

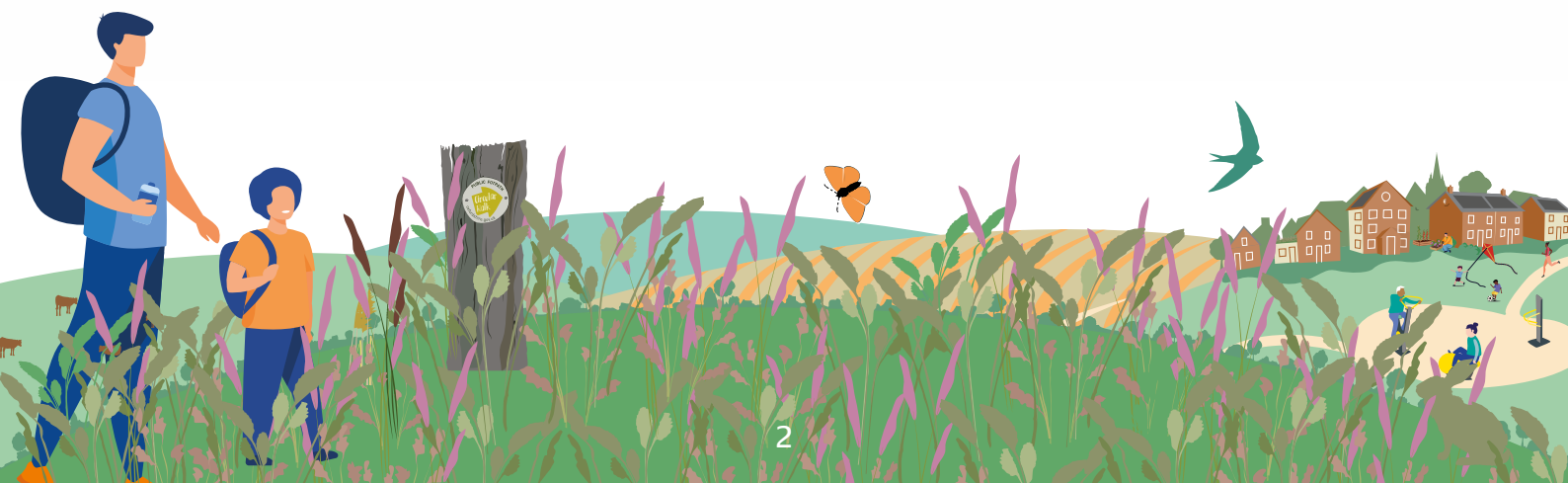
Community Nature Plan 2020–2022

A natural environment
for people and wildlife



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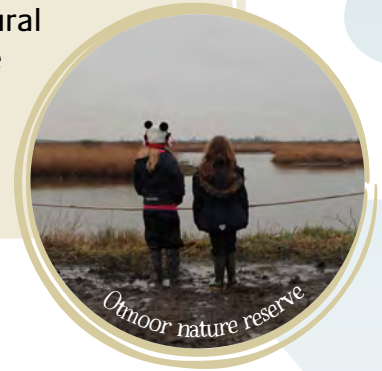


1. Introduction



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; its contribution to climate change adaptation and resilience; and the economic prosperity that it brings.

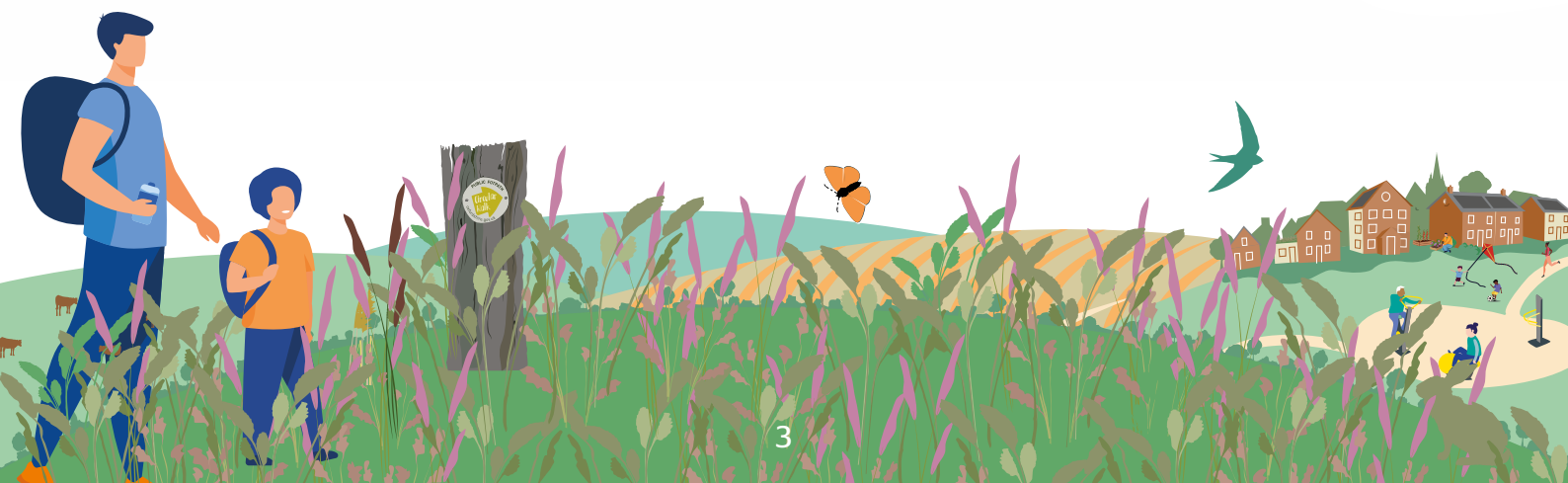


Purpose

The key purpose of the Community Nature Plan is to demonstrate the council’s fulfilment of its **statutory biodiversity duty** under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, a duty that will be strengthened by the Environment Bill. Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 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 Community Nature Plan also sets out aims, actions and targets relating to key themes:

- A key function of the council in terms of the biodiversity duty is its role as a local planning authority. The council has legal obligations relating to important wildlife sites, habitats and species; and requirements under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) relating to conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- The importance of the natural environment for community health and wellbeing, specifically access to green space and connection with nature
- The value of land (natural capital) and the services it delivers (ecosystem services) for people and the local economy
- The contribution of the management of land and buildings to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment
- The important role of natural carbon management for climate change adaptation and resilience



Multiple benefits

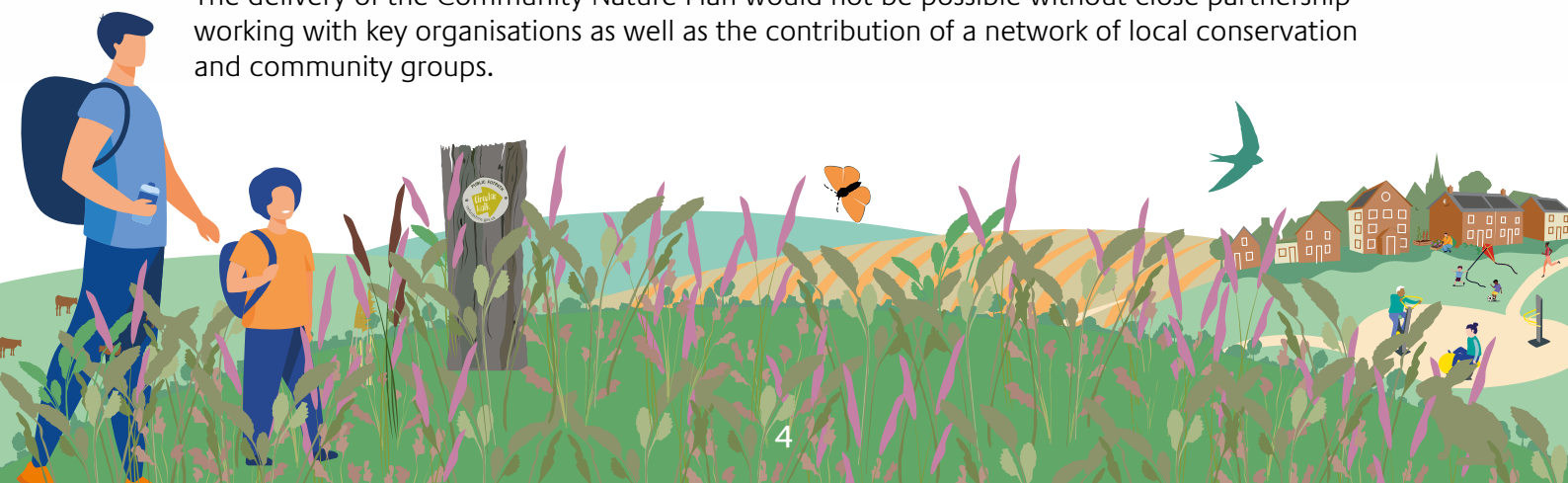
The multiple benefits of the natural environment are reflected in three of the strategic priorities of the council's **Business Plan 2020-2021**:

- **Leading on environmental sustainability** – key components of this priority are the protection of our natural environment and delivery of our aspirations for the district to be carbon neutral by 2030
- **An enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres** – 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
- **Healthy resilient and engaged communities** – the importance of access to green spaces and connection with nature for physical and mental health and resilience has been starkly highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic

Contributions to the delivery of these **multiple benefits** are made by a wide range of council services and workstreams including Planning Policy and Development Management, the Wellbeing team, the Bicester Garden Town Programme, the Healthy Place Shaping Programme, the 2020 Climate Change Action Framework and the Street Scene and Landscape Services team.

Working in Partnership

The delivery of the Community Nature Plan would not be possible without close partnership working with key organisations as well as the contribution of a network of local conservation and community groups.



2. Cherwell's natural environment

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.



Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) are sites of substantive nature conservation value at a County level which are protected through the planning system. They form an important network of habitats for animals and plants, both within Oxfordshire and beyond, and are vital to sustaining wildlife populations. Appropriate land management is often essential to enable this wildlife to survive and flourish. Within the Cherwell District there are also District Wildlife Sites (DWSs), the value of which is not considered sufficient to meet County LWS criteria but is deemed significant at the District level. Some of these sites already have local group or conservation organisation involvement such as Stratfield Brake in Kidlington which is owned and managed by the Woodland Trust. In some cases, with appropriate management, a DWS may attain LWS quality. The Council's biodiversity partners, TVERC and BBOWT, offer surveys and land management advice to owners of these local sites.



The District has four Local Nature Reserves (statutory designation of sites with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally) – Kirtlington Quarry, Bure Park in Bicester, Adderbury Lakes and The Slade in Bloxham; numerous Reserves owned and managed by the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust; Woodland Trust sites such as Stratfield Brake, Piddington Wood and Daeda’s Wood just north of Deddington; sites managed by the Banbury Ornithological Society (BOS) such as the Bicester Wetland Reserve; and Parish and Town Council land which is owned and/or managed for wildlife and people.

The council owns and manages land which contributes to the District’s biodiversity resource. The most notable and largest sites are Banbury Country Park and the proposed Burnehyll Community Woodland on the edge of Bicester which offer many opportunities for biodiversity and access improvements.

Oxfordshire’s Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) identify some of the most important areas for biodiversity in the District and provide a focus for coordinated action. This focus is now being integrated with a Nature Recovery Network approach which identifies opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity. The council’s biodiversity partner, Wild Oxfordshire, co-ordinates both the CTA and NRN projects.

Cherwell’s biodiversity resource is also part of its Green Infrastructure. Green Infrastructure (GI) defines 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 together with Oxfordshire and District Wildlife Sites form important components of the green infrastructure network of the District. Securing adequate green infrastructure is crucial to achieving sustainable communities.



3. Planning and sustainable development

Protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment is integral to sustainable development. Biodiversity is an important consideration in the planning process and must be integrated from an early stage into the design of any scheme. 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 **Environment Bill** has been introduced to support the UK's departure from the European Union, the delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan (which sets out government action to help the natural world regain and retain good health) and the National Resources and Waste Strategy. Its progress through Parliament has been delayed by COVID-19 but there are several sections of the Bill that are anticipated to directly apply to local government (if passed in its currently proposed form), including Part 6, Nature and Biodiversity.

This section of the Bill includes provisions to:

- Strengthen the duty on public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Publication of biodiversity reports will be required to review the actions taken by the local authority to comply with its duties for nature and biodiversity
- Make it mandatory for housing and development to achieve at least a 10 per cent net gain in value for biodiversity, a requirement that habitats for wildlife must be left in a measurably better state than before the development
- Require local authorities to support better spatial planning for nature through the creation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs). The DEFRA 25-Year Environment Plan highlights six key areas for action, one being to establish a Nature Recovery Network. This will protect and restore wildlife, as well as providing greater public enjoyment of the countryside; increased carbon capture; and improvements in water quality and flood management

A revised **National Planning Policy Framework** (NPPF) was published in February 2019 and Chapter 15 (conserving and enhancing the natural environment) strengthens the importance and protection of the natural environment in the planning process. A requirement for biodiversity net gain is included in the NPPF but a number or percentage for the gain is not specified. However, the Environment Bill, if passed in its currently proposed form, will mandate a 10 per cent net gain in value.



The **Planning for the Future white paper** (August 2020), which sets out the Government’s proposals for reform of England’s planning system, proposes to amend the NPPF to ensure *“that it targets those areas where a reformed planning system can most effectively play a role in mitigating and adapting to climate change and maximising environmental benefits”*. Consultation responses to date have expressed concerns in terms of the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and it is not yet clear how proposals will align with the provisions of the Environment Bill.

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 that contribute to, and help ensure, sustainable development. In terms of biodiversity net gain, it says “In considering proposals for development, a net gain in biodiversity will be sought by protecting, managing, enhancing and extending existing resources, and by creating new resources” Conservation and enhancement of the natural environment are also key strands of the **Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review-Oxford’s Unmet Housing Need** adopted in September 2020 (providing for new development to meet the council’s share of Oxford’s unmet housing need) in which biodiversity impact assessments and biodiversity improvement and management plans are planning application requirements for all development sites.

Adopted Local Plan policy ESD 10 (protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment) supports securing net biodiversity gain on development sites as well as requiring the protection of important wildlife and geological sites, habitats and species. The Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides additional information about how policy ESD10 should be applied and how biodiversity impact should be assessed; and more detailed guidance has been approved by the council’s Executive (produced by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and other professional bodies).

The Cherwell Local Plan Review has commenced with the publication of a Community Engagement Paper in July of this year. The review will consider whether the existing plan policies need to be amended or new policies included in the plan. The consultation paper identified several issues relating to biodiversity and the natural environment and indicated how these issues could be addressed by the plan, including biodiversity net gain.

The council endorsed the Wildlife Trusts’ guidance “Homes for people, homes for wildlife” in July 2018. 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





Provision for swifts at the Hill Community and Sports Facility

The **Oxfordshire Plan 2050** (OP2050) is progressing and its emerging spatial strategy is being influenced by the Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Network (NRN). The concept of a NRN is simple in that it should extend and link existing sites of wildlife value. Building on mapped Conservation Target Areas, the NRN has been prepared by a partnership of three of the council's biodiversity partners (BBOWT, TVERC and Wild Oxfordshire) who have secured extensive buy in across the County's environmental sector through a broader Working Group, consultation events in 2019 as well as validation from the Oxfordshire Biodiversity Advisory Group. A potential policy approach has also been submitted to the OP2050 team including ensuring that the NRN is given significant weight in planning decisions. The NRN will also help inform the Cherwell Local Plan Review, guide key policies like biodiversity net gain and develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This Strategy, which will be required by the Environment Bill, can use the NRN to map out important habitats and opportunities for the local environment to be improved, linking communities' knowledge/priorities with national environmental objectives. In August 2020 Natural England announced funding to develop five pilot NRN/LNRS areas indicating that Oxfordshire's progress to date is noteworthy.

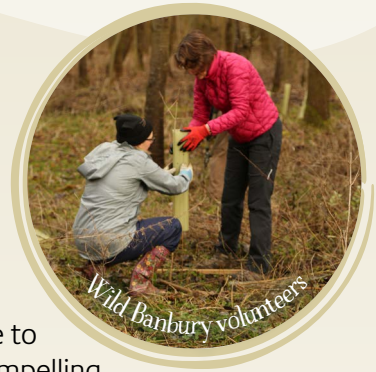
The continuation of this vital work will be locally led by a responsible authority yet to be decided but likely to be at a County level and involving a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) or its equivalent. Oxfordshire does not currently have a LNP but significant progress is being made towards establishing one with the support and funding from the Growth Board. The ambition for LNPs is that they will help their 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. To do this effectively they will need to be self-sustaining strategic partnerships of a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people with the credibility to work with, and influence, other local strategic decision makers.



4. Community value

(i) Community health and wellbeing

The natural environment is increasingly being recognised as an important asset for supporting health and wellbeing. The importance of access to green spaces and connection with nature for physical and mental health and resilience has been starkly highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Green space has a key role to play in the drive to increase levels of physical activity and there is a wealth of compelling evidence that time spent in green environments promotes a positive outlook on life and enhances our ability to cope with, and recover from, stress, illness and injury (Public Health England, Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020).



A recent Natural England report has reviewed the evidence for the health and wellbeing benefits of green infrastructure and sets out the sizeable body of research that underlines the importance of creating more, bigger, better and joined-up green spaces, especially near to where people live, and to address inequalities. It also identifies the beneficial role of social interventions such as media campaigns to increase awareness of green spaces and holding community events in a natural environment; and reviews the wider health and wellbeing role of green infrastructure, for example in nature recovery, addressing climate change and mitigating noise and air pollution (Natural England, A rapid scoping of health and wellbeing evidence for the Framework of Green Infrastructure Standards (NEER015), September 2020).

The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted not just the importance of access to the natural environment for both physical and mental health but also that there is significant inequality of access to green space (*The grass isn't greener for everyone: why access to green space matters* Ramblers Association 2020 and *England's Green Space Gap* Friends of the Earth 2020). These reports provide evidence that people on a low income and people from a BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) background are less likely to have good access to green space. If we are to create healthy places and resilient communities it is important to improve access to green spaces in these communities in order to reduce health inequalities.

The following are examples of key projects that contribute to the health and wellbeing of the District's residents and are supported by the council's funding of its biodiversity partners. Many have been impacted by COVID-19 in 2020 but are now functioning again.

- The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) leads on, and provides expertise for, the 'Wild Banbury' project and a new 'Wild Bicester' project which has recently been launched and joint funded by the Bicester, Healthy Placeshaping and Wellbeing teams. Both Wild Projects provide opportunities for conservation volunteering, connecting with nature as well as benefits for wildlife habitat
- Wild Oxfordshire supports local community projects with ecological advice. Following on from organising a successful 'Green Zone' at the 2019 Kidlington Gala Day, the community ecologist is currently involved in developing a green space project in Kidlington led by the council's healthy placeshaping team
- RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) manages the Otmoor Nature Reserve which is a haven for wildlife in the District with visitor trails, bird hides and a wetland watch lookout building



- Warriner School Farm has been unable to provide its usual programme of primary school and youth group visits in 2020 but has been actively supporting socially distanced community events with family packs of nature-based activities
- Muddy Feet Training delivers forest school and outdoor learning sessions to schools and groups in the District. It is currently working with special needs children at Bardwell School in Bicester and young people at the Hill Community Centre in Banbury, both funded by the council. The council also provided funding for Muddy Feet to develop a resource pack for teachers and parents 'Transitioning back to school during the corona virus pandemic'



(ii) Natural capital

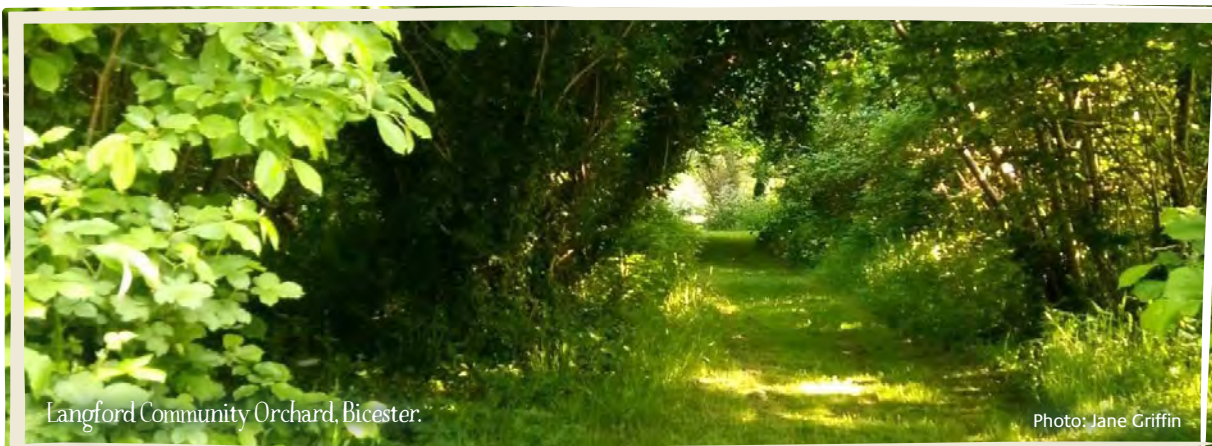
Current understanding of the value of nature in society is embodied in the concepts of natural capital and ecosystem services:

Natural capital – elements of nature that produce **value for people**. These include ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, minerals, the air and oceans, as well as natural processes and functions.

Ecosystems services – delivered by natural capital, they underpin human health and wellbeing (eg food production, water supply, carbon storage).

DEFRA published natural capital guidance in January 2020 - 'Enabling a Natural Capital Approach'. This guidance brings together and makes accessible a wide range of tools, data and case studies to enable decision-makers and appraisers to better value and account for natural capital in their local areas.

Oxfordshire's natural capital has been mapped by the University of Oxford working with stakeholders to produce an evidence base to feed into development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. This work was supported by the council and will inform the Cherwell Local Plan Review going forward. The mapping was carried out in terms of the County's ability to deliver 18 different ecosystem services and will help to identify areas of high value natural capital that should be protected from inappropriate development; low scoring areas that represent opportunities to improve provision; and strategic networks of high value green infrastructure which are important for wildlife and active travel routes for people. The mapping can be combined with other layers of information, such as flood zones and transport infrastructure, to help with decision making for site allocation and natural capital investment.



Langford Community Orchard, Bicester.

Photo: Jane Griffin

5. Climate action



The climate emergency and biodiversity crisis are inextricably linked. The creation, protection and sustainable management of habitats which have carbon removal and storage functions play a key role in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Tree planting is just one of the carbon capture options together with healthy soils, grasslands and wetlands which can remove and store vast amounts of carbon.

Working with nature, urban solutions such as street trees, green roofs and walls and the development of integrated and connected green infrastructure projects can help urban areas adapt to climate change impacts, such as flooding events and heatwaves, as well as tackling socio-environmental challenges which include poor air quality, biodiversity loss and human health and wellbeing.

The council's 2020 Climate Action Framework recognises the importance of natural carbon management in its commitment to take action in the wider community with a view to achieving net zero carbon by 2030. It states that through council policy and partnerships, natural carbon management will be improved by protecting and enhancing natural capital assets which capture and store carbon; and the ambition to double tree cover in Oxfordshire with 'the right tree in the right place' will be supported.

The Framework also includes plans to support existing Nature Recovery Strategy work in the county (through the inclusion of biodiversity net gain targets in planning policy) and to work with a wide range of partners to develop a tree strategy for Oxfordshire.

The Council has committed, as far as possible, to double tree cover within the District by 2045, to identify and secure funding opportunities in furtherance of the commitment and to require developers to demonstrate how they will be improving biodiversity (specifically through the planting of more trees).



6. Working in partnership

The delivery of the Community Nature Plan would not be possible without close partnership working with key organisations as well as the contribution of a network of local conservation and community groups. The council supports six key organisations with annual funding in accordance with deliverables.

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 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. Local communities use TVERC data for neighbourhood planning and volunteer recording groups are supported by the organisation.

Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) provides land management advice to Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and some District Wildlife Site (DWS) owners/managers. The advice helps to improve site value and maintain the robustness of the LWS designation. BBOWT leads on the well-established Wild Banbury Project and more recent Wild Bicester Project which are all about enhancing habitats for wildlife and bringing people into contact with nature. It supports a North Oxfordshire volunteer group which monitors a number of bat box projects that the council has initiated and helped to fund.

Wild Oxfordshire supports community wildlife groups and activities as well as citizen science projects and events. It 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; and to develop an Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Network and Strategy.

RSPB owns and manages the flagship Otmoor Nature Reserve. Floodplain grazing marsh, which is a national priority habitat, and other habitats support birds and other wildlife which are national priority species. The RSPB encourages access along its visitor trails and to its bird hides. It also supports volunteer training and facilitates projects involving volunteers and landowners.

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.

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.

Local projects and community groups also play an important role in protecting and enhancing the District's natural environment and providing access to nature. For example, with the help of local people throughout the District, the **Cherwell Swift Conservation Project** successfully continues to find, monitor and create new nest sites with the help of local people and enlightened developers such as the council's Build! team; and Muddy Feet Training is enabling young people to access, connect with and learn from their natural environment.



7. Community nature plan aims, actions and targets

Theme 1: 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 adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review – Oxford’s Unmet Housing Need includes a connected green infrastructure policy. It also has requirements in the development brief for biodiversity net gain and planning application requirements for Biodiversity Impact Assessments and Biodiversity Improvement and Management Plans
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) February 2019 strengthens the importance and protection of the natural environment in the planning process and includes a requirement for biodiversity net gain. It also recognises the importance of good evidence and data for decision-making
- The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (OP2050) is progressing and the central plan team is working with the Oxfordshire District local authorities to develop strong policies relating to nature and biodiversity
- Connectivity between natural features and easy access to high quality wildlife-rich natural green space are key principles of the BBOWT guidance ‘Homes for people, homes for wildlife’ which was endorsed by the council in July 2018

Aim 1: Planning policy

- Ensure strong policies relating to nature and biodiversity are included in all relevant Local Plan documents in accordance with relevant legislation, the NPPF, the provisions of the Environment Bill and the emerging OP2050

Actions

- ➔ Include and amend policies, proposals and guidance as necessary relating to biodiversity, green infrastructure (GI) conservation target areas (CTAs), the nature recovery network and natural capital in the preparation of the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040
- ➔ Support the OP2050 team to develop strong policies relating to nature and biodiversity
- ➔ Support the provision of high quality, up to date biodiversity information and evidence required by the Oxfordshire and Cherwell Local Plan process through funding biodiversity partners

Targets

- 🎯 Review policies relating to protection and enhancement of biodiversity, green infrastructure and conservation target areas in the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040
- 🎯 Include policies relating to biodiversity net gain and offsetting, nature recovery network and natural capital as appropriate in the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040
- 🎯 Contribute to OP2050’s policy development relating to nature and biodiversity through planning and natural environment workstreams
- 🎯 Continue to fund TVERC to collate, analyse and supply data associated with the Local Plan process, Annual Monitoring Report and constraint GIS layers required for planning projects and site assessments
- 🎯 Continue to fund TVERC to deliver the District Wildlife Site (DWS) Project through site surveys and in accordance with approved selection criteria



Aim 2: Development management

- Ensure legislation and policies relating to nature and biodiversity are adhered to through the development management process

Actions

- ➔ Continue to deliver the requirements of all nature and biodiversity policies in the implementation of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1)
- ➔ Ensure adherence to green infrastructure policy and development brief/planning application requirements in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review
- ➔ Support the provision of high quality, up to date biodiversity information and evidence required by the Development Management process through funding biodiversity partners



Targets

- Screen all planning applications in terms of their impact on important sites, habitats and species in line with relevant legislation and policy
- Assess those that impact upon important sites, habitats and species in line with relevant biodiversity legislation and policy
- Require planning applications for all Partial Review sites to include biodiversity impact assessments and biodiversity improvement and management plans
- Seek a minimum of 10 per cent net gain in biodiversity in line with the Environment Bill when considering proposals for development
- Produce guidance relating to biodiversity impact assessment, net gain and offsetting
- Continue to fund TVERC to collate, analyse and supply data associated with screening and assessment of planning applications

Aim 3: Green and blue infrastructure

- Support the establishment and development of green and blue infrastructure networks and ecological connectivity throughout the District for wildlife and people.

Action

- ➔ Support partners and deliver projects that can help protect and enhance green and blue infrastructure as well as access to high quality green space.



Targets

- Deliver the Kidlington wayfinding project to encourage walking for wellbeing in the parish through the establishment of signed health routes which link green spaces and natural features
- Work in partnership with Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association (OPFA) to support the provision, retention and viability of high quality, accessible community green space
- Continue to fund Wild Oxfordshire to facilitate the Conservation Target Area (CTA) Project
- Support Wild Oxfordshire to progress the development of the Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Network and Strategy
- Support and participate in the catchment partnership work in the District led by BBOWT

Theme 2: Community value

- There is a wealth of evidence that the natural environment, its wildlife and green spaces are vital for community and economic health and wellbeing
- Natural Capital means elements of nature that produce value for people and underpin human health and wellbeing. Through identification of the wider values of land, the natural capital mapping of Oxfordshire will help inform future investment decisions that are required to maintain and improve natural benefits for all who live and work in the District

Aim 1: Health and wellbeing

- Support and promote initiatives to encourage involvement in the natural environment and to improve public understanding of, and connection with, 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

- Continue to fund BBOWT's Wild Banbury and Wild Bicester Projects; Wild Oxfordshire's work with local groups and community sites; RSPB's volunteer/landowner events; Warriner School Farm's programme of visits and outreach for young people; TVERC's work with, and training of, volunteer wildlife recorders; and OPFA's community engagement work
- Promote BBOWT's Wild Parishes online resources and webinars which support parish councillors, clerks and volunteers to improve their patch for wildlife and people
- Support the Cherwell Swift Conservation Project with advice and promotion
- Contribute nature-based activities to community events such as fundays, school projects and local greenspace activities
- Work with the Grants Officer, Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association and the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment to assess and deliver local wildlife, green space and access projects
- Protect, improve and promote urban green spaces in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington through Wild Banbury, Healthy New Town and Healthy Placeshaping initiatives
- Produce and promote a public facing document to encourage taking action for wildlife and discovering local green spaces and the District's natural environment
- Explore opportunities for local community projects relating to habitats and species eg road verges, hedgehogs, bees



Aim 2: Natural capital

- Engage with strategic partnership work relating to valuing the natural environment

Actions

- ➔ Support the further development of the Oxfordshire natural capital mapping resource as a decision-making tool for site allocation and natural capital investment

Targets

- 🕒 Participate in strategic and local debate as the natural capital mapping work progresses
- 🕒 Explore using a natural capital approach to inform strategic site allocations as part of the Cherwell Plan Review 2040



Theme 3: Land and buildings management

- The council has responsibilities for maintaining and enhancing land and property for people and wildlife on its own estate and on sites that it manages
- The Council can also influence the management of land and property throughout the District by supporting key partner organisations
- Parish and Town Councils as well as local groups have an important role to play in land management throughout the District

Aim 1: Council land and buildings

- 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
- ➔ Deliver biodiversity and access improvements relating to Burnehyll Community Woodland and Banbury Country Park
- ➔ Consider opportunities for protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the built environment

Targets

- 🕒 Work in partnership with BBOWT to improve Enslow Marsh and Trow Pool Local Wildlife Sites
- 🕒 Liaise with partners to plan biodiversity and access improvements within Burnehyll Community Woodland through regular working group meetings
- 🕒 Deliver biodiversity and access improvements within Banbury Country Park
- 🕒 Continue to include biodiversity protection and enhancement measures within Cherwell Build projects
- 🕒 Promote 'Biodiversity in the Built Environment Good Practice Guide: Preservation of existing nesting sites and provision of artificial nesting sites'



Aim 2: Cherwell District

- Support environmental organisations that manage, or provide advice on the management of, land in the District
- Support local communities and groups to fulfil their biodiversity obligations and to improve management of land and buildings for habitats and species



Actions

- Continue to fund the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) towards its management of the Otmoor Nature Reserve
- Continue to fund the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) towards the Local Wildlife Sites Project and the Wild Banbury and Bicester Projects
- Support conservation projects in the active Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) of the District, particularly the Ray and Cherwell Valleys
- Continue to fund Wild Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association (OPFA) to support local projects that involve land/building management for important habitats and species

Targets

- RSPB and BBOWT to provide reports to demonstrate delivery in accordance with funding agreements
- Any funded projects in the CTAs to provide reports to demonstrate delivery of objectives
- Wild Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association (OPFA) to provide reports to demonstrate delivery of local projects in accordance with funding agreements
- Promote BBOWT's Wild Parishes online resources and webinars which support parish councillors, clerks and volunteers to improve their patch for wildlife and people



Wild Banbury pond, Spiceball Park

Theme 4: Climate action

- The council's 2020 Climate Action Framework recognises the importance of natural carbon management in its commitment to be net carbon neutral from its operations and activities by 2030
- The creation, protection and sustainable management of habitats which have carbon removal and storage functions play a key role in climate change adaptation and mitigation

Aim: Natural carbon management

- Improve natural carbon management through policy and partnerships

Actions

- ➔ Include natural carbon management in the review/formulation of policy relating to climate mitigation and adaptation in the preparation of the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040 and the Oxfordshire Plan 2050
- ➔ Work in partnership to deliver projects that will provide biodiversity and carbon offsets



Targets

- Include policies relating to biodiversity net gain and offsetting, nature recovery network and natural capital as appropriate in the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040
- Contribute to OP2050's policy development relating to nature, biodiversity and natural carbon management through planning, natural environment and climate change workstreams
- Support key biodiversity partners to protect, manage and enhance habitats which have carbon removal and storage functions
- Work with partners to develop an Oxfordshire Tree Strategy
- Work with partners to explore the delivery of biodiversity and carbon offset projects

