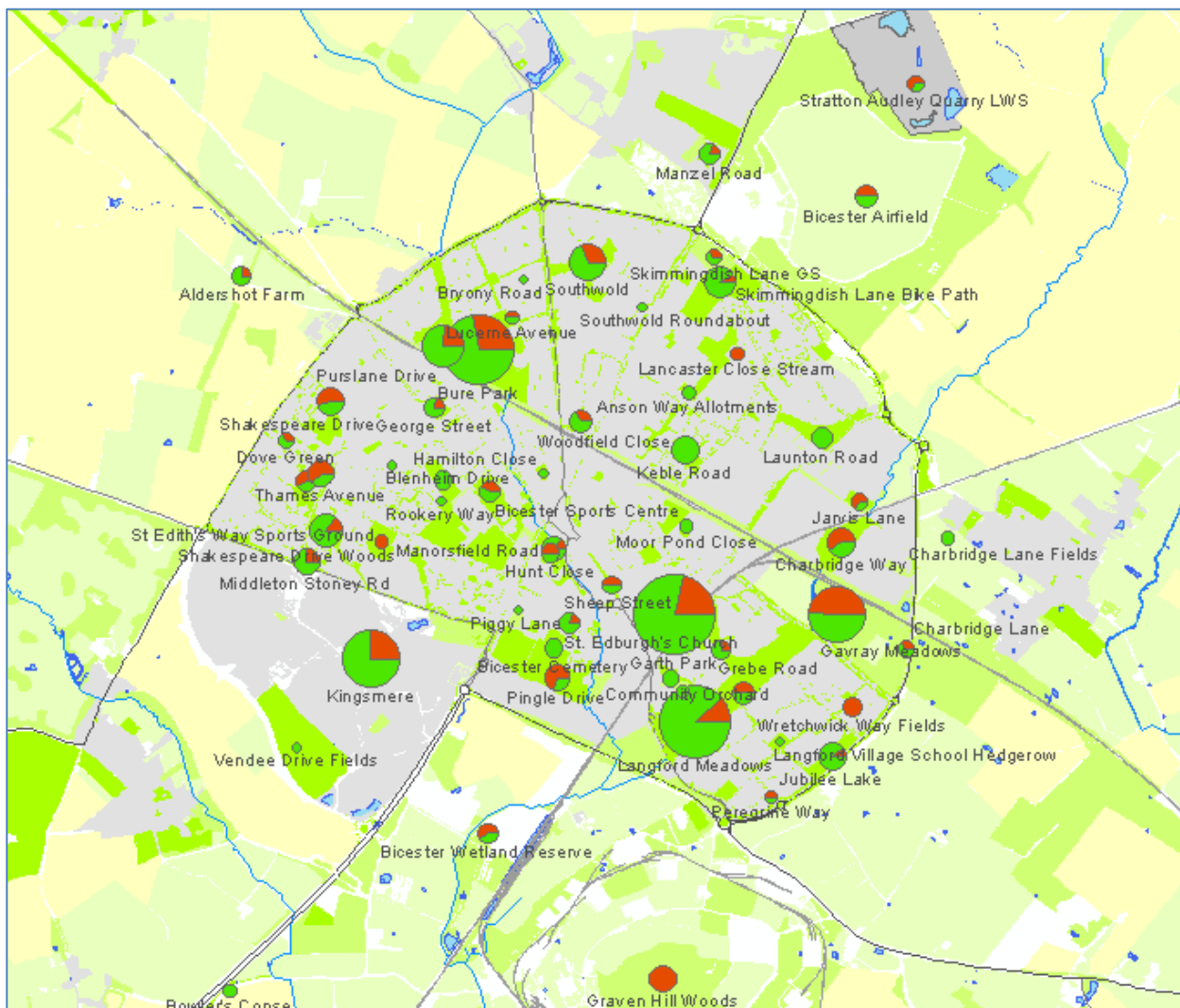


Figure 7: Distribution of benefits and blocking factors across Bicester. The circles show the number of benefits (green) and blocking factors (red) for each green space across Bicester. The size of the circles is proportional to the total number of factors reported for each space.



Distance to nearest natural green space

We have also mapped the straight line distance of people's houses from the nearest accessible natural green space (NGS) using the Natural England Accessible Natural Green Space standards (ANGSt). This analysis shows a lack of accessible natural green space in Bicester. Only Bure Park and Charbridge way meet the definition of a 'natural or semi-natural green space' over 2 hectares in the CSC 2011 Open Space Survey, and only 13% of properties in Bicester are within 300m of these areas (Figure 8). However, if the definition of 'natural green space' is expanded to include amenity green spaces and parks/gardens, of which Langford Meadows, Garth Park, Southwold Amenity Green Space and Launton Road Park are over 2 hectares, then 45% of properties are within 300m (Figure 9).

No properties in Bicester are within 2 km of a large (20 hectare+) accessible natural green space, although if Langford Meadows, Mallard Way Green Space (including the community orchard) and Garth Park are taken as one linked unit, they add up to almost 20 hectares. Efforts to improve the natural character and wildlife value of these areas could therefore help to meet the demand for more natural green space in Bicester. The analysis also shows the importance of the proposed new 36 ha community woodland at Burnehyll, which would bring 8365 (43%) of the properties in Bicester within 2km of a 20ha+ natural green space, not including new properties yet to be built at Kingsmere (Figure 10).

Figure 8: ANGSt analysis: 2530 out of 19594 buildings (13%) are within 300m of an accessible natural green space over 2ha in size (using the CDC Open Space survey 2011 definition of natural green space).

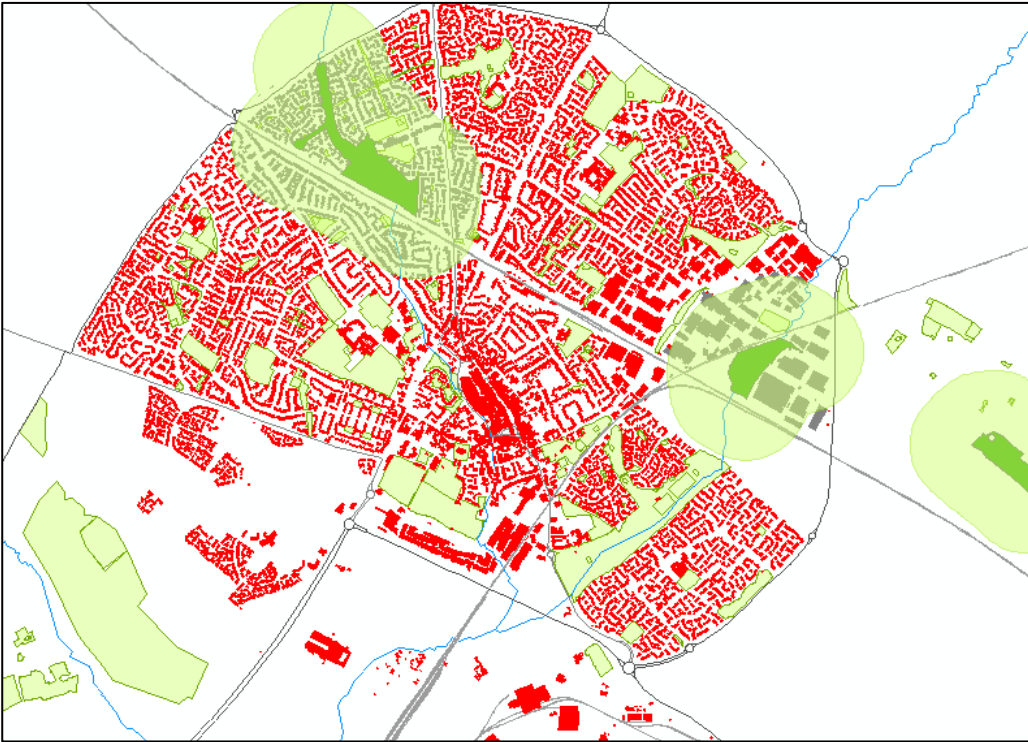


Figure 9: ANGSt analysis: Including amenity green space and parks, 8882 out of 19594 buildings (45%) are within 300m of a green space over 2 ha in size.

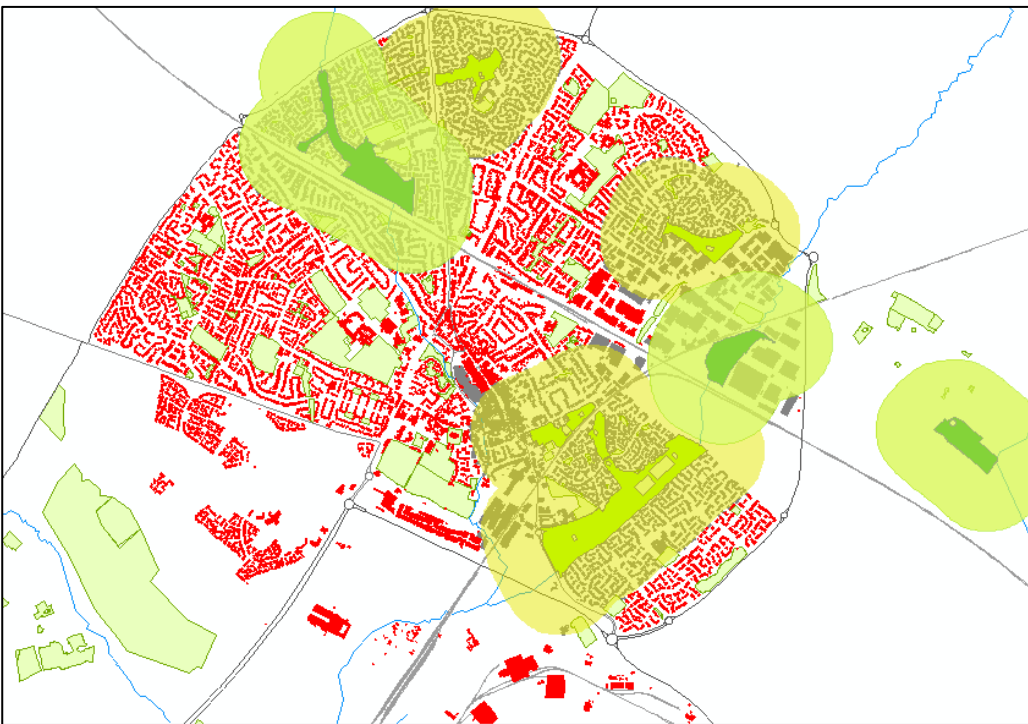


Figure 10: Properties within 2km of a 20 hectare accessible natural green space after Burnehyll Community Woodland is created (43%)

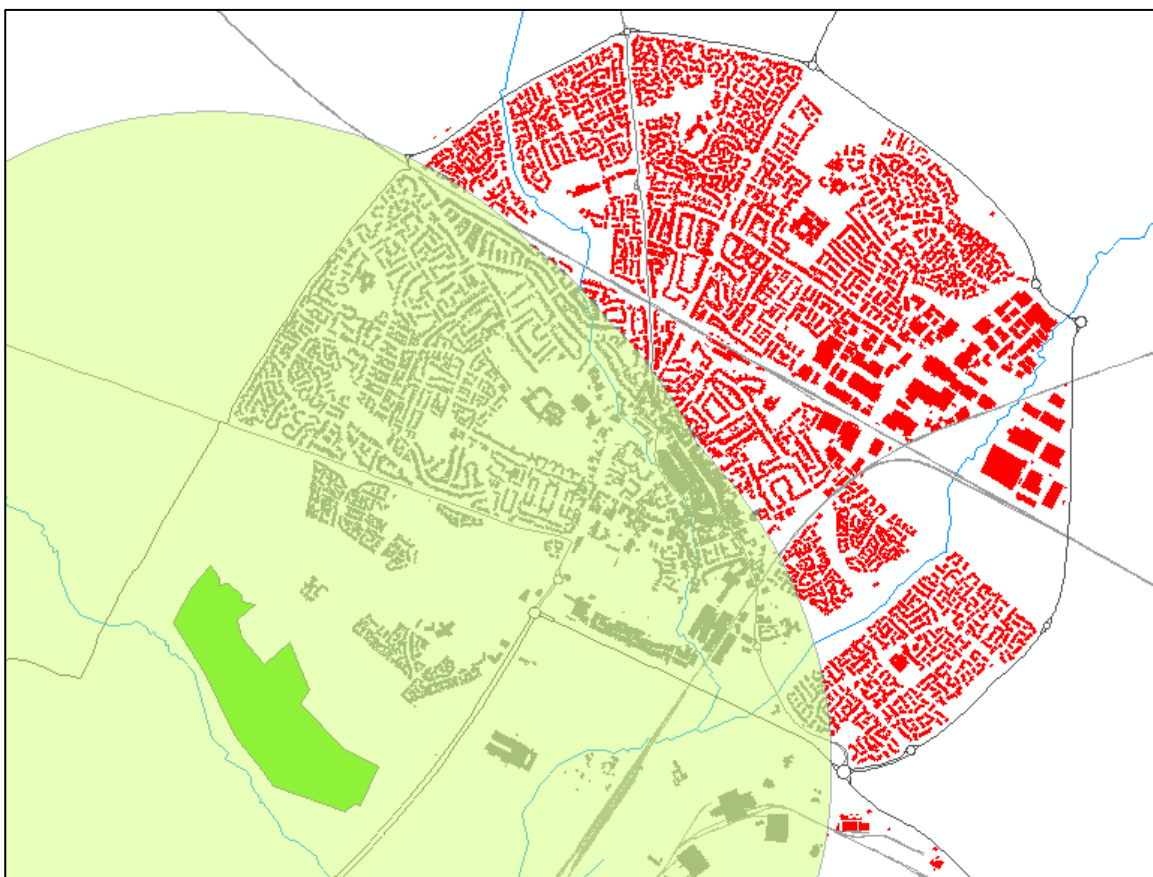


Figure 11 shows a summary of all the results of the ANGSt analysis. It reveals that even after the new community woodland is created, 20% of all buildings in Bicester will lack access to both 2ha and 20ha natural green spaces (shown in red). The deficit in accessible natural green space provision within Bicester identified from this ANGSt analysis is consistent with many of the comments from the public mapping survey, e.g. ‘it doesn’t feel like there is much nature left in Bicester any more’; ‘I’ve seen Bicester’s nature go in my lifetime’. There is also evidence of a demand for areas of a reasonable size (‘areas smaller than Langford Meadows are no good for walking and running’), and for linking areas together to provide wider networks (‘Kingsmere meadows need to be better connected together and to the rest of Bicester green space’).

The properties without access to natural green space are concentrated in North East and Central Bicester (consistent with the relatively high ratio of benefits to blocking factors reported in these areas), plus a strip close to Jubilee Lake. The Jubilee Lake properties are currently close to open countryside and footpaths towards Launton, but one resident reported that the ‘dangerous crossing over the ring road prevents us going further out of Bicester’ towards Wretchwick, and another said ‘green spaces are not well connected (especially from Langford out east) and footpath routes are not clear’. Planned development around Wretchwick would result in loss of this open countryside, but a resident of Ambroseden hoped that ‘when that bit of Bicester is developed they may build in new routes to walk to Bicester via Graven Hill or Wretchwick Road’.

Figure 11 Summary of ANGSt analysis results

	No. of buildings	
Within 300m of a 2ha NGS and 2km of a 20ha NGS (Burnehyll)	792	4%
Within 300m of a 2ha NGS	1767	9%
Within 300m of a 2ha amenity GS or park and 2km of a 20ha NGS (Burnehyll)	876	4%
Within 300m of a 2ha amenity GS or park	5476	28%
Within 2km of a 20ha NGS (Burnehyll)	6697	34%
None of the above	3986	20%



The ORVal valuation tool

ORVal (Outdoor Recreation Valuation) is a new online tool developed by the University of Exeter, freely available at <http://leep.exeter.ac.uk/orval/>.

ORVal estimates the welfare value of green spaces based on data in the national MENE database (Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment). MENE is an ongoing survey run by Natural England which conducts 800 face to face interviews every week throughout the year with randomly chosen people in England, asking them about their visits to green space within the last seven days. It has been running since 2009. ORVal uses this database to estimate the typical time that people take to travel to particular green spaces, and then converts this time into an equivalent monetary value using Department for Transport guidelines (ranging from £2.30 per hour for trips under 8km to £9.45 per hour for trips over 160 km). This is added to the estimated fuel cost that would be involved in driving to the green space (assuming a value of 9p/km). This travel cost is used as input to an econometric model that estimates the welfare value of a typical green space anywhere in the country, taking into account the size of the green space, its type (e.g. natural green space, golf course, sports field etc), its land cover (e.g. % woodland, grassland, etc) and what other alternative green spaces are nearby.

There are some limitations to this method. Firstly, it will undervalue green spaces that are ‘on the doorstep’ and thus involve no travel cost. Secondly, the MENE database is only used for day trips, not for overnight visits such as weekends away or holidays. Thirdly, the model is very complex and uses a long series of assumptions and estimates to correct for various issues with the MENE data. For example, respondents do not always identify the green spaces they have visited by name, so the model has to ‘guess’ which of the green spaces within, say, a 2 km range has actually been visited. Therefore the output should be treated with caution. The model is currently being revised and a new version is expected shortly. The results presented here are based on the first version to be released.

Despite these caveats, the ORVal tool is recognised and supported by Defra. It is very easy to use. It presents a map of England, and you can click on any green space to get an instant estimate of the total welfare value and the split by socio-economic class. You can also estimate the value for all the green spaces in an administrative district (aggregated by middle super-output area). Finally, the tool also estimates value for segments of path networks between ‘access points’ where paths intersect roads. Figure 12 shows the estimate for Bure Park: ORVal estimates that it attracts 28,000 visits per year which are valued as being worth £113,096 per year in terms of recreational use.

ORVal can also be used to estimate the value of new green spaces or footpaths. You can draw the outline of a new space on the map, and specify the proportion of woodland, grassland, water etc. The tool will estimate the value, taking into account the other green spaces that exist nearby as alternative destinations. This could be useful for analysing different options for creating new green spaces – though it must be remembered that ORVal only indicates the recreational value, not the value for biodiversity, flood protection, carbon storage etc.

Figure 12: The ORVal tool, showing the estimated welfare value of Bure Park as £113,096 per year

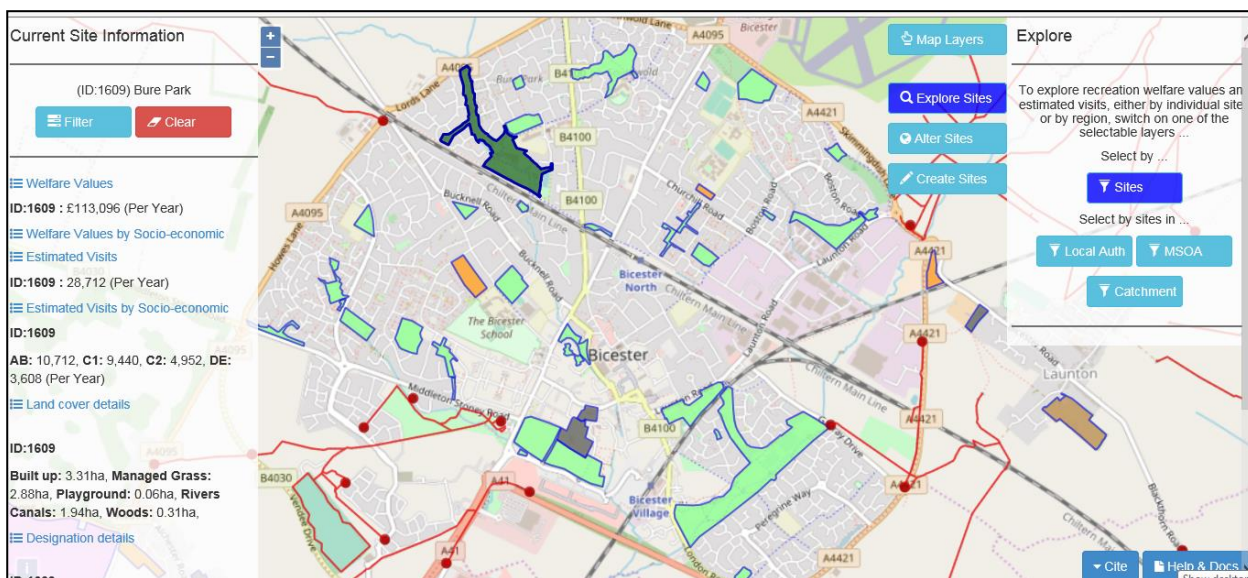
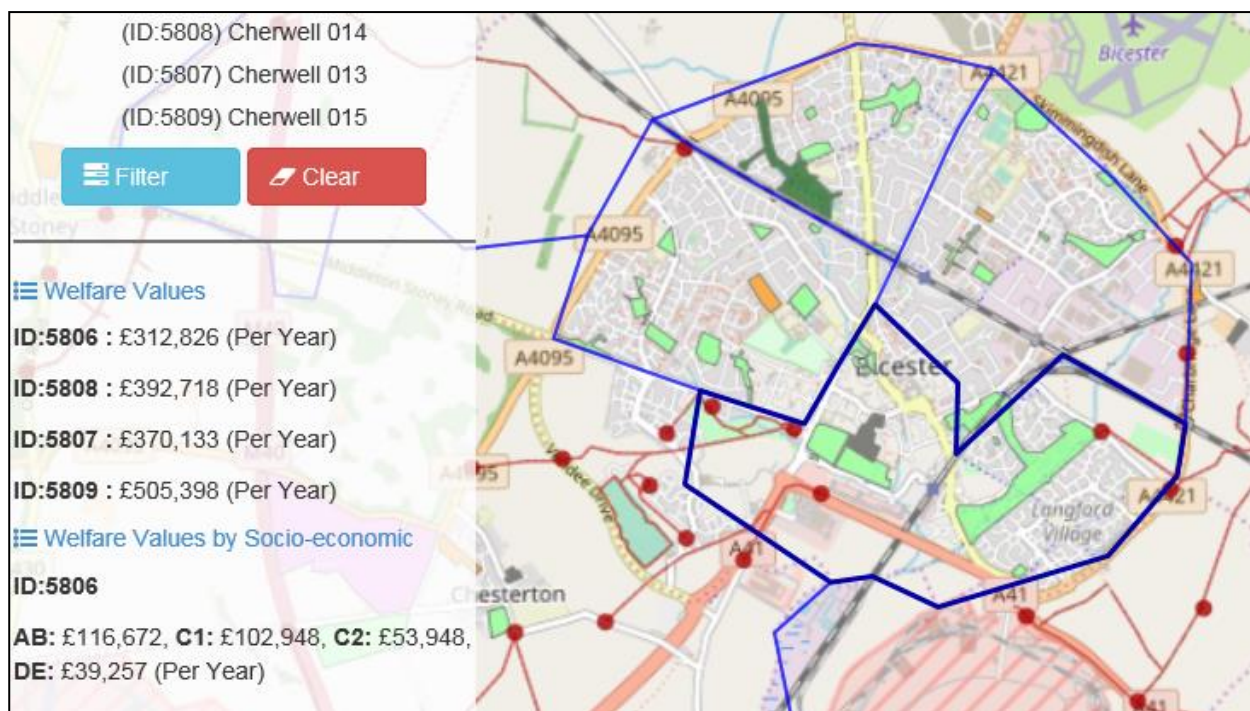


Figure 13 shows the estimated total value for all the green spaces in four wards of Bicester, which are estimated to attract 410,000 visits per year valued at £1.6 million / year.

Figure 13: ORVal, showing total values for four wards of Bicester



Implications for future spend and provision

These results can help to identify where new natural green space is needed, and where enhancements may be needed to existing green space. It is important to remember that the ANGSt analysis only indicates the demand for ‘natural’ green space. Separate analysis is needed (e.g. via the CDC Open Space Survey, which is currently being updated) to assess provision for other types of green space including sports facilities, allotments and playgrounds. There may be trade-offs: for example, one resident commented on Bure Park ‘there are no goal posts for my teenagers to play football. There are bushes around where the football can get lost’. This clearly conflicts with other residents who wanted a wilder space that was better for nature.

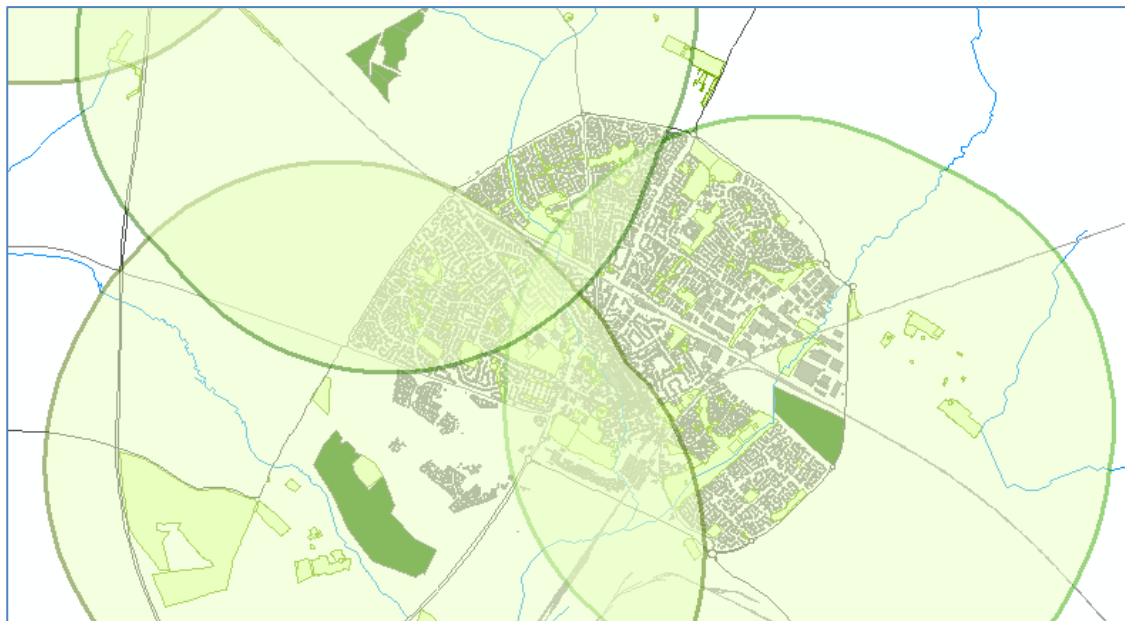
It is also important to note that the ANGSt analysis only looks at the straight line distance from buildings to green spaces. The actual walking distance will almost always be over 300m, and the route may be blocked by busy roads.

With these caveats in mind, we have identified some potential options for reducing the deficit in Bicester’s existing and future green space provision.

1. **Providing new natural green space in north-east and south-east Bicester.** Almost 4000 properties in north-east, central and south-east Bicester (shown in red on Figure 11) are not within 300m of a 2ha NGS, amenity GS or park, or within 2km of a 20 ha NGS. Three options could mitigate this:
 - a. Protecting and enhancing the 2.5 ha natural green space at Skimmingdish Lane would bring an extra 775 properties within 300m of a natural green space (of which 417 were not within 300m of even the amenity green space at Southwold). Currently residents cannot easily access this space (‘it is blocked off by hedges so we can’t access it’), although some do find a way in (‘Fantastic for recreation - has been left wild and unmanaged - perfect!’). Habitats on part of this space have recently been damaged by developers, though the remainder is a target for SEMLEP funding for enhancement.

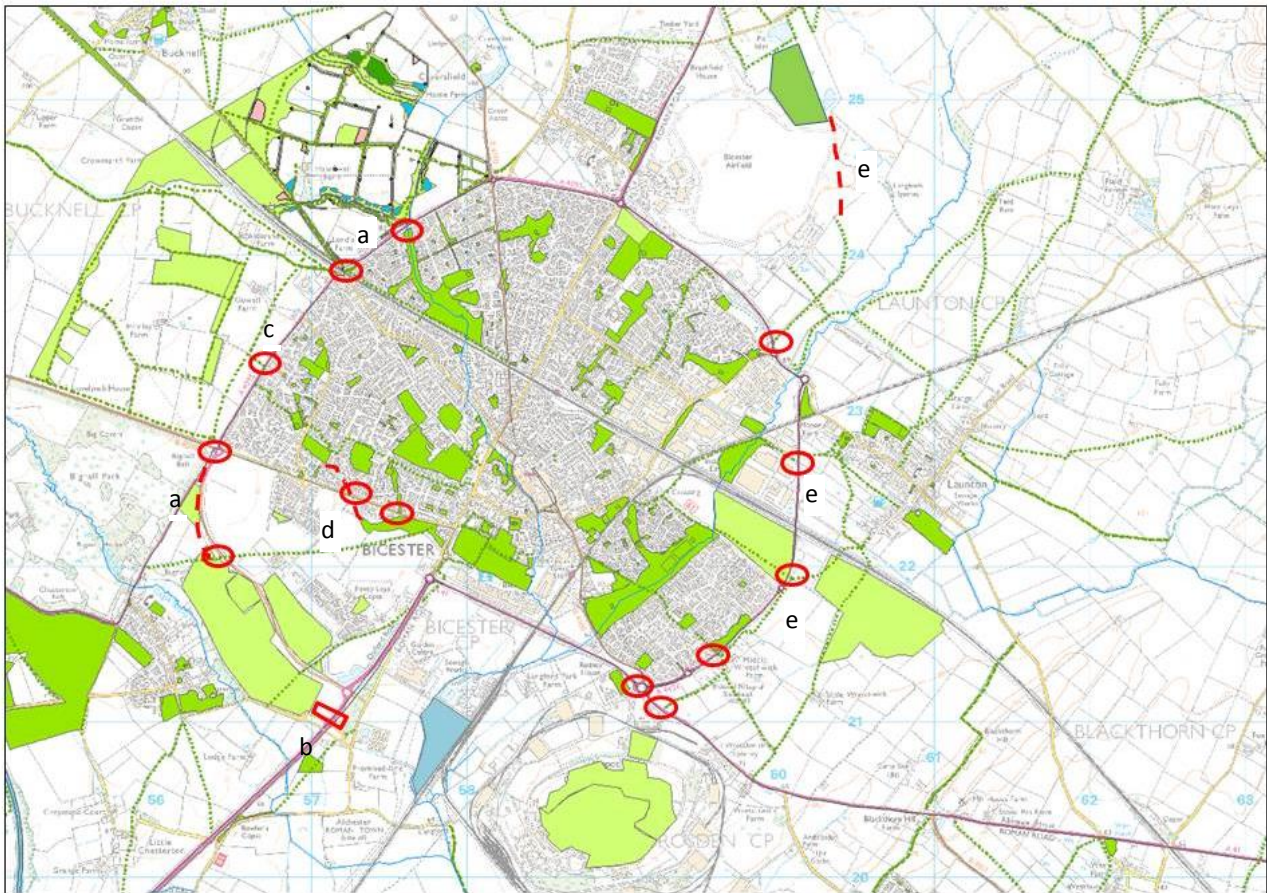
- b. Improving access to the green space around Bicester airfield could also contribute to provision for north-east Bicester, provided that there is a way of crossing Skimmingdish Lane safely.
 - c. If access to Gavray Meadows could be provided, this would bring 617 buildings within 300m of a natural green space (although 449 of these are within 300m of amenity green space at Langford Meadows).
2. **Enhancing existing natural green space.** The public mapping survey revealed problems with the two existing natural green spaces at Bure Park and Charbridge Way. Comments for Bure Park included 'Bure Park is not great for wildlife any more - too surrounded by houses'; 'dogs on the loose scare away the wildlife'; 'it would be good to get the waterways and lakes clean to encourage more birds to come to the nature park'; and 'not a good nature reserve - too managed and manicured'. SEMLEP funding could play a part in enhancing wildlife habitats here. For Charbridge Way, comments included 'Access is unclear and it is unsafe for children and recreation - factory waste goes straight into the stream; isolated, noisy, dirty'; and 'seems to be a clash between recreation (quad bikes) and wildlife here'. Although it is mainly surrounded by commercial facilities and therefore plays a lesser role in providing local natural green space for people, it could be an important link in the wider network of green spaces for both recreation and wildlife, if problems such as pollution from the industrial estate are tackled.
 3. **Protecting and enhancing smaller green spaces in west Bicester.** Residents of west Bicester lack access to larger areas of green space and so are very dependent on the network of small green spaces in the Avon Crescent and Shakespeare Drive area. Comments show that these spaces are highly valued but they are under threat from speculative developers, e.g. trees have been felled in the Avon Crescent area, and there are also problems with litter and broken glass in the Shakespeare Drive green spaces.
 4. **Upgrading amenity green spaces to natural green spaces.** Launton Road Park, Southwold Amenity Green Space and Langford Meadows could be enhanced to give more 'natural' characteristics and wildlife habitat, such as natural grassland, woodland and shrubs. This would help to tackle the deficit in natural green space in areas not close to Bure Park and Charbridge Way. However, there still needs to be adequate provision of 'amenity' areas for those who value short grass for informal sport and play, or those who prefer a more manicured appearance. For this reason we have not suggested 'naturalising' Garth Park, as this is the only formal park / garden in the area.
 5. **Providing new large natural green spaces.** The new Burnehyll community woodland will be within 2km of 43% of the houses in Bicester. The new country park planned for NW Bicester Eco-town is around 17 ha, and will cover a further 17% of properties. This still leaves 40% of Bicester residents over 2km from a large green space. However, if access could be provided to the local wildlife site at Gavray Meadows then this would cover all the remaining properties so that every household in Bicester would be within 2km of a large natural green space (Figure 14). Although the main part of Gavray is only 15 ha, it could be linked with Langford Meadows (15 ha) or with the proposed Ray Meadows wildlife corridor to create a much larger area.

Figure 14: Providing access to larger areas of natural green space in Bicester (within 2 km)



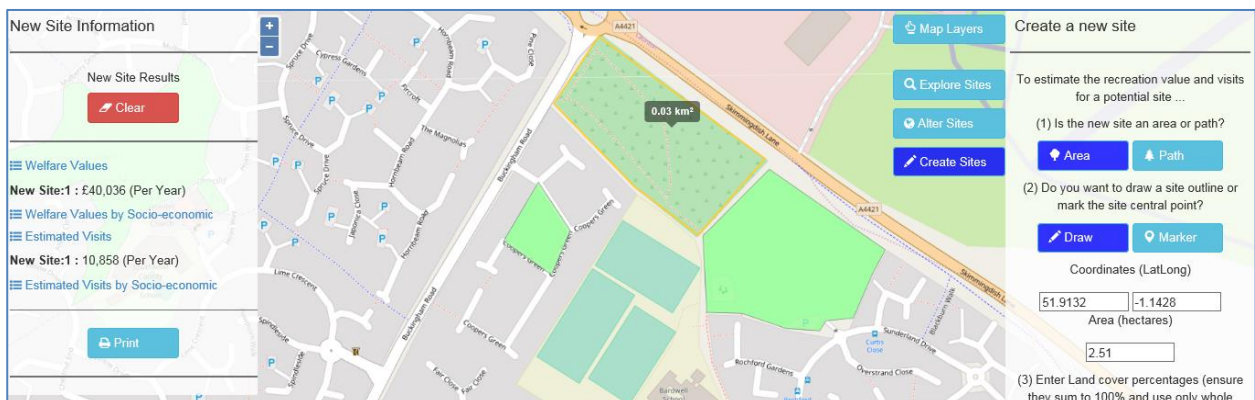
6. **Improving connected networks of green space.** Linking smaller green spaces together can help to satisfy the unmet need for larger areas of green space. The public mapping work also recorded strong demand for better-connected walking and cycling routes and better road crossings, e.g. ‘it would be great to have an even greater cycling network to be able to get out further into the countryside rather than be restricted to reserves or cycle paths around busy traffic areas’. Specific potential opportunities have been identified from the map (**Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**), though some of these may already have current or planned crossing points:
- a. linking the new green spaces planned in NW Bicester to Bure Park, Burnehyll woodland and the Shakespeare Drive area, via safe crossings of the ring road (e.g. green bridges or tunnels);
 - b. ensuring that the planned park and ride development on the A41 at the east end of Burnehyll woodland allows a wildlife corridor and road crossing to help link the woodland to the Graven Hill area and the wetland reserve;
 - c. Providing a walking / cycling route along Howes Lane which currently has no pavement (in the long term, this may be achieved via the plans for road realignment in that part of NW Bicester);
 - d. Providing better and safer crossing points over Middleton Stoney Road to link Kingsmere with the rest of Bicester, including at the Pingle Brook crossing point, at the end of the Kennedy Way green space and across the A41 onto the Pingle Drive green space.
 - e. Ensuring that there are pleasant and well-signposted walking routes between Bicester and the surrounding villages (Chesterfield, Ambrosden, Launton, Caversfield and Bucknell). There could be opportunities to create a round-Bicester walking route, e.g. by filling in missing links such as around Bicester airfield to Stratton Audley Local Wildlife Site. There was specific demand for a buggy-friendly route from Chesterfield to Bicester town centre.

Figure 15: Potentially important links and crossing points to create green space networks



We used ORVal to estimate the recreational benefits of some of these options: £40,000 per year for the 2.5 ha Skimmingdish Lane site (assuming land cover of 10% marsh, 80% natural grass and 10% woodland), (Figure 16), £67,000 per year for the 14 ha Gavray Meadows site and £100,000 per year for Burnehyll. We could use other tools (GI-Val / iTree) to assess additional benefits such as carbon storage, flood protection and air quality regulation, and there would also be considerable biodiversity benefits.

Figure 16: Using ORVal to estimate the recreational value of the Skimmingdish Lane site



Conclusion

We have used a range of methods to assess the demand for green space in Bicester. A public survey showed that Bicester residents value their green space very highly, identifying a wide range of benefits for health, wellbeing, local identity, connection to nature and community cohesion. The ORVal tool, developed by Exeter University and Defra, estimates that Bicester’s green spaces attract over 400,000 visits per year,

with an estimated welfare value of £1.6 million per year. However, some parts of Bicester (especially north-east and central) lack easy access to natural green spaces over 2 hectares, and all parts currently lack access to larger areas of natural green space (over 20 hectares). In addition, factors such as litter, lack of connected routes or poor signposting block access to the benefits of green space in several areas. Based on these findings, we have identified some options that could help to tackle these problems and ensure that all Bicester residents have access to a network of high quality green space that meets their needs for recreation, health and wellbeing.

This analysis is not complete because it focuses primarily on the value of natural green space for recreation and contact with nature. CDC's ongoing update to their Open Space survey could help to complement this with an analysis of needs for other types of space (allotments, sports fields etc). We also aim to produce further analysis of the potential to create connected networks of green space for wildlife, as well as further work on valuing the other benefits of green space such as for carbon storage, air quality regulation and flood regulation.

Appendix 1

Number of people mentioning different activities in Bicester's green spaces

Activity	Number of people mentioning the activity
walking	45
playing	32
viewing nature	25
dog walking	23
watching wildlife	21
cycling	19
running	19
socialising	11
viewing from inside	8
volunteering	7
football	7
other	56
visiting cafe	6
birdfeeding	5
environmental education	5
sitting	4
picking berries	3
picnic	3
growing food	3
listening	3
reading	3
skating	3
visiting historical sites	2
watching gliders	2
relaxing	2
basketball	2
outdoor gym	2
bug collecting	2
drone photography	1
organised activities	1
fishing	1
Tennis	1
kite flying	1
tree climbing	1

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



Be part of
**NATURE'S
RECOVERY**

**Your local Wildlife Trust's vision for the natural environment
in Berks, Bucks and Oxon by 2030**

Who we are

The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust, BBOWT

is the only membership organisation in the three counties that protects wildlife and the places where it thrives, encourages people to discover their local nature reserves, and understands the value of the health and economic benefits of wildlife.

BBOWT is

52,000 members

1,450 volunteers

46 local groups

£5.4m turnover

88 nature reserves

4 environmental education centres

3 Living Landscape schemes

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Our Vision

An environment rich in wildlife, valued by all.

Our Mission

To create a Living Landscape across our towns, cities and countryside and inspire our communities to act for nature.

Our Aim

To lead the way for nature's recovery and connect people with nature, so that:

- Our soil and water resources are managed to create functioning ecosystems and wildlife-rich places.
- Local communities, decision-makers, landowners and businesses work with and for nature.
- People recognise their dependence upon nature and its value to their mental and physical wellbeing.

Cover Image: We will connect people and nature. Matthew Roberts. Brown hare by Richard Bowler



NATURE'S RECOVERY

We will bring nature into urban areas.
Taylor Wimpey

Message from the CEO and Chair

This Strategic Plan for 2016-2021 sets out an exciting new approach for the work of the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust. Never has it been more important to be ambitious and focused in our work.

The Plan is designed to **restore nature** so that our wildlife habitats are 'more, bigger, better and joined'. A new goal has been set to increase the area of unprotected wildlife-rich land in our three counties from 6.9% to 10% by 2030. A healthy natural environment is not only good for wildlife but provides us with clean water, pollinates our crops, conserves soils, and reduces flooding.

Even this is not enough. We also need to **get people involved** and empower them to take action for wildlife. We will inspire more people of all ages and backgrounds to understand and value the natural world.

Central to the Plan is the urgent need to build **more strong partnerships** to make this vision a reality: farmers, house-builders, construction firms, water and energy companies, health and education providers, local authorities, other charities, government agencies and more.

We are committed to ensuring we **build up our abilities** so that BBOWT can succeed and stays relevant to a changing society and changing economic landscape. We will do all we can to ensure that people recognise and **value nature's benefits** to society and the economy. Over the next five years, with the support of our loyal members, BBOWT will play a leading role in securing an environment rich in wildlife, valued by all.

Society is changing and so are we

Portraits: Ric Mellis



Estelle Bailey

Estelle Bailey
Chief Executive



Clive Booth

Sir Clive Booth
Chair

More, bigger, better and joined

Healthy for wildlife, healthy for people

You might ask why nature needs to recover in the first place. The answer is that our three counties have suffered 70 years of habitat destruction. New houses and roads have gobbled up land. And there are 100,000 more homes to come in this area. Unsustainable farming has depleted soils, wiped out a lot of our wildlife and made flooding worse.

We can't put all this damage right, but there are many places left where small changes in management would allow large areas of land

to function more naturally. And that would benefit not just wildlife, but all of us as well.

Large-scale scientific studies show that nearby nature makes us happier, healthier, and more relaxed. It's hardly surprising; after all we have evolved to feel secure in resource-rich environments.

So what would it be like, living near a nature restoration area?

In essence it would be a return to the quantity and variety of wildlife everyone took for granted 100 years ago. Whether walking in town or country you'd see more wild flowers, hedgerows, meadows and ponds. You'd almost certainly notice more birds, bees and butterflies visiting your garden.

There might be wildlife-rich areas set aside for rivers to flood into, and wildlife-friendly planting at your place of work. Your children might even know more names of flowers and

butterflies than you. The science predicts a whole range of more subtle effects too: less obesity, illness and depression. Which means more days when you feel great.

It won't happen everywhere, but it's a start. **The next few pages show the five Themed Actions we will take to deliver the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust's Strategic Plan 2016 – 2021.**

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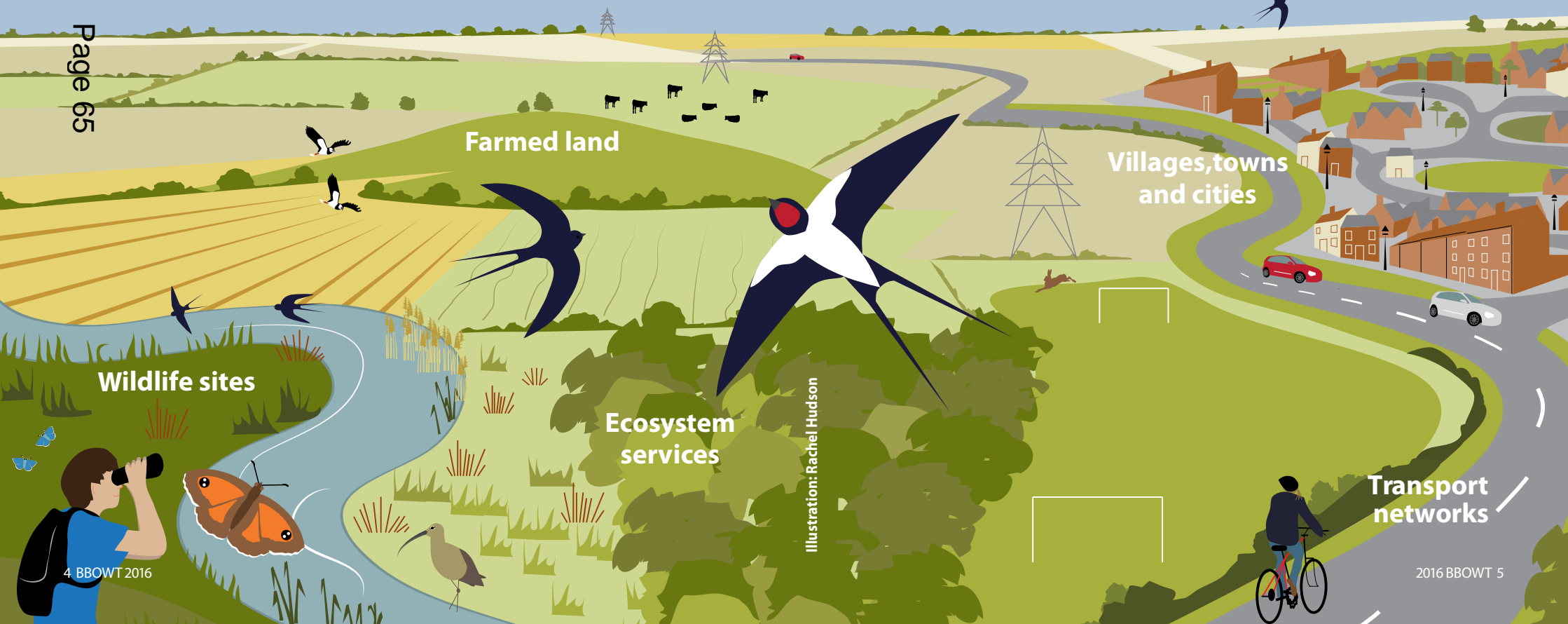


Illustration: Rachel Hudson

1

Restore nature

Today we manage 88 nature reserves covering over 2,500 hectares. These are natural havens where wildlife thrives and spreads into the wider landscape when conditions are favourable. We will ensure the reserves continue to flourish.

We will continue to use the principle championed by Professor Sir John Lawton of 'More, bigger, better and joined' to create three new Living Landscape areas to protect and improve biodiversity and habitats for wildlife.

BBOWT will stand up for wildlife, fighting to protect areas recognised for their wildlife value: nationally these are Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and locally, Local Wildlife Sites. We will work with partners to improve the wildlife value of land beyond these protected areas, in ways that improve the ecological networks across our region.

Through careful management of soil and water resources these networks will be more resilient to the extremes of weather and rising temperatures resulting from climate change, bringing wider benefits to society.

We will

- Continue to invest in our current estate and Living Landscape projects, and establish the Upper Thames Vision as an exemplar project.
- Fight to defend areas protected for their wildlife value.
- Work with landowners beyond those areas to improve the wildlife richness of our countryside.



At a glance

Beyond areas already protected:

8% of land rich in wildlife by 2020

10% rich in wildlife by 2030

6 Living Landscape schemes in rural and urban areas

West Berkshire Living Landscape - more than 65,000 people currently live within six miles of here.

Rob Appleby

2

Get people involved

We will make it easier for people and communities from all backgrounds to visit and cherish their local nature reserves, local green spaces and Living Landscapes.

We will build on successful urban projects in Oxford and West Berkshire to connect with communities that are traditionally less engaged in our work.

Thousands of people already visit our nature reserves every year. Some of them take part in events and conservation activities. Others quietly enjoy the environment and species they find there. All derive great benefits to their health and wellbeing. We want this to continue.

Today more than 12,000 schoolchildren visit our sites each year. Over the next five years we will ensure more schoolchildren and young people experience nature and wildlife. Giving young people healthy, natural experiences builds their confidence and sense of responsibility.

We will

- Take Living Landscapes into Reading, Slough and Milton Keynes, by establishing partnerships with local communities and businesses to make more green spaces for people and wildlife.
- Improve the attractiveness of our visitor centres while ensuring they remain important resources to learn about nature. Establish a new wildlife centre in Oxfordshire.
- Continue to engage and educate everyone about nature, particularly young people.



Who knows the value of awakening a sense of wonder?
Ric Mellis

By 2021

20,000 people taking action directly for wildlife

50,000 schoolchildren visiting our education centres

40,000 high quality volunteering experiences

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Volunteers just love volunteering.
Jess Gallagher

Enjoying local, urban green spaces.
Eleanor Church



Valuing nature's benefits

We will only make real progress with Restoring Nature when wildlife and ecosystem services provided by the natural world are recognised and valued by landowners, decision-makers, planners, developers and the NHS.

We will build on BBOWT's strengths to work with utilities, food and technology businesses, and retailers, to help them recognise the true value of natural capital in their processes.

We will work with public health bodies to ensure the 'natural health service' is available for everyone visiting our nature reserves and their local green spaces. We will work with decision-makers in local authorities who can influence the integration of natural green spaces within all forms of new development.

We will

- Develop new ways to value ecosystem services, and improve our understanding of climate change impacts to build resilience into our activities.
- Work with partners on a shared agenda for natural green spaces in the built environment.
- Increase opportunities for local influencers to work with BBOWT to make more spaces for nature and people where they live.

By 2021

40,000 people attending community events, courses & activities

10 new schemes integrating wildlife with development

2,500 people engaging in activities in nature to benefit their health

4

More strong partnerships

Achieving our Strategic Plan will require more strong partnerships. Businesses, local authorities and politicians increasingly recognise the need to help with nature's recovery; we will inspire more to do so and to act with urgency. BBOWT provides an unmatched knowledge of local ecology, the impacts of our activities for wildlife and where solutions lie. Nature's recovery will depend on BBOWT joining up with those able to make a positive impact, as we're doing already with The Crown Estate, Thames Water and The Parks Trust, among many others.

We will

- Partner with developers and local authorities to create more natural green spaces in built environments.
- Work with companies and organisations to ensure ecosystem services are fully integrated with development proposals.
- Continue to campaign and advocate for wildlife locally and nationally.



NATURE'S RECOVERY



BBOWT staff and volunteers are our greatest asset, and we will invest in them.
Alison Blaney

5

Build up our abilities

Everything BBOWT does depends on the organisation being efficient, financially robust, and well-led and governed. We will inspire our 130 staff and 1,450 volunteers, giving them the practical support to realise their potential, and better coordinate and streamline our work.

A new commercial approach to trading, ecological consultancy and land management will bring in new income.

We will

- Ensure BBOWT has the appropriate resources, systems and governance processes in line with national fundraising standards.
- Invest in supporting and equipping our staff and volunteers to deliver the Strategic Plan 2016-2021.
- Seek income from new sources and manage our assets more efficiently.



By 2021

Even stronger financial base

More diverse board of trustees

Every member of staff and every volunteer empowered to realise their full potential

By 2021

150 partners working with BBOWT for nature restoration

60 decision-makers making positive impacts for wildlife

All 21 of our MPs aware of nature's needs and people's needs for nature in their constituencies



Working together for nature's recovery: Thames Water and BBOWT discuss future plans at Farmoor Reservoir, Oxfordshire. Ric Mellis



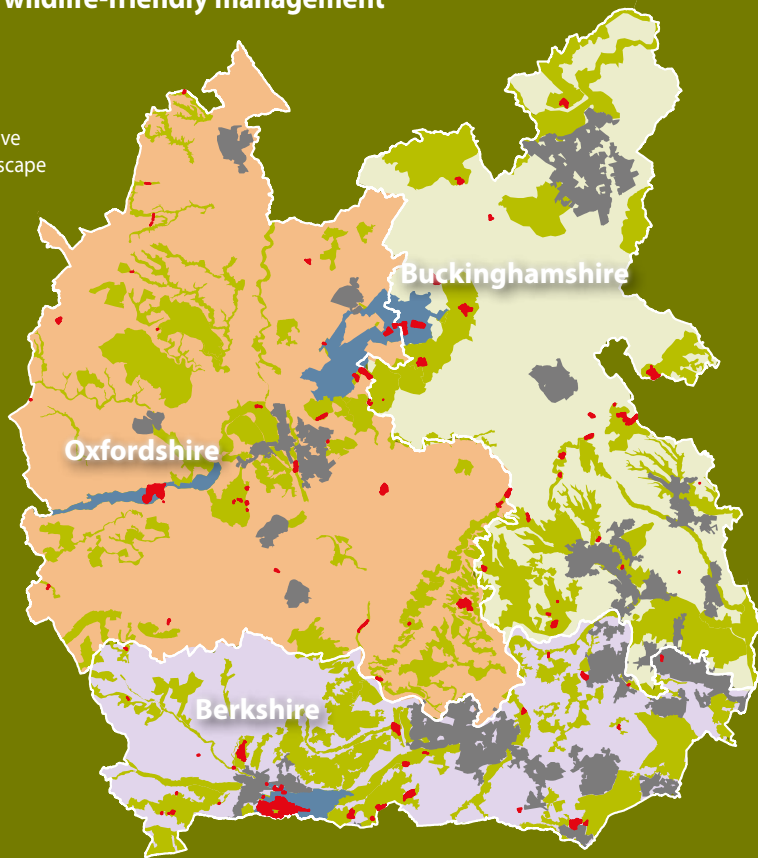
Where nature could return

Studies of our three counties show the areas most likely to benefit from wildlife-friendly management

Key

- BBOWT nature reserve
- BBOWT Living Landscape
- Urban area
- Potential nature restoration area

This map shows which parts of our three counties are most suitable for creating networks for nature.



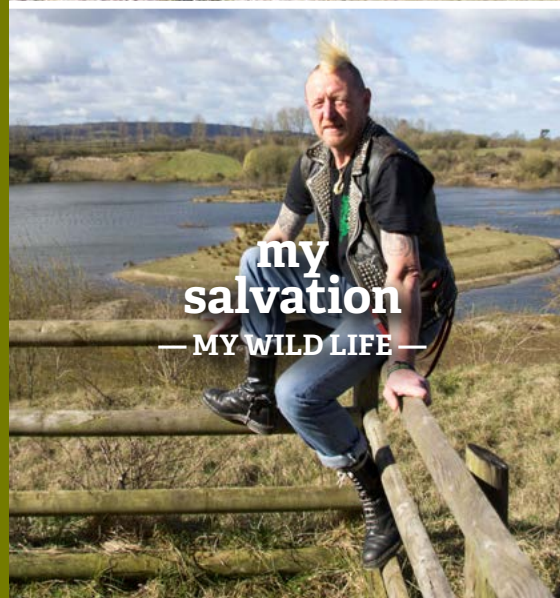
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Our goal

By 2030 we will have **increased the area** of unprotected wildlife-rich land in our three counties from 6.9% to 10%.

And we will have **expanded our reach** into local communities to bring wildlife into people's lives.

All our lives are better when they're a bit wild



Join us Be part of nature's recovery!

To deliver our Strategic Plan we need a wide range of partners. Please contact us to find out how you can make a positive difference for wildlife and people.

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The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) is one of 47 Wildlife Trusts across the UK working to bring about nature's recovery, and to reconnect people to the natural world.

Registered Charity Number: 204330
Company Registered Number: 00680007

Working together with our partners,
we will lead the way for nature's recovery.
Jess Gallagher

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