

## APPENDIX 2

### COMMUNITY NATURE PLAN 2018-2020 AIMS, ACTIONS AND TARGETS

#### SEPTEMBER 2019 UPDATE

##### 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; 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
- **Full partner reports - [www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk/communitynatureplan)**  
**Highlights**
- **BBOWT – heritage lottery funding for Wild Banbury has now come to an end but the project has been so successful in engaging with the local community and volunteers that it has been prioritised by BBOWT resulting in the lead officer being made a permanent post**
- **TVERC – supports volunteers for some data processing, species recording and site surveys with an annual value for Oxfordshire of £17,145 in 2018/19**
- **Wild Oxfordshire – delivered 2018 training for the national pollinator monitoring scheme's citizen science initiative**
- **RSPB – volunteer surveying carried out as part of the Upper Thames Wader Project working with landowners**
- **Warriner School Farm - within the Warriner School Partnership and Multi-Academy Trust a programme of seasonal workshops were delivered covering themes such as Potty about Plants, Marvellous Minibeasts, Owl Day and Busy Bees. Outside of the partnership the farm delivered farm visits to the Sunrise Multicultural Project, Hardwick Primary School, St John's School, and Dashwood Nursery. 2018 saw a new programme of Young Birdwatching sessions that were subsidised by Cherwell District council in conjunction with Banbury Ornithological Society.**

- OPFA – support to improve outdoor facilities provided to Deddington, Adderbury and Milcombe relating to housing development.
- Support the Cherwell Swift Conservation Project with advice and promotion
- Council officers have assisted the project co-ordinator with a variety of issues relating to planning applications and data. Swift promotional event held at Bodicote House in June 2018 during the first national ‘Swift Awareness’ week. Two young swifts rescued in August 2019 at Bodicote House and taken to “The Nutkin Ward” in Middleton Cheney for rehabilitation. Swift guidance fed through to the Graven Hill team. Recommendation for approval of biodiversity and buildings guidance at October 2019 Executive
- Support Wild Oxfordshire’s work with local groups and community sites
- Annual funding agreement requires maintenance of an up to date database of local groups and support for four specific groups through site visits and follow up advice. Groups supported include those involved with the management of Langford Community Orchard in Bicester, Adderbury Lakes local nature reserve, Otmoor Meadow, Merton Woods and St Mary’s Fields nature reserve in Kidlington
- Contribute nature-based activities to community events such as fundays, school projects and local greenspace activities
- Forest school/outdoor learning activities and training have been provided at Adderbury and Bloxham primary schools as well as Banbury Playday and Bicester Activity Day. There was a wild zone for the first time at the Kidlington Gala Day which involved various conservation organisations that CDC supports and which help to deliver the Council’s Community Nature Plan, particularly its health, wellbeing and educational theme. Wild Oxfordshire co-ordinated the “Green Road” and organised some activities around the importance of bees as pollinators; the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust staff spoke to people about local conservation sites and kept children busy with their river model; the Cherwell Swift Conservation Project was promoting why the birds are important, where they nest and how people can protect them; Muddy Feet was encouraging young people to get involved with den building; and representatives from the Canal & River Trust and St Mary’s Fields Nature Reserve were making people aware of volunteering opportunities in the village. Upper Thames Butterfly Conservation and Kidlington Abundance (promoting use rather than wastage of local fruit) were also both on the “Green Road”.
- Work with Grants Officer and Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment to assess and deliver local wildlife and access grant funded projects
- Deddington and Stratton Audley Parish Councils have received MHCLG funding towards pocket park projects following on from collaboration between the Grants Officer and Community Nature Officer. Some collaboration with TOE in relation to the Swalcliffe Community Woodland Project
- Protect, improve and promote urban green spaces in Bicester to support Healthy New Town initiatives and Placemaking
- Some progress is being made with the proposed Burnehyll Community Woodland and the Friends group is keen to enhance biodiversity on the site. Green spaces such as Langford community orchard have been improved by local groups with advice and support from Wild Oxfordshire’s community ecologist and promoted by the Bicester team through community events such as Wild Meadow Day. Promotion also through a hard copy green spaces leaflet. Open space maintenance requires additional work with owners and managers

- Produce a new 'Discover Cherwell's Great Outdoors' webpage to include access to the countryside opportunities
- Progress yet to be made
- Explore opportunities for local hedgehog projects
- Hedgehog surveying in the grounds of Bodicote House involving staff took place in September and will be repeated at appropriate times of the year. The Wild Banbury Project Officer is exploring other opportunities in the town

#### 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
- Planning policy officer and Bicester delivery manager attended the stakeholder workshop in June 2019 on natural capital mapping in Oxfordshire. Community nature officer is part of an Oxfordshire Plan 2050 environmental subgroup which has contributed to this plan.
- Apply and extend Oxford University's work on evaluating green infrastructure - 'Tools for Planning and Evaluating Urban Green Infrastructure: Bicester and Beyond'
- The extension of this work is the natural capital mapping in Oxfordshire project which is feeding into the Oxfordshire Plan 2050

## 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 partner

### Targets

- Policies, proposals and guidance to be included in the next Cherwell Local Plan
- A review of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) has started. It is anticipated that that the timescale for the Local Plan Review as contained in the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) will be reviewed by the Council at the end of the year
- Publish Open Space Assessment and Strategy
- It is anticipated that this will be completed by the end of the year
- 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
- Annual funding agreement requires the regular supply of robust data relating to sites, habitats and species
- Support TVERC to achieve approval for the proposed District Wildlife Site (DWS) selection criteria and the processing of 20 sites
- Selection criteria have been approved by the Council's Ecology Officer and 20 sites were assessed in November 2018. There are now 15 approved DWSs and 47 more to be surveyed and assessed.

### 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
- Registration planners use the GIS information provided by TVERC to decide whether consultation with the Ecology Officer is required. Reduced staff capacity in Development Management following separation from South Northants Council is resulting in increasing response times to planning application consultations concerning ecology.
- Preparation of internal standing advice relating to biodiversity and planning applications
- Not yet prepared but website information to assist planners and developers is being produced
- Production of specific guidance covering biodiversity impact assessment and offsetting and a portfolio of potential offset projects
- The 2019 Executive Report recommends approval of biodiversity impact assessment and net gain guidance. The production of a portfolio of potential offset projects will require additional approaches and increased ecological advisory resources.

## 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)
- SEMLEP funding was never confirmed for this work as the criteria were altered and a resubmission was not possible in terms of timescale and staff resources. Garden Town funding to support future plans for the town has been secured
- Apply and extend Oxford University's work on tools for evaluating green infrastructure - 'Tools for Planning and Evaluating Urban Green Infrastructure: Bicester and Beyond'
- The extension of this work is the natural capital mapping in Oxfordshire project which is feeding into the Oxfordshire Plan 2050
- Support TVERC to provide habitat connectivity mapping
- This mapping was provided and trialled in 2018/19. Its scale was not found to be sufficiently valuable in determining the biodiversity impact assessment of planning applications and so was removed from the annual funding agreement with TVERC for 2019/20.
- Support Wild Oxfordshire to facilitate the Conservation Target Area (CTA) Project
- Annual funding agreement requires facilitating the update and revision of Oxfordshire Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) and supporting partnership work relating to the active Cherwell CTAs. Updated CTA guidance has been produced. The Ardley and Upper Heyford CTA was approved in September 2018. A North Cherwell CTA has been proposed.

## 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
- Both Enslow Marsh and Trow Pool are Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) managed by the Council. Small scale works have been carried out at Enslow Marsh through the BBOWT LWS restoration project including cutting back sections of sedge, removing scrub and opening up some old pond areas. Trow Pool has been surveyed in 2019 through the LWS Project and management advice will be followed up
- Cherwell Build team to include biodiversity protection and enhancement measures within its projects
- Swift bricks have recently been installed in the following Cherwell Build projects in Banbury – the Community Sports Hall at The Hill (10 bricks) and the housing development at Hope Close, Banbury (12 bricks). There are also plans to install swift boxes in the development of the former Admiral Holland site in Banbury
- Liaise with stakeholders with a view to protecting/enhancing biodiversity and improving access within Banbury Country Park
- Most recent liaison with stakeholders was in January 2018. Land acquisition is not complete but plans are progressing in relation to important elements of the project
- Biodiversity guidance to be included in Sustainable Buildings in Cherwell Supplementary Planning Document
- Sustainable Buildings in Cherwell SPD is no longer in the Local Development Scheme.

## 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
- Interim and end of year reports received for 2018/19. Interim reports for 2019/20 due at the end of October
- Any funded projects in the CTAs to provide a report to demonstrate delivery of objectives
- In 2018/19 the RSPB Upper Thames Wader Project was funded to deliver advice to landowners/managers on wet grassland creation, restoration, maintenance and funding opportunities in the Lower & Upper Cherwell and Ray CTAs. Interim and end of year reports have been received

**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 (by 31 March 2020)
- Langford community orchard – provided funding for beehives (made by Bicester Green) and contributed to site visit involving owner, manager, local group and Wild Oxfordshire's community ecologist
- St Mary's Fields nature reserve, Kidlington – attended local group meeting in April 2019