

Protecting and Enhancing Cherwell's Natural Environment

Draft Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan

2015-2016



Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

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- Page 3
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Bluebell Wood – credit David Rees
- Page 4 - Daedas Wood Bat Box Project – credit Paul Jarczewski (Woodland Trust)
- Page 9 – Reedbed at Otmoor – credit Colin Wilkinson (RSPB)
- Page 12 – Pond Dipping, Warriner School Farm – credit Beverley James

**PROTECTING AND ENHANCING CHERWELL'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
CORPORATE BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN
2015-2016**

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Corporate Vision

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

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. 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.

Cherwell's biodiversity resource 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 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 Natural Environment 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/naturalenvironment

Hard copies of this document can be provided by contacting the Council's Countryside and Conservation Officer on 01295 221707



Daeda's Wood Bat Box Project

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is to demonstrate 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),

It also sets out 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”

The Corporate BAP is reviewed and updated annually.

1.2 BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES

Biodiversity 2020 is a national strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services which was published in 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 (see downloads at www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment)

The Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan is based on Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) in the County. The CTAs include the most important areas for priority habitats and provide a focus for where conservation efforts can be most effective. The CTAs are currently being updated as part of a new Oxfordshire Biodiversity 2020 Strategy. This is being led by Wild Oxfordshire, an organisation that co-ordinates the County’s Local Nature Partnership.

1.3 BIODIVERSITY LEGISLATION AND POLICY

Protecting and enhancing biodiversity has become 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 National Planning Policy Framework, the Water Framework Directive and guidance relating to biodiversity 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.

Guidance relating to biodiversity legislation and planning policy, and how these apply to important sites, habitats and species, is available in a comprehensive document “Biodiversity and Planning in Oxfordshire” This is available under downloads at www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment

1.4 BIODIVERSITY AND THE PLANNING PROCESS

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.

The **Cherwell Local Plan**, once adopted, will set the broad planning framework for meeting the future needs of the District. It includes detailed biodiversity, conservation target area and green infrastructure policies. All policies in the Submission Local Plan relating to the natural environment can be seen in downloads at www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) took full effect in March 2013. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. It is described as a key part of the Government's reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, to protect the environment and to promote sustainable growth. The NPPF includes three dimensions to sustainable development which the planning system needs to perform – economic, social and environmental. The environmental role is described as “contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy” (para 7).

Section 11 (paras 109-125) is entitled ‘Conserving and enhancing the natural environment’ and includes reference to providing net gains for biodiversity where possible, protection and enhancement of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure, promoting priority habitats and species and the importance of ecosystem services and soils. To view this full section, see downloads at www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment

There is an emphasis within the new framework on local planning authorities creating local policy and guidance which both reflects the NPPF and, at the same time, the needs and priorities of their communities. Neighbourhood planning legislation came into effect in April 2012 which aims to give communities more control over the development of their local area. Local planning authorities must provide support to help people produce their neighbourhood development plan. Some draft guidance has been produced to advise on biodiversity and neighbourhood planning (see downloads at www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment)

British Standard 42020 is a code of practice for biodiversity in planning and development. It requires integration of biodiversity into all stages of the planning process from before application for permission to construction. Relevant Council Officers attended an introductory workshop in September 2014; and the review of the validation checklist and planning conditions relating to biodiversity is a specific target in this document (see Section 8, Action 1.2.1, page 16).

2. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WHITE PAPER

2.1 **'The Natural Choice'**, the first White Paper on the natural environment in 20 years, 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. The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has published a briefing note explaining the implications of the White Paper for local authorities – (see downloads at www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment).

2.2 **Key issues** within the Natural Environment White Paper include -

2.2.1 **Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs)** – encouraging new and existing local partnerships to integrate action, and work with local authorities to identify opportunities to protect and improve nature at a local level. There is a duty for local authorities to co-operate with all recognized LNPs

*Oxfordshire's Local Nature Partnership is co-ordinated by **Wild Oxfordshire**. Its role is to help the local area to manage the natural environment as a system and to embed its value in local decisions for the benefit of nature, people and the economy. Wild Oxfordshire is facilitating a successful partnership with three main areas of focus – sustainable land management, green economic growth and quality of life/local health and wellbeing.*

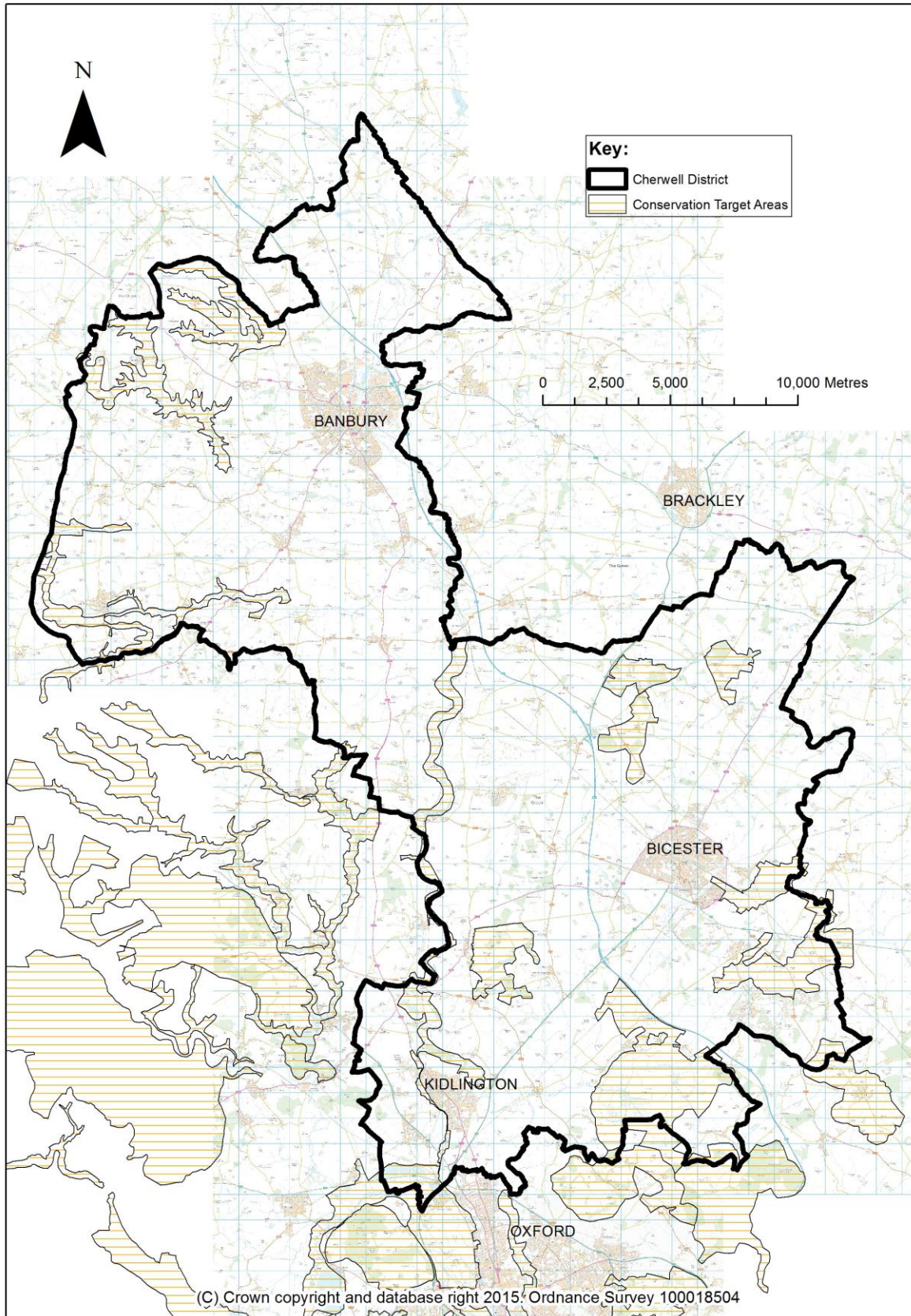
2.2.2 **Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs)** – encouraging local partnerships to set up Nature Improvement Areas where there are significant opportunities to enhance and reconnect nature

Although none of the proposals relating to Oxfordshire went forward as one of the 12 NIA pilot projects, priority areas - Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) - have already been identified in the County (see Figure 1). Wild Oxfordshire co-ordinates the CTA project and most of the environmental organisations that CDC supports contribute to the maintenance, restoration and creation of priority habitats within CTAs. See Section 4 of this document for more information about the Council's biodiversity partners.

2.2.3 **Biodiversity Offsetting** – defined as a proposed approach to compensate for habitats and species lost to development in one area, with the creation, enhancement or restoration of habitat in another. Under this system, any negative impacts on the natural environment would then be compensated for, or 'offset', by developers. The Government published a Green Paper on biodiversity offsetting in September 2013. The results of various pilot schemes are yet to be published

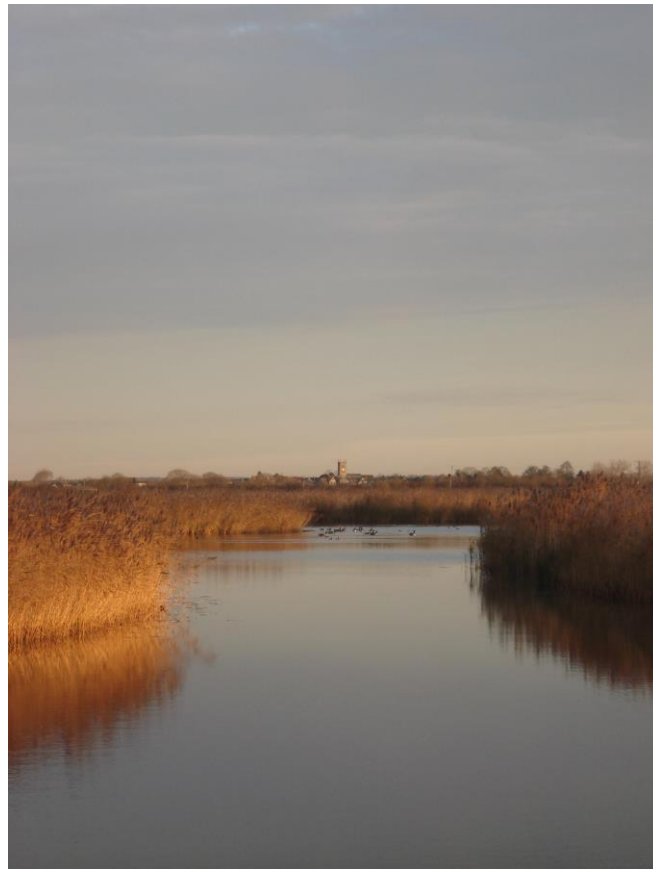
The NW Bicester ecotown is the first development in the District that has used the DEFRA metric to demonstrate how the scheme can achieve net biodiversity gain. As part of this, the need for an offsite compensation scheme relating to loss of farmland bird habitat was identified and has been agreed

Figure 1 – Conservation Target Areas (May 2015)



3. CHERWELL'S BIODIVERSITY RESOURCE

- 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 illustrated in Figure 2.
- 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). 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. More information about the 'Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and CTAs' can be found in downloads at www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturaleenvironment
- 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 both environmental and social benefits. Such benefits include conserving and enhancing biodiversity as well as improving the health and wellbeing of people and the economy. Conservation Target Areas form an important component of the green infrastructure network of the District. Securing adequate green infrastructure is an important component of achieving sustainable communities.



Reedbed at Otmoor

Figure 2 – Biodiversity Resource (August 2014)

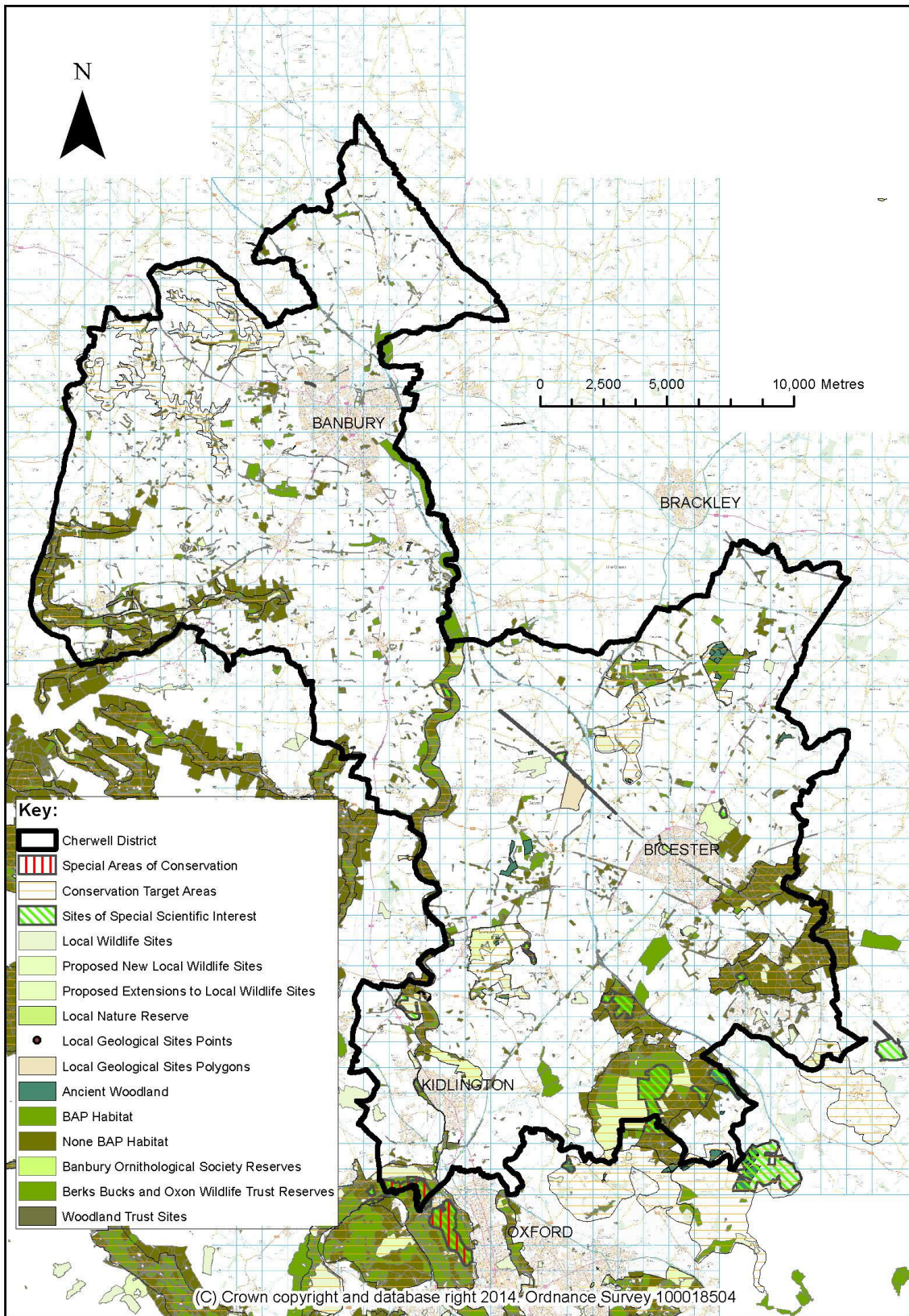
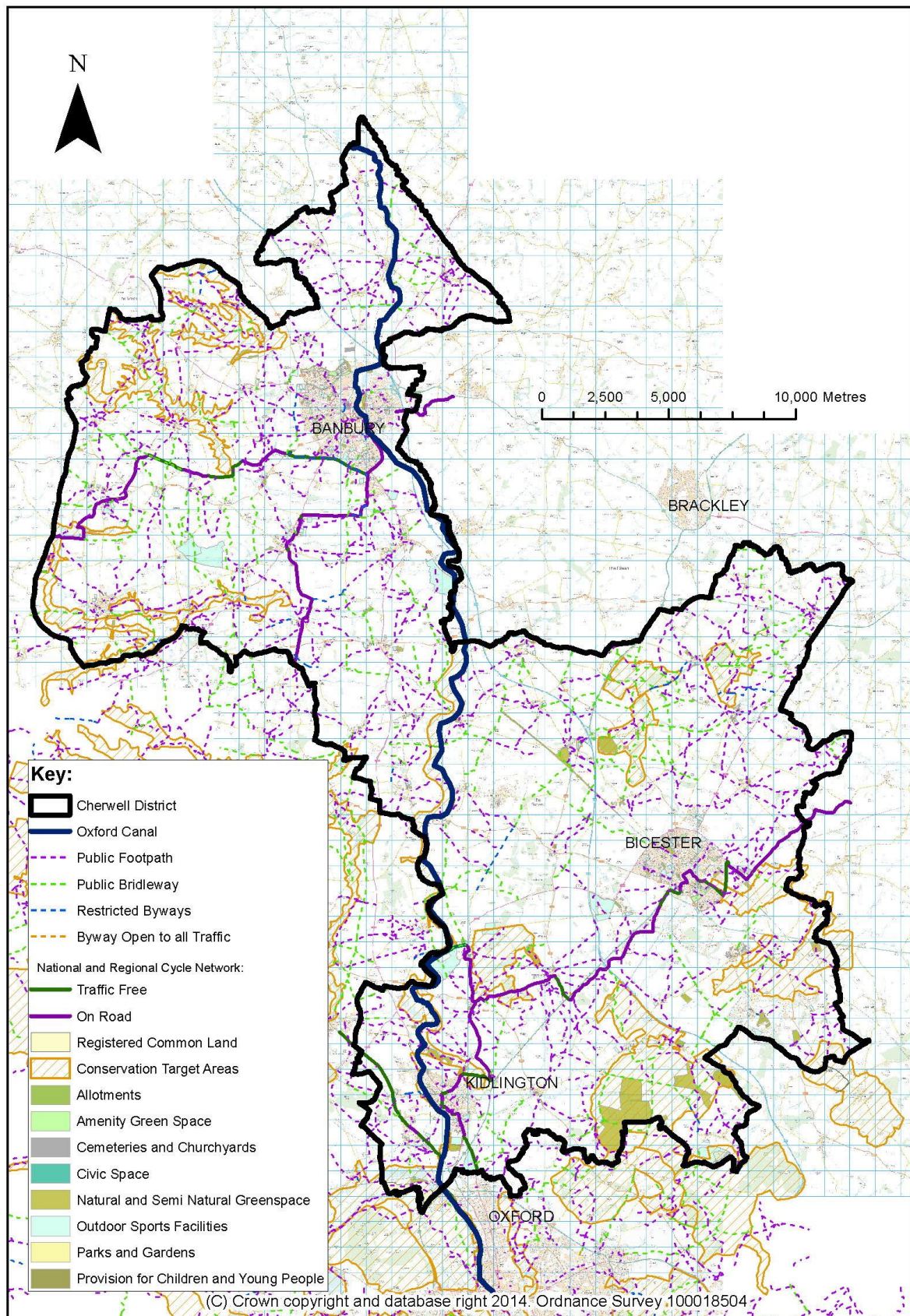


Figure 3 – Green Infrastructure (August 2014)



4. BIODIVERSITY PARTNERS

- 4.1 The delivery of the Corporate BAP relies heavily on partnership work. The Council supports five main environmental organisations with annual funding in accordance with service level agreements. These organisations provide progress reports during and at the end of each year which are published on the Council's biodiversity partners webpage – see www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment
- 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 using aerial photography and survey work to assess habitat condition. TVERC also reports on Local Plan indicators, information which is required for the Council's Annual Monitoring Report.
- 4.3 **Wild Oxfordshire** co-ordinates the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership; champions the natural environment through continuing engagement with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and is currently contributing to a County/LEP Strategic Environment and Economic Investment Plan; leads on partnership work to maintain and improve the District's Conservation Target Areas which are used as a planning focus for biodiversity improvement; and delivers 'Biodiversity and Planning' related talks to local communities.
- 4.4 **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. This is important as LWS designation is a constraint in the planning process.
- 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.
- 4.6 A successful programme of primary school visits about the importance of the natural environment as a food source, for its health benefits and for its intrinsic value was delivered in 2014/15 by **Warriner School Farm**. This will be expanded in 2015/16 to include youth group visits such as cubs, brownies and youth clubs.



Pond dipping, Warriner School Farm

5. CHERWELL PLANS, PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES

- 5.1 The **Council's Business Plan 2015/16** includes the delivery of a Corporate BAP as a specific objective - "Deliver the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan "Protecting and Enhancing Cherwell's Natural Environment"
- 5.2 The **Submission Cherwell Local Plan Part 1** (as modified February 2015) includes policies specifically relating to biodiversity, green infrastructure and Conservation Target Areas.
- 5.3 **Local Plan Part 2** will include additional policies and planning guidance to supplement Local Plan Part 1 policies The **2010 Sustainable Community Strategy** reports that the quality of the natural environment is one of the features that the people in Cherwell value most; and includes priority actions for biodiversity under its third ambition "Connected and protected – our infrastructure and environment in 2030"

SCS3.9f - Link in with existing Biodiversity Action Plans and support the active encouragement of the protection and enhancement of the natural environment

SCS3.10b - Work to protect our environment and biodiversity by supporting farmers, land owners, volunteers and local businesses

SCS3.LB2 – Bicester – to demonstrate exemplary environmental and social practice in managing growth

SCS3.LR4 – Rural – Supporting rural land managers to adapt to the impacts of climate change

- 5.4 The **2012 Low Carbon Environmental Strategy** recognises the important role that the natural environment plays in capturing and storing carbon, therefore reducing the amount being added to atmospheric CO₂ concentrations which are causing climate to change.

6. CORPORATE BAP DELIVERY

- 6.1 To reflect all these expectations and evolving issues, the Council's approach to protecting and enhancing biodiversity within the Cherwell District is summarised below:
- An annual Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) will be produced to set out and monitor the Council's compliance with the NERC Act Duty and other legislative and policy requirements
 - A review of the previous year's Corporate BAP will be included within the current year's Action Plan
 - The Council's key policies relating to biodiversity will be included in the Local Plan and relevant Council Strategies
 - The Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (and the evolving Oxfordshire Biodiversity 2020 Strategy), delivered through the Conservation Target Area project, will be supported through the funding of a number of partner organisations
 - Wild Oxfordshire (co-ordinator of Oxfordshire's Local Nature Partnership) will be a key partner and relevant projects will be supported.

7. 2014-2015 REVIEW

Aims, actions and targets are divided into **five main themes**. Highlights and some areas of limited progress are listed below and expanded on within the Action Plan tables which follow on the next page.

7.1 Planning and Sustainable Development

a) Planning Policy

- Submission Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 (as modified February 2015) includes robust policies relating to biodiversity, green infrastructure and
- Conservation Target Areas
- Updated and improved digital dataset illustrating the habitat resource of the whole District is now available as an evidence base

b) Development Control

- 535 planning applications assessed in 2014/15 by Ecology Officer (78% increase from 2013/14)
- NW Bicester ecotown development is the first in the District to use a DEFRA metric to demonstrate how the scheme can achieve net biodiversity gain. The need for an offsite compensation scheme relating to loss of farmland bird habitat has been identified, agreed but not yet secured
- British Standard 42020 workshop organised in partnership with Wild Oxfordshire – involved 6 CDC Officers plus planners/ecologists from BBOWT, West Oxfordshire District Council, Warwickshire County Council and South Northants District Council

c) Council Strategies and Services

- No Council or LSP strategies published requiring biodiversity policies

7.2 Land and buildings management

- Wet grassland habitat for lapwing, snipe, curlew and redshank has been restored through providing management advice to local farmers in the Ray and Cherwell Valleys (in partnership with RSPB)
- A second bat box project has been established in Grimsbury Wood (the first was established in Kirtlington Quarry in 2012)

7.3 Council owned and managed land/buildings

- Cherwell Build has included swift and bat boxes in many of its projects
- Progress is being made on the improved management of priority habitat at Enslow Marsh (leased by CDC from the Canal & Rivers Trust)
- Assessment of the tower at Trow Pool (owned by CDC) for provision of artificial nesting sites not yet achieved

7.4 Green Infrastructure

- Conservation Target Areas continue to be the focus of partnership work. See biodiversity partners' progress reports – www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment

7.5 Health, Wellbeing, Economy and Education

- £31,000 has been confirmed for a project based in Spiceball Park in Banbury from the Environment Agency Catchment Restoration Fund
- Staff and funding support were given to the successful 2014 Oxfordshire Goes Wild event held at Bure Park school in Bicester.

8. 2015-2016 AIMS, ACTIONS AND TARGETS

Some actions and targets have changed from the 2014-2015 Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan. Where this is the case, the 2014/15 actions and/or targets have been specified and reviewed in the last column of the tables below.

Theme 1: Planning and Sustainable Development

(a) Planning Policy Context

- Conserving and enhancing biodiversity are important elements of sustainable development. The Submission Local Plan includes strategic policies relating to ecology and biodiversity, green infrastructure and conservation target areas that will 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. The importance of ecosystem services and soils are also specifically noted (Para 109)
- The NPPF recognises the importance of good evidence and data for decision-making (Paras 167 and 188-192).

Aim	2015-2016 Action	Measure/Target	2014-2015 Review
1.1 Ensure protection, management and opportunities for enhancement and extension of biodiversity are taken into account in the preparation and implementation of the Local Plan	1.1.1 Include policies and proposals relating to biodiversity, green infrastructure (GI) and Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) in all relevant Local Plan documents	<p>Policies/proposals to be included in the Cherwell Local Plan</p> <p>Supplementary planning guidance relating to biodiversity to be included in all relevant Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)</p>	<p><i>Relevant policies included in the Submission Local Plan Part 1 (as modified February 2015)</i></p> <p><i>Work on these planning documents will be progressed in 2015/16, including Local Plan Part 2 and the Sustainable Buildings in Cherwell SPD</i></p>
	1.1.2 Support the provision of high quality, up to date biodiversity information and evidence required by the Local Plan process through funding biodiversity partners	<p>Collation, analysis and supply of data from TVERC associated with Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)</p> <p>Supply of ecological constraint GIS layers from TVERC required for planning projects and site assessments</p>	<p><i>TVERC data supplied in October for the AMR</i></p> <p><i>TVERC data supplied in July 2014 (swifts, protected/notable species and BAP habitats as part of whole District mapping project), January 2015 (BAP habitats and whole District mapping project), February 2015 (protected/notable species) and March 2015 (Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites).</i></p>

Aim	2015-2016 Action	Measure/Target	2014-2015 Review
1.1 contd Ensure protection, management and opportunities for enhancement and extension of biodiversity are taken into account in the preparation and implementation of the Local Plan	1.1.2 contd Support the provision of high quality, up to date biodiversity information and evidence required by the Local Plan process through funding biodiversity partners	TVERC to deliver District Wildlife Sites Project 2015 (sites identified in 2013 mapping project) New target for 2015/16 Wild Oxfordshire to review and update Conservation Target Area boundaries New target for 2015/16 BBOWT to provide Single Data List report (LWS Project) associated with AMR New target for 2015/16	2014/15 target <i>Supply of an updated and improved digital dataset illustrating the habitat resource of the District</i> 2014/15 update <i>Final report and data received in July 2014.</i>

(b) Development Management Context

- 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.
- British Standard (BS) 42020 has been recently developed to provide clear guidance to ensure that actions and decisions taken at each stage of the planning process are informed by sufficient and appropriate ecological information.

Aim	2015-2016 Action	Measure/Target	2014-15 Review
1.2 Incorporate biodiversity management into each stage of the planning process	1.2.1 Work towards achieving British Standard 42020 – a code of practice for biodiversity in planning and development	Review validation checklist and biodiversity planning conditions	2014/15 target <i>Establish a protocol relating to ecology and planning consultations</i> 2014/15 update <i>First opportunity will be to review validation checklist and planning conditions in 2015</i>
1.3 A net gain in biodiversity will be sought when considering proposals for development by protecting, managing, enhancing and extending existing resources	1.3.1 Screen all planning applications with regard to their impact on important sites, habitats and species	Ecology Officer to be consulted whenever important sites, habitats and species are affected	<i>Planning application checklist which includes all protected sites, habitats and species and some additional constraint information (eg swifts, District Wildlife Sites) is used by all Registration Officers</i>

<p>1.3 contd A net gain in biodiversity will be sought when considering proposals for development by protecting, managing, enhancing and extending existing resources</p>	<p>1.3.2 Assess planning applications that impact upon important sites, habitats and species with regard to relevant biodiversity legislation/policy</p>	<p>Comments to be sent to relevant Planning Officer within required timescale</p> <p>Assessment to be made of need for additional staff resource</p> <p>New target for 2015/16</p>	<p><i>535 planning applications have been assessed by the Council's Ecology Officer with regard to relevant biodiversity legislation/policy</i></p>
	<p>1.3.3 Assess the impact of the NW Bicester ecotown on important sites, habitats and species with regard to relevant biodiversity legislation/policy</p>	<p>Secure biodiversity net gain</p> <p>Ensure that all planning applications accord with relevant development requirements and principles set out in the draft NW Bicester SPD</p> <p>New target for 2015/16</p>	<p>2014/15 target <i>Play an active role in the Landscape/Green Infrastructure (GI) workstream's contribution to masterplanning of the wider site</i></p> <p>2014/15 update <i>Supported the Biodiversity Working Group in its contribution to masterplanning of the wider site</i></p> <p>2014/15 target <i>Biodiversity Strategy/Ecology and Landscape Management Plan (ELMP) for the wider site to be provided</i></p> <p>2014/15 update <i>A Biodiversity Strategy has been provided (Appendix 6J of Environmental Statement, August 2014). ELMPs will be required as part of each planning application relating to the wider site</i></p> <p>2014/15 target <i>Ensure that all relevant surveys for the exemplar development and wider site are sufficiently current</i></p> <p>2014/15 update <i>Walkover surveys were carried out relating to the exemplar development prior to commencement to ensure original surveys remained appropriate. For the wider site, further survey work may be required</i></p> <p><i>DEFRA metric used to demonstrate how to achieve net gain. This has identified the need for an offsite compensation scheme relating to loss of farmland bird habitat but this has yet to be secured</i></p>

<p>1.3 contd A net gain in biodiversity will be sought when considering proposals for development by protecting, managing, enhancing and extending existing resources</p>		<p>Ensure that all planning applications include relevant ecological surveys that are sufficiently current New target for 2015/16</p>	
	<p>1.3.4 Support the provision of high quality, up to date biodiversity information required by development control through funding of biodiversity partners</p>	<p>Annual supply of ecological constraint GIS layers from TVERC</p> <p>TVERC to deliver District Wildlife Sites Project 2015 (sites identified in 2013 mapping project) New target for 2015/16</p> <p>Wild Oxfordshire to review and update Conservation Target Area boundaries New target for 2015/16</p>	<p><i>TVERC data supplied in July 2014 (swifts, protected/notable species and BAP habitats as part of whole District mapping project), February 2015 (protected/notable species) and March 2015 (Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites).</i></p> <p>2014/15 target <i>Supply of an updated and improved digital dataset illustrating the habitat resource of the District</i></p> <p>2014/15 update <i>Final report and data received in July 2014.</i></p>
	<p>1.3.5 Provide information/training for officers and members on new and updated legislation, policy and issues relating to important sites, habitats and species</p>	<p>Promote internal training and provide information about relevant external training, co-ordinating attendance as and when required</p> <p>Provide legislative and planning policy updates as and when required</p> <p>Update natural environment web pages and maintain as a source of biodiversity information</p>	<p><i>British Standard 42020 workshop organised in partnership with Wild Oxfordshire – involved 6 CDC Officers plus planners/ecologists from BBOWT, WODC, Warwicks CC and South Northants DC</i></p> <p><i>Publicised new and updated “Biodiversity and Planning in Oxfordshire” guidance (produced by OCC, BBOWT & TVERC)</i></p> <p><i>Web pages updated throughout the year to include 2014/15 Corporate BAP, key information relating to legislation and planning policy and biodiversity partners’ reports – see www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment</i></p>

(c) Council services and strategies context

In accordance with the NERC Act Duty, biodiversity protection and enhancement should be extended through all relevant Council services, the Council's range of strategies and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

Aim	2015-2016 Action	Measure/Target	2014-15 Review
<p>1.4 Maximise opportunities for biodiversity through improvements to services and relevant strategies</p>	<p>1.4.1 Seek ways of improving Council services with regard to biodiversity</p>	<p>Establish a Cherwell Green Business Award through Economic Development New target for 2015/16</p>	<p>2014/15 target <i>Establish improved links with the Eco-Bicester team</i> 2014/15 update <i>The team organised a successful stall at Oxfordshire Goes Wild at Bure Park School</i></p>
	<p>1.4.2 Include and/or update policies relating to biodiversity and the natural environment in any relevant strategies</p>	<p>Biodiversity policies to be included in any relevant strategies published in 2015-2016</p>	<p><i>No relevant strategies published</i></p>
	<p>1.4.3 Provide appropriate information to the LSP Board</p>	<p>Wild Oxfordshire to present its engagement work with Local Enterprise Partnerships to the LSP Board New target for 2015/16</p>	

Theme 2: Land and buildings management

There are various ways that the Council can influence the management of land and property for wildlife throughout the District.

Aim	2015-2016 Action	Measure/Target	2014-15 Review
2.1 Support environmental organisations that manage, or provide advice on the management of, land in the District	2.1.1 Continue to fund the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)	Organisations to provide a report twice a year to demonstrate delivery of land management/land management advice in accordance with funding agreements Support conservation projects in the active Conservation Target Areas of the District – the Ray and Cherwell Valleys	<i>Satisfactory interim and end of year reports received. Available to view on the Council's website www.cherwell.gov.uk/naturalenvironment</i> <i>Contributed to Catchment Restoration Fund project development – £31,000 has been confirmed for project based on Spiceball Park in Banbury</i>
2.2 Support local communities to fulfil their biodiversity obligations and to improve management of land and buildings for habitats and species	2.2.1 Support local projects that involve land/building management for important habitats and species 2.2.2 Support Wild Oxfordshire to deliver biodiversity information to local communities 2.2.3 Support BBOWT and the Woodland Trust with bat box project in Daedas Wood New target for 2015/16	Support three local projects Deliver five local talks Provide 16 bat boxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Continuing support for Cherwell Swift Conservation Project</i> • <i>Advice given to Banbury Community Action Group – successful TOE2 funding application for community orchard</i> • <i>Advice given to Tadmarton Parish Council - survey and management of local woodland site</i> <i>Five talks delivered in 2014/15?</i> 2014/15 target <i>Support Banbury Ornithological Society with bat box project in Grimsbury Wood</i> 2014/15 update <i>10 bat boxes were donated to the project</i>
2.3 Secure improved management for habitats/ species as part of new build/refurbishment	2.3.1 Provide guidance on biodiversity and the built environment	Biodiversity guidance to be included in Sustainable Buildings in Cherwell Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	<i>Work on this planning document will progress in 2015/16</i>

Theme 3: Council owned and managed land and buildings

The Council has specific responsibility for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity on its own estate and on sites that it manages.

Aim	2015-2016 Action	Measure/Target	2014-2015 Review
3.1 Secure improved management of parks and open spaces for habitats and species	<p>3.1.1 Encourage protected and priority habitats and species at appropriate sites</p> <p>3.1.2 Work in partnership with others to deliver biodiversity improvements associated with the development of Cherwell Country Park</p>	<p>Assess suitability of Trow Pool tower for provision of artificial nesting sites</p> <p>Work in partnership with the Local Wildlife Sites Restoration project to improve Enslow Marsh</p> <p>Commission surveys and liaise with stakeholders with a view to improving biodiversity</p>	<p><i>Not achieved. Site visit to be arranged with Cherwell Swifts Project and Oxfordshire Bat Group</i></p> <p><i>Some small scale management works are planned for summer 2015 involving the Oxford Conservation Volunteers and the Kidlington fire crew</i></p> <p><i>Project has not progressed. Purchase of the northern field is still being negotiated with the Environment Agency</i></p>
3.2 Secure improved management of buildings and associated external environments for habitats and species	3.2.1 Encourage protected and priority species at appropriate sites	<p>Monitor wildflower meadow at Bodicote House with a view to plantings at other sites if successful</p> <p>Continue to work with the Cherwell Build team to improve biodiversity protection and enhancement within its projects</p> <p>New target for 2015/16</p>	<p><i>Assessment to be made about successful establishment in summer 2015.</i></p> <p>2014/15 target <i>Erect bird boxes in the grounds of Bodicote House</i></p> <p>2015/16 update <i>Bird boxes erected in March 2015</i></p> <p>2014/15 target <i>Consider creating additional wetland habitat adjacent to the Bodicote House pond to improve water quality</i></p> <p>2014/15 update <i>Considered too ambitious. Request to facilities management for the interceptors between the car park and the pond to be cleared out on a more frequent basis to minimise potential runoff pollution</i></p>

Theme 4: Green Infrastructure

- Green infrastructure comprises the network of accessible multifunctional green space in both rural and urban areas. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is a key benefit resulting from the provision of high quality, connected open space.
- Nature conservation has traditionally focused on the protection of special sites such as SSSIs and Local Wildlife Sites. However, isolated reserves are unlikely to be able to sustain wildlife in the longterm and connectivity is crucial. Sites will need to be buffered, extended and linked if wildlife is to be able to adapt to climate change. Habitat fragmentation should be avoided as plants and animals need large, functional areas or networks which give them room to adapt, resilience to change and the opportunity to spread.
- Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) are an important component of the GI network in the Cherwell District. They include some of the most important areas for biodiversity and provide a focus for co-ordinated action.

Aim	2015-2016 Action	Measure/Target	2014-15 Review
4.1 Support the establishment and development of GI through implementation of relevant policies	4.1.1 Ensure new development meets local and qualitative standards of open space provision to form a multi-functional and resilient network	Progress GI work within the District New target for 2015/16	
4.2 Support the establishment and development of ecological networks through delivery of the Conservation Target Area (CTA) project.	4.2.1 Continue to fund the environmental organisations that coordinate and deliver the CTA Project	Organisations to provide a report twice a year to demonstrate that they are working towards the development of ecological networks in accordance with funding agreements	<i>Satisfactory interim and end of year reports received from Wild Oxfordshire, RSPB and BBOWT. Available to view on the Council's website - www.cherwell.gov.uk/biodiversitypartners</i>
4.3 Support the establishment and development of GI through contribution to a County Strategy	4.3.1 Work in partnership to deliver a County GI Strategy	Limited progress to date. Planned completion of Strategy by March 2017	2014/15 target <i>Assist the mitigation of climate change through tree/woodland initiatives - Support community woodland sites with management advice and work to produce woodfuel as a local and renewable energy resource</i> 2014/15 update <i>This has not been possible without the support of an external woodland management organisation</i>

Theme 5: Health, Wellbeing, Economy and Education

- The value of the natural environment for the health and wellbeing of both people and the economy is well recognised. A Nature and Wellbeing Green paper has been prepared by the Wildlife Trusts and RSPB which sets out the evidence showing how much people need nature for their mental and physical health; and how important natural capital is to the economy.
- Biodiversity conservation 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. Public understanding and education are vital.
- An Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership (Wild Oxfordshire) is now well established. It has brought together a multi sector partnership which is raising awareness of the social and economic benefits of a healthy natural environment and initiating and working on relevant projects.

Aim	2015-2016 Action	Measure/Target	2014-15 Review
5.1 Work in partnership with others to link action to improve the natural environment with social and economic priorities	<p>5.2.1 Support and contribute to Wild Oxfordshire's work</p> <p>5.2.2 Facilitate involvement of appropriate Officers with the SEEIP (Strategic Environment & Economic Investment Plan) New target for 2015/16</p>	<p>Provide support for the "Health and Natural Environment" strategic project</p> <p>Appropriate Officers to attend workshops in May and June</p>	<p>2014/15 target <i>Provide support for "Oxfordshire Goes Wild" event in Bicester</i></p> <p>2014/15 update <i>Funding and staff support given to this successful wildlife event in September based at Bure Park Primary School</i></p>
5.2 Support and promote initiatives to encourage involvement in the natural environment and improve public understanding of biodiversity	<p>5.3.1 Engage young people through promotion of conservation activities in/with schools and organised groups</p> <p>5.3.2 Engage Parish Councils and interested groups/individuals through provision of information</p> <p>5.3.3 Produce publicity material</p>	<p>Support Warriner School Farm to provide subsidised school and youth group visits</p> <p>Send 'Nature Conservation News' to all Parish Councils and local groups annually</p> <p>Maintain web pages. Use Cherwell Link for promotion</p>	<p><i>Over 13 primary school biodiversity visits were supported, a number of which had not previously been regular visitors to the Farm</i></p> <p><i>Nature Conservation News circulated to all Parish Councils in May; and TVERC training programme circulated to all Parish Councils in March 2015. Creation of community and parish biodiversity guidance webpage in October 2014</i></p> <p><i>Web pages updated regularly – biodiversity partners reports, annual swifts report and annual Corporate BAP. Cherwell Build article in Spring 2015 Cherwell Link</i></p>