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FOREWORD

- The aim of the Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is to provide a working document that will help focus attention and resources on those habitats and species that are particularly important in the District.
- The Cherwell BAP is not a Council BAP but a BAP for the Cherwell District and all people who live and work within the area.
- Cherwell District Council (CDC) has consulted widely to ensure that local priorities are taken into account within the BAP. Working in partnership with local individuals, groups and organisation will be essential to the success of the BAP.
- Protection and enhancement of important habitats and species through the Local Plan process, development control and management agreements is the main way CDC can directly contribute to delivery of the BAP.
- As CDC owns and manages very little land or relevant sites, funding those organisations and projects that can directly influence sympathetic management of priority habitats and species is key to the identification, protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the District.
- As farmers manage the majority of land in the District, their work is crucial to the maintenance of biodiversity in Cherwell.
- The Cherwell BAP will be reviewed annually and reported to the winter meeting of the Countryside Forum. The progress on each action will be assessed and, where possible, measured. This information will then be fed into the Oxfordshire BAP reporting system and used to contribute to Oxfordshire BAP targets.
- The Cherwell BAP Monitoring Group will meet once a year to assess progress and whether any changes are required. Local representatives from both the urban and rural settlements within the District will be invited to join the Group.
- All relevant links to Council Plans and Strategies and national, regional and county biodiversity related reports have been made within the BAP.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cherwell District Nature Conservation Strategy (1999-2004)

In 1999, Cherwell District Council published a five-year Nature Conservation Strategy. This Strategy has helped the Council focus on the priority areas for nature conservation within the District.

Working in partnership with individuals, groups and organisations has been crucial to the successful achievement of many of the objectives and key actions within the Strategy, with the Council often acting as a facilitator and providing grant support for many of the related projects.

The Strategy also covers several priority issues including the management of land owned by Cherwell District Council and the Council's statutory duty as the local planning authority.

Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan (2005-2010)

Objective 4 of the Nature Conservative Strategy calls for the production of a local BAP and the same objective can also be found in the Council's Environmental Strategy, published in December 2002.

The key reasons for producing a BAP for Cherwell are:

- To allow a focus on those habitats and species that are particularly important in the District.
- To take into account priorities as seen by local people
- As a continuation of the District Nature Conservation Strategy, to provide guidance to the District Council on the priority areas on which it needs to focus

In many ways, a BAP for Cherwell will provide an updated extension of the District Nature Conservation Strategy. Many of the recommendations will be similar because most of the underlying priorities have not changed. (A complete review of this Strategy is provided in Appendix 1).

Although a comprehensive BAP for Oxfordshire already exists, concentrating on the Cherwell District allows more specific and detailed information on habitats and species to be provided which gives a better appreciation of their distribution and importance in contributing to the biodiversity of the area. It also can be much more specific in its objectives and actions, mentioning specific sites or locations in some cases. However, every effort has been made to ensure that national and county targets for species and habitats are taken into account within the Cherwell BAP so that they can be translated into effective action at the local level.

2. BIODIVERSITY

Since the production of the Cherwell District Nature Conservation Strategy, biodiversity has come to the forefront of thinking with regard to the direction for nature conservation. Biodiversity is defined as the variety of life and the aim is conserve this variety. Such an approach is not radically different but allows a clear focus on agreed habitats and species that require action as a priority.

The Rio Conference

In 1992 the UK and 158 other governments signed the Convention on Biological Diversity at the second United Nations conference on Environment and Development, better known as the Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro. It is also known as the Rio Convention. It called for the creation and enforcement of national strategies and action plans to conserve, protect and enhance biological diversity.

The UKBAP

The government's response to the Rio Convention was the production of the United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan. There are five main areas identified within the UKBAP:

1. Partnership – action involving the mutual co-operation of statutory, voluntary, academic and business sectors at both national and local levels.
2. Targets – the establishment of measurable outcomes that address the needs of species and habitat types of most concern to biodiversity conservation.
3. Policy Integration - recognition that shifts in policy are needed to reverse the decline in the UK biodiversity resource and to support sustainable development in all sectors of society.
4. Information – while sound science and knowledge should underpin decisions, recognition that new approaches are required to fill information gaps and understanding and to manage the information already available more efficiently.
5. Public Awareness – public understanding and action is needed to support the changes required to maintain biodiversity.

The UKBAP defines those habitats and species that are a priority for conservation action and action plans have been produced for each one. The priority species are defined as:

- Species which are globally threatened
- Species which are rapidly declining in the UK, i.e. by more than 50% in the last 25 years
- In some instances where the species is found in fewer than 15 ten kilometre squares in the UK
- Species which are listed in the EC Birds or Habitats Directives, the Bern, Bonn, or CITES Conventions, or under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 or the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

The England Biodiversity Action Plan

This BAP seeks to ensure biodiversity considerations become embedded in all main sectors of public policy and sets out a programme for the next five years to make the changes necessary to conserve, enhance and work with the grain of nature and ecosystems rather than against them.

It is a Government strategy produced by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), but it has been prepared with the active partnership of a broad range of stakeholders in the public, voluntary and private sectors. These partners are part of the England Biodiversity Group who oversee the Plan's implementation and report yearly on progress.

The England BAP sets out a series of actions that will be taken by the Government and its partners to make biodiversity a fundamental consideration in:

- Agriculture - encouraging the management of farming and agricultural land so as to conserve and enhance biodiversity as part of the Government's Sustainable Food and Farming Strategy.
- Water - aiming for a whole catchment approach to the wise, sustainable use of water and wetlands.
- Woodland - managing and extending woodland so as to promote enhanced biodiversity and quality of life.
- Marine and coastal management - so as to achieve the sustainable use of management of our coasts and seas using natural processes and the ecosystem-based approach.
- Urban areas - where biodiversity needs to become a part of the development of policy on sustainable communities and urban green space and the built environment.

The Oxfordshire BAP

It is recognised that meeting the targets in the UKBAP's habitat and species action plans will require action at a local level which should be co-ordinated through the production of local biodiversity action plans.

The Oxfordshire BAP is the local contribution to this process and its production and implementation has been co-ordinated by the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum (ONCF). The Oxfordshire BAP goes beyond those habitat types listed as priorities in the UKBAP and includes certain habitats that may not be particularly rare but they may be important for a range of priority species. Therefore, action plans for such habitats can produce benefits for these species. Action Plans have been produced for most species. These action plans include five main elements – current status, issues, current action, objectives and actions. The actions detail the key organisations involved in meeting any objective.

The Oxfordshire Habitat Action Plans can be found on the ONCF website – www.oncf.org.uk. Hard copies are also available from ONCF.

Birds of Conservation Concern

Produced by the RSPB in conjunction with other national ornithological and conservation groups, this document helps focus on the priorities for bird conservation. There is a red list of species of greatest concern. This includes species where -

- The population or range has declined by more than 50% in the last 25 years.
- The species has declined in the long-term (since 1800).
- It is a globally threatened species.

There is an amber list of species of medium concern, which includes those species, which have declined by less than 50% or with significant populations restricted to a small number of sites.

Other Documents

Some of the partners concerned with biodiversity action in Cherwell have their own strategies and plans that include biodiversity issues and provide recommendations and guidance for meeting biodiversity targets within their work, There are also other documents that relate to the Cherwell District and include biodiversity considerations or which may need to be considered when planning to meet biodiversity action targets. A list of these documents is provided in Appendix 2.

3. BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Towards a Cherwell BAP

In January 2004, the Council commissioned Graham Hawker, an ecological consultant, to produce a precursor document for the Cherwell BAP. (In 1996 a similar document was produced by Graham to help the production of the

District Nature Conservation Strategy). This document, completed in June 2004, included the following sections:

- The priority habitats and species in Cherwell District were detailed. The report considered those habitats and species listed in the UKBAP and Oxfordshire BAP. It also considered other local priorities. Issues concerning each habitat were highlighted.
- The relationship between the work of organisations active in Cherwell District and the conservation of priority habitats and species was summarised.
- Recommendations for objectives and actions to be included in the Cherwell BAP were made.

The document was structured in this way to help inform the five elements of habitat and species action plans that form such an essential part of the Cherwell BAP.

Local Consultation

One of the main functions of a local Biodiversity Action Plan is to identify targets for species and habitats appropriate to the local area, and reflecting the values of people locally. To achieve this, the District Council has consulted widely with local individuals, groups and organisations to ensure that local priorities are taken into account.

- An article requesting feedback from local people about what habitats and species are important to them (see Appendix 3) was included in the Summer 2004 edition of the Cherwell Link which is delivered to every household in the District.
- A copy of this article was sent to all Parish Councils and members of the Cherwell Countryside Forum.
- A copy of this article has been added to the Council's website together with a copy of the full report 'Towards a Cherwell BAP'. The report can be downloaded.
- A hard copy of the full report was sent to all partner organisations (see Section 6, Working in Partnership).

Feedback from the local consultation has been recorded and will be held as background material. Much of the feedback has been incorporated into this document and will be taken into consideration within the context of the Council's nature conservation activities e.g. landscaping, planning control, grant aid.

4. CHERWELL'S BIODIVERSITY RESOURCE

4.1 Cherwell District

The Cherwell District covers almost 59,000 hectares of some of the most beautiful areas of Oxfordshire (Figure 1). Much of the District in the Ironstone Downs, the Cherwell Valley, the Thames Valley, North Ploughley and Muswell Hill is recognised

as being of High Landscape Value and includes an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty near the village of Epwell. In the south of the District, Otmoor is significant habitat for many species of plants, birds and insects. Over 8,000 hectares of the District is Green Belt land. There are also 15 sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) which are areas of special wildlife or geological interest and 32 scheduled ancient monuments. Pixey and Yarnton Meads SSSI is of European importance being a candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAR). The Upper Thames tributaries have been designated as an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) within which farmers and landowners can receive various payments to follow environmentally favourable agricultural practices. In 1996 the Council established the first Local Nature Reserve at Kirtlington Quarry. There are also 93 County Wildlife Sites (CW's) noted for their rich flora and fauna.

Cherwell is a predominately rural District but the urban centres, parks and open spaces within are just as much a part of our local environment and provide habitat for wildlife. The District has three large settlements (Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington) and numerous villages. Some 47 of these settlements have designated Conservation Areas in which special planning policies operate.

4.2 Information

Information is key to the conservation of biodiversity which requires sound data to support the decision making process and to help target and guide conservation activities. Recently, there have been two main developments designed to bring major improvements in this area. These are the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre and the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscapes Project.

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC)

The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre was set up in 2003 with funding from English Nature and all the local authorities with Oxfordshire. The Oxfordshire Biological Records Centre is part of the TVERC and is responsible for collecting data either from field survey or from other groups and wildlife recorders, managing that data and providing it to support nature conservation in Oxfordshire. This will include providing data in useable forms for Cherwell District Council to enable easy access for constraints checking in all aspects of the Council's work.

Some of the current work underway includes:

- The County Wildlife Sites survey
- Making data available in a form that can be used easily in geographical information systems.
- Priority habitat mapping which will give a far more accurate idea of the distribution and area of these habitats.
- Producing County Wildlife Site and SSSI citations in a user friendly form
- Producing an inventory of all data held by all groups and organisations in Oxfordshire
- Working with data holders and recorders

In addition, TVERC are planning to apply for Heritage Lottery Funding to support a Community Wildlife Recording Officer post.

Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Project (OWL's)

The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape project seeks to classify land in Oxfordshire both in terms of its landscape type and its biodiversity. This will be a powerful tool to assist with targeting suitable habitat creation for a landscape, which is particularly important in relation to agri-environment schemes. It can also be useful for targeting landscape conservation grants. OWL's can be used as supplementary guidance for the planning process. It will be possible to recognise features that are important for biodiversity and landscape and provide guidance as to suitable habitats that can be created or enhanced with development proposals. OWL's has been highlighted as an example of good practice in the State of the Countryside Report 2004, published by the Countryside Agency. The results of the study will be on Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC's) website by the end of 2004.

Objectives and Actions

Objective

- To provide accurate and comprehensive data on biodiversity to aid all aspects of nature conservation within Cherwell District.

Actions	Key Organisations
Provide accessible understandable information to aid the planning constraints checking process and the targeting of conservation work.	TVERC
Provide training for Council Officers in use of data.	TVERC
All groups that hold data to provide information to assist with constraints checking and targeting conservation work.	TVERC, Banbury Ornithological Society (BOS), Oxford Ornithological Society (OOS), Butterfly Conservation, Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), Oxfordshire Geology Trust (OGT) and all other data holders
Continue development and updating of OWLs information	OCC, TVERC

Specific Actions for Cherwell District Council

- Continue support for TVERC

- Refer to OWLS, as appropriate, in carrying out CDC functions

4.3 Protection

The Cherwell Local Plan now contains sound policies for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity (the adopted policies and those in the Draft Local Plan are listed in Appendix 4). This was one of the aims of the District Nature Conservation Strategy and there are action points within the Oxfordshire BAP for local planning authorities to have strong policies.

The work of the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre will enable easy access to constraints checking information for the Council.

Despite strong Local Plan policies there are still losses in Oxfordshire and opportunities to deliver benefits for biodiversity are being missed. In order to address this problem, a Biodiversity Checklist has been produced, as part of the Oxfordshire BAP process that can be appended to planning applications. This puts the onus on the developer to provide the necessary information rather than the planning officer. The checklist is currently being trialled in South Oxfordshire. It addresses small-scale developments. A separate checklist for larger scale developments will also be produced. The checklist has been produced with the support of the Southeast England Development Agency. The text of the Biodiversity Checklist, rather than a copy of the form, is provided in Appendix 5.

Government planning guidance seeks to make best use of previously developed land (formerly referred to as brownfield sites) in accommodating new development, in preference to the release of greenfield sites. However, previously developed sites can be of greater value in biodiversity terms, particularly those sites that have remained disused in the long-term such as quarries and airfields. Most of the disused quarries in Cherwell District support important habitat remnants, especially limestone grassland, when in the wider countryside on greenfield sites this habitat is very restricted in distribution. At Shipton-on-Cherwell Quarry, wetland has developed and, overall, it has the greatest variety of breeding birds in the District including priority species. Airfields often retain important grassland habitat - the importance of Upper Heyford became apparent once it fell into disuse. Some previously developed sites are particularly valuable for invertebrates. The conservation group 'Buglife', which fulfils a similar role for invertebrates as 'Plantlife' do for plants, is highlighting this value by classifying key sites as 'Phoenix sites'. It is important to recognise and highlight the importance of such previously developed sites and distinguish them from sites such as recent disused industrial areas.

CDC's Community Plan, Environmental Strategy, Rural Strategy and Cultural Strategy include references to biodiversity. However, it is the Environmental Strategy that deals most directly with all aspects of the environment including biodiversity issues. This has more detailed actions concerning nature conservation and includes the production of a Biodiversity Action Plan. There is a close link between the actions in the Environmental Strategy and the actions recommended in this report. Policies from all these Strategies are listed in Appendix 4.

Objectives and Actions

Objective

- To implement appropriate policies to protect biodiversity and to use biodiversity data to strengthen that protection.

Actions	Key organisations
Apply legislation to protect SSSI's from harmful actions.	English Nature (EN)
Maintain and apply strong policies for site and species protection in Cherwell Local Plan and Minerals Local Plan.	CDC and OCC
Improve constraints checking procedures. Use biodiversity data provided by TVERC and from the OWLs project in all relevant aspects of the Council's work.	CDC
Incorporate biodiversity considerations into all aspects of the Council's work and other strategies. Leisure and access proposals must avoid conflicts with biodiversity priorities.	CDC

Specific Actions for Cherwell District Council (in addition to those mentioned above)

- Maintain strong Local Plan policies for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity
- Implement improved constraints checking procedures based on information provided by TVERC. Use this information for checking planning applications and proposals as well as other Council projects and proposals.
- Apply conditions to planning permissions to protect biodiversity and use management agreements and Section 106 agreements if appropriate.
- Consider the introduction of a biodiversity checklist if trials elsewhere prove successful.
- Include reference in Development Plan Documents to the importance of some previously developed sites as part of the biodiversity resource of the District.

4.4 Management

Wider Countryside

The majority of land in the District is managed by farmers and other landowners and their work is key to the delivery of the maintenance of biodiversity in Cherwell District. This does not only apply to important sites but to the wider countryside such as the management of hedgerows and field margins.

Plans and reports are of course useful and important tools but to achieve the aims and targets set out in a BAP, in most cases, the goal has to be to engage with the farming community and other land managers. Organisations such as the National Farmers Union (NFU) and Country Landowners' Association (CLA) are key in providing information to their members on the importance of maintaining biodiversity and available agri-environment schemes.

Those organisations and projects that work most closely with landowners play a key role in encouraging land managers to undertake sympathetic management that conserves biodiversity. The Farming and Wildlife Group (FWAG), DEFRA, the County Wildlife Sites Project, the Oxfordshire Woodland Project (OWP) and English Nature are significant contributors in this area. The Environment Agency (EA) works closely with landowners along rivers. Projects such as the Water Vole and Sustainable Wetland Project are also important here.

Local groups of people can also play a role here. They may meet landowners during ecological survey work or may know landowners in their local area and can encourage them to meet with organisations like FWAG and to enter agri-environment schemes.

It is also important to recognise that land ownership is changing with many people moving out of towns and cities and buying farms. These people may have less need, and sometimes no need, to make a living income from the land and can be more receptive to managing land sensitively to benefit wildlife.

ONCF and FWAG are planning to engage farmers by sending out a survey that will ask what animals they see/no longer see on their land and what habitats are present/no longer present.

Key Sites

- **Sites of Special Scientific Interest**

There are 15 SSSIs in Cherwell District. Eight of these are geological sites, two of which (Ardley Cutting and Quarries and Hook Norton Bank and Cuttings) are also notified for their biological interest. It is also worth noting that 3 geological SSSIs are within sites notified as County Wildlife Sites due to the presence of important habitats (Shipton on Cherwell, Horsehay and Stratton Audley Quarries). Pixey and Yarnton Meads SSSI is of European importance being a candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAR). SSSIs are divided into units, which are used for monitoring purposes. English Nature carries out condition monitoring of SSSIs and, where there are problems, negotiates solutions with landowners. At present, 6 of the 43 SSSI units in the District are described as unfavourable. The national target is that 95% of SSSIs should be in favourable or recovering condition by 2010.

- **County Wildlife Sites**

There are currently 93 County Wildlife Sites in Cherwell District. Over 50 have been surveyed and management advice has been provided. Of the original sites notified as County Wildlife Sites, nine have been denotified and three have been added. In addition, a number of other potential sites have been surveyed. In some cases, owners have refused permission to survey and declined the provision of advice.

- **Nature Reserves**

Kirtlington Quarry is currently the only Local Nature Reserve in Cherwell District. Bure Park in Bicester is now being considered. Other possibilities due to ownership or management by Cherwell District Council are Giant's Cave near Banbury, Neithrop Fields Cutting in Banbury, Bicester Fields and Enslow Sedgebed between the Oxford Canal and the River Cherwell.

Some sites are either owned or managed by nature conservation groups such as the Otmoor RSPB reserve, Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust's (BBOWT's) Whitecross Green Wood, Banbury Ornithological Society's (BOS's) Balscote Quarry Reserve and the Woodland Trust's Piddington and Stoke Woods.

Government agencies such as Network Rail and the Highways Agency and utility companies such as Thames Water either own important sites (Ardley Cuttings); or lease areas of land as nature reserves (Grimsbury Reservoir Woodland, Merton Community Woodland and Bicester Wetland Reserve); or are responsible for land with potential to benefit biodiversity (verges and land associated with the M40); or own and manage sites that pass through sensitive areas (Banbury to Oxford Railway). All are charged with taking a responsible approach to biodiversity issues. Network Rail is preparing site management statements for key sites and the Highways Agency has produced a BAP. Thames Water published its BAP in 1999, has carried out a biodiversity audit of most of its operational sites and has been involved with several biodiversity projects in the District.

- **River Cherwell and Oxford Canal**

The River Cherwell and its watercourse are managed by the Environment Agency, which has produced a BAP for the Thames Region. The Oxford Canal is owned by British Waterways and this organisation has implemented an Environmental Code of Practice giving detailed guidance in assessing and implementing all activities to high environmental standards. A corporate Biodiversity Action Plan is in preparation.

Objectives and Actions

Objectives

- To encourage sympathetic management of priority habitats and sympathetic management for priority species within Cherwell District
- To contribute towards national and county targets for habitat restoration

Actions	Key Organisations
Improve management of SSSIs in unfavourable management	English Nature
Continue monitoring SSSI condition	English Nature
Survey all County Wildlife Sites (CWS)	TVERC
Introduce condition monitoring of CWS.	TVERC
Provide management advice for CWS owners and encourage entry of sites into agri-environment schemes	County Wildlife Site Project, Oxfordshire Woodland Project, DEFRA, FWAG
Provide management advice for habitats	Oxfordshire Woodland

outside designated sites.	Project, FWAG, DEFRA, Environment Agency, Community Wildlife Project, Ponds Conservation Trust
Continue management of nature reserves to meet biodiversity aims.	Woodland Trust, RSPB, BBOWT, BOS, OOS, CDC, Local Groups
Continue management of existing and new road verge nature reserves.	OCC and Local Groups
Government agencies, utility companies and public corporations should take into account biodiversity issues in their work and co-operate with nature conservation groups and organisations to safeguard and manage land to benefit biodiversity.	Network Rail, Highways Agency, Thames Water, Environment Agency, British Waterways
Contribute to Oxfordshire BAP targets for priority habitat re-creation and restoration by reporting progress on Cherwell BAP actions	CDC

Specific Actions for Cherwell District Council

- Continue to support the County Wildlife Sites Project in order to help deliver improved and sensitive management of County Wildlife Sites.
- Provide grant aid to nature reserves including purchase of new sites and extensions for habitat restoration.
- Continue work with relevant organisations to improve management at Enslow Marsh. The condition of the site should be considered favourable within the five-year timescale of the Cherwell BAP.
- Produce a management plan for Giant's Cave (The Bretch) with the emphasis on restoring limestone grassland habitat.
- Work with Bicester Angling Club to implement habitat improvements at Trow Pool.
- Regularly review management at other sites managed by the Council.
- Continue support for organisations and projects providing management advice (County Wildlife Sites Project, FWAG and Oxfordshire Woodland Project).
- Seek to engage with the farming community through the Cherwell Countryside Forum and ongoing support for FWAG.

5. CHERWELL'S PRIORITY HABITATS AND SPECIES

5.1 Introduction

This section of the BAP details the priority habitats and species found in Cherwell District within nine Habitat Action Plans (HAPs).

Habitats

The habitats described are largely derived from the priority habitats listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and the Oxfordshire BAP. However, at the local level, it is important not simply to stick to those priority habitats listed in the UKBAP. Many priority species are associated with what are termed broad habitat categories and conservation action aimed at these habitats should benefit such species. The Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan includes a number of such broad habitat categories and these will also be included here. In addition, any other habitat that has been identified as important in Cherwell District is also included. Within the HAPs, where it is appropriate, the association with the habitats listed in the UKBAP is mentioned.

Some of the habitats are very rare in Cherwell District and, for the sake of simplicity, similar habitats are dealt with together. Therefore, all wetland habitats are considered in a single HAP and wet woodland is included as a sub-section in the Woodland HAP. Aquatic habitats are considered in a single HAP with subsections for watercourses (rivers, streams and ditches), canals and standing water (ponds, lakes, mineral extraction sites and reservoirs). In the Oxfordshire BAP, the latter categories are described separately.

Some of the names used are slightly different from the Oxfordshire BAP. This is the case with acid grassland and heathland and the sub sections in the Wetlands HAP. This has been done to cover the habitats in Cherwell more clearly. For example, in the Oxfordshire BAP, acid grassland is included under heathland. In Cherwell, there are only small remnants of heathland but there are a few sites with acid grassland. The title of heathland would be inappropriate and it is important to clearly state what is covered. Throughout the HAPs, any differences with the Oxfordshire BAP are explained.

The table on the next page attempts to summarise the relationship between habitat names in the UKBAP, Oxfordshire BAP and the Cherwell BAP.

Species

The UKBAP priority species and other species of conservation concern (as defined in Section 2, Biodiversity) are listed for each habitat. However, for birds, only those species identified in the Birds of Conservation lists (see section 2, Biodiversity) are included as species of conservation concern because of the greater focus this document provides for bird conservation. In the HAPs the listed species are only included for their main associated habitat(s). In many cases with animals, the associations are more complex. Further information is available in the English Nature report '*Biodiversity - Making the Links*' (Simonson and Thomas, 1999). Occasionally, recently extinct species may be included because these may become target species for reintroduction projects.

A number of species which are not priority species or on the wider 'species of conservation concern' list are mentioned as local character species. These are still uncommon and sometimes quite rare in the District. They may be indicative of a good habitat condition or have been highlighted as being of particular concern by local groups or people.

Relationship between habitat names in the UKBAP, Oxfordshire BAP and Cherwell BAP

UKBAP	Oxfordshire BAP	This Report	Notes
Cereal Field Margins	Farmland	Cereal Field Margins and Farmland	
Species Rich Hedgerows	Hedgerows	Hedgerows including Ancient or Species Rich Hedgerows	
Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland	Lowland Broad Leafed Woodland	Woodland	
Wet Woodland	Wet Woodland	Woodland	Very rare in Cherwell District and included with woodland
Parkland and Wood Pasture	Parkland, Wood Pasture and Veteran Trees	Parkland and Veteran Trees	There is no wood pasture in Cherwell
Lowland Meadows	Grazing marsh and neutral grassland	Neutral grassland and grazing marsh	
Grazing Marsh	Neutral grassland and grazing marsh	Neutral grassland and grazing marsh	
Lowland Calcareous Grassland	Chalk and Limestone grassland	Lowland Calcareous Grassland	
Lowland Dry Acid Grassland	Heathland	Acid grassland and heathland	
Heathland	Heathland	Acid grassland and heathland	
Reedbeds	Reedbeds	Wetlands (Fen, Flushes, Reedbeds and other swamp habitat)	
Fen	Fens and flushes	Wetlands (Fen, Flushes, reedbeds and other swamp habitat)	

Mesotrophic Standing Water	Ponds, reservoirs, gravel pits and other lakes and canals dealt with separately	Ponds, lakes, mineral extraction sites and reservoirs and canals described in a separate sub section	
Chalk Streams	Rivers and ditches	Rivers, streams and ditches	
	Settlements	Settlements	
	Earth Heritage	Earth Heritage	
		Scrub	

Habitat Action Plans (HAPs)

The nine HAPs within this section of the BAP each include four main elements – current status, issues, current action and objective/actions. In addition to the more general actions that are identified, specific actions for Cherwell District Council are included. However, within some of the HAPs, the Council is also a key organisation with regard to some of the general actions. Where this is the case, reference to CDC is also made under general actions (specifically in the Wetlands and Settlements HAPs).

Many of the actions identified, both general and specific, are ongoing and target dates have not been set. The BAP will be reviewed annually and the progress on each action assessed. This information will then be fed into the Oxfordshire BAP reporting system and used to contribute to Oxfordshire BAP targets.

Species Action Plans (SAPs)

SAPs have been prepared at the national and county level and the Cherwell BAP will seek to contribute information to those that already exist. If time and resources permit, CDC will help to facilitate the preparation of SAPs for certain local character species in partnership with local organisations.

5.2 FARMLAND HABITAT ACTION PLAN

1. Current Status

The Hawker Report (1996) recorded that 85% of the District is farmed as arable or improved grassland. This wider countryside is greatly appreciated as being typical of our rural English landscape. Although in the main this is not regarded as prime wildlife habitat, the area does include the majority of the District's hedgerows, small woodlands and ponds and presents the greatest scope for wildlife improvement.

Cereal Field Margins

As large areas of Cherwell District are farmed for arable crops, there are many cereal field margins. This habitat is a UKBAP priority due to the need to encourage better management and the benefits it would bring for a range of priority species. There are two key groups of species associated with cereal field margins. These are farmland birds and arable wildflowers. There have been few records of the priority arable wildflowers in recent years. There are some records from the 1970's and 1960's of cornflower, corn cleavers and red hemp nettle and some records from the 1980's from the Bicester area for Shepherd's Needle.

The number of fields with sensitively managed margins is small when compared to the total number. The most valuable margins are wide strips that are left uncropped and where herbicides and pesticides are not used. These will support a range of arable wildflowers in some cases, including rare and priority species. They will also support a greater diversity of invertebrates that, along with weed seeds,

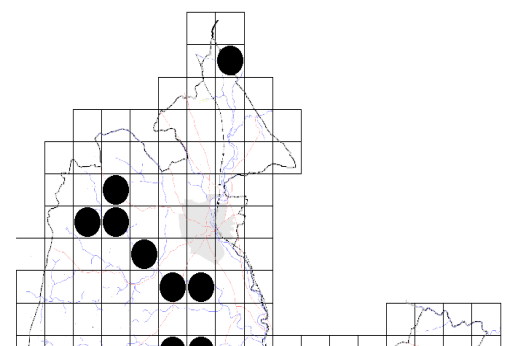
Priority Species (including other farmland habitats)

Tree Sparrow
Skylark
Corn Bunting
Grey Partridge
Brown Hare
Shepherd's Needle
Possibly some other arable wildflowers

Species of Conservation Concern

Harvest Mouse
Lanwina

Figure 2: Distribution of Grey Partridge (2001-2003)¹



provide important feeding areas for farmland birds. They also provide buffers for hedgerows, watercourses and any habitats on adjacent land.

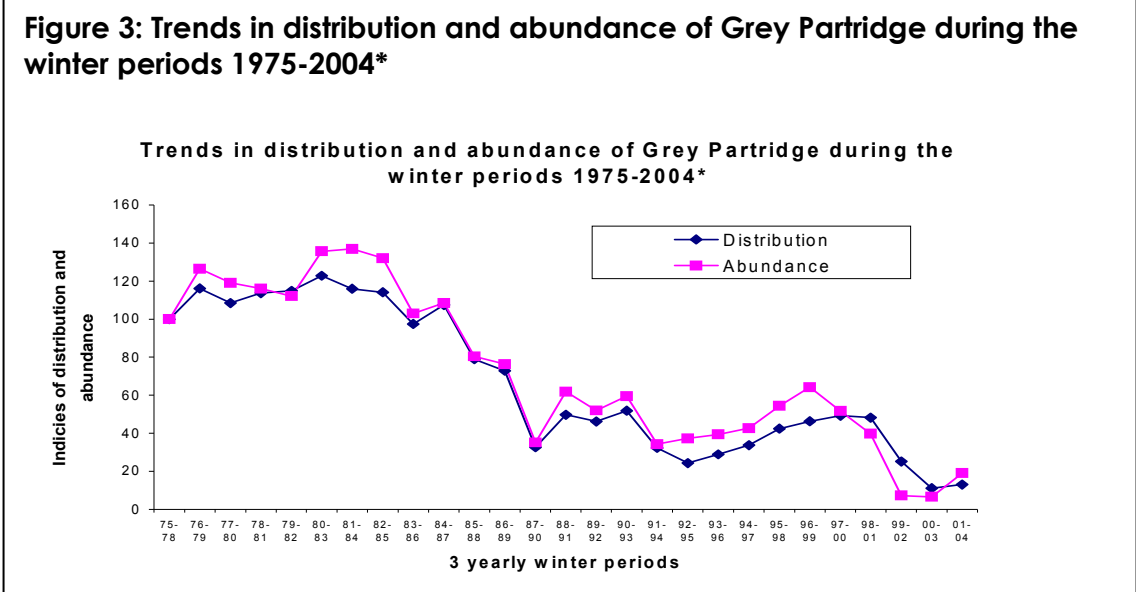
Agri-environment schemes such as set aside and Countryside Stewardship has increased the numbers of sympathetically managed field margins. In areas with an active shoot, game crops are often planted in field corners and along field margins to provide cover and food for game birds. These also provide valuable food resources for other birds.

Other Farmland Habitats

In the Oxfordshire BAP, this category is included within farmland. While field margins are particularly important, they cannot be looked at in isolation. The combination of field margin and sympathetically managed hedgerows is particularly important for conserving biodiversity in farmland.

¹Distribution is indicative only and not based on detailed comprehensive survey for Grey Partridge

Other habitats such as ponds, small woodlands and farm buildings all contribute to the overall biodiversity within farmland. Birds such as skylark, corn bunting and lapwing nest in cereal crops. Tree sparrows nest in holes in buildings, especially the more isolated barns and farm outbuildings (*Birds of Oxfordshire. Brucker, Gosler and Heryet, 1992*).



*Information from Banbury Ornithological Society's Random 1km Square Survey. The years 1975-78 are used as a baseline.

Hedgerows including Ancient or Species Rich Hedgerows

The UKBAP includes ancient and species rich habitats as a priority habitat as these tend to support the greatest diversity of wildlife. However, all hedgerows that are sympathetically managed with a good structure are important for wildlife and, thus, the Oxfordshire BAP considers all hedgerows as a habitat category.

Hedgerows are closely associated with the farmland category as they are key farmland habitats and the management of hedgerows, along with field margins, is particularly important for many of the priority species associated with these habitats.

Hedgerow trees are also an important feature. There is, therefore, a close association with veteran trees, which are included within the Parkland and Veteran Trees Habitat Action Plan (HAP). There is also a close association with field margins as these provide buffer zones for hedgerows and, together, a better habitat for farmland birds.

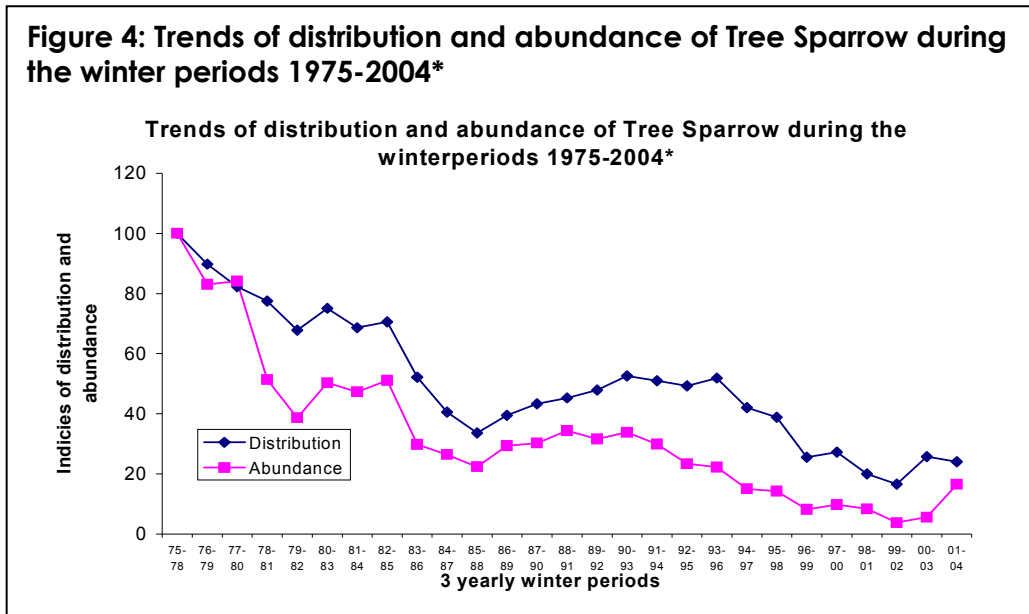
There are two main sources of information on hedgerows. The Oxfordshire Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) has surveyed many hedgerows to identify species rich examples. Banbury Ornithological Society (BOS) record hedgerows with good structure during their ten kilometre square land use surveys.

<p>Priority Species Linnet Grey Partridge Reed Bunting Pipistrelle Song Thrush Tree Sparrow Turtle Dove</p> <p>Species of Conservation Concern Black Hairstreak Brown Hairstreak Other bats</p>

2. Issues

- Changes in farming practice, such as the reduction in spring-sown crops and the lack of fields left as stubble through the winter, have had significant effects on farmland bird populations.
- The combination of powerful herbicides, pesticides and management right up to the field edge, along with sometimes spraying into hedge bottoms, has severely affected food availability for farmland birds.
- Redevelopment of redundant buildings reducing nesting opportunities for tree sparrows, barn owls and swallows.
- Introduction of genetically modified crops. The effects of this contentious issue are largely unknown but there are major concerns about its implications for biodiversity,

- In recent years the loss of hedgerows has slowed considerably. There have been few applications for hedgerow removal, under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and, with replanting, the length of hedgerows is relatively stable.
- The key issue is the need to improve management as many hedgerows are cut at inappropriate times of the year.
- Neglect has led to many 'gappy' hedgerows.
- The loss of elm trees has significantly affected the number of hedgerow trees. This has degraded the landscape as well as having an adverse affect on wildlife conservation.



*Information from Banbury Ornithological Society's Random 1km Square Survey. The years 1975-78 are used as a baseline.

3. Current Action

FWAG

Organisations such as FWAG play a pivotal role in engaging with and advising farmers on nature conservation and delivering the conservation of biodiversity in the wider countryside of Cherwell District. Beside general advisory work, Whole Farm Plans have been produced and FWAG has been responsible for approximately 50% of accepted Countryside Stewardship applications in Oxfordshire. FWAG has produced a map of the Cherwell District, which shows all the areas that they have been involved with during the last five years.

FWAG can also target land to link areas within Countryside Stewardship and to encourage management adjacent to existing valuable sites.

Agri-environment Schemes

These schemes are administered by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

- **The Upper Thames Tributaries Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA)**

This includes the Cherwell and Ray flood plains. Significant areas of these have been entered onto the Upper Thames Tributaries ESA. Approximately half of the land entered into the scheme has been in the tiers, which can provide benefits for wildlife.

- **Countryside Stewardship**

Well over 100 areas of land in Cherwell District are in the Countryside Stewardship scheme. Landowners are receiving payments for the management of hedgerows, field margins, grasslands, re-creating grasslands and parkland. Warriner School Farm in Bloxham, which receives an annual Council grant towards its outreach work to schools and the community, has been in the Countryside Stewardship scheme since 1999.

In 2005, the ESA and Countryside Stewardship schemes will be replaced by the Environmental Stewardship Scheme. This will merge the existing schemes and hopefully build on the benefits for nature conservation these have brought. At present, the scheme is in the development stage and should be finalised by the end of 2004.

Subsidies provided to farmers through the European Common Agricultural Policy will also change. Farmers will receive single farm payments not tied to production and intensification. Potentially this could result in environmental benefits.

Hedgerow Surveys

Hedgerow surveys to identify 'species rich' examples, have been carried out by CPRE and other local groups, with CPRE holding a database of all the survey information. Coverage is patchy and reliant on local interest in undertaking surveys. BOS identify hedgerows with a good structure in its regular 10 km land use surveys that cover all but the very south of Cherwell District. The District Council has grant aided some of the survey work. The Council also provides grants for hedgerow planting and restoration through its Landscape Conservation Grants Scheme.

Rivers Project

A joint project between FWAG, BBOWT and WildCRU (Wildlife Conservation Research Unit) will combine the production of Whole Farm Plans with encouraging buffer zones along watercourses. A key element in this project is that monitoring will be undertaken by WildCRU in order to establish what benefits for wildlife result from the project. This is particularly important because previously there has been little monitoring work to assess the benefits of agri-environment schemes.

4. Objectives and Actions

Objectives

- To encourage sympathetic management of hedgerows and other farmland habitats.
- To address declines in farmland birds.
- To identify the resource of 'species rich' hedgerows and hedgerows with good structure.

Actions	Key Organisations
Develop targeted projects within Cherwell District to replace the production of Whole Farm Plans	FWAG
Inform membership of changes in agri-environment schemes and promote environmental responsibility including the need to conserve biodiversity	NFU and CLA
Use BOS hedgerow structure information and CPRE hedgerow survey information to help target agri-environment schemes.	FWAG and DEFRA
Use OWLs to help target agri-environment schemes	FWAG and DEFRA
Continue survey of hedgerows to identify hedgerows with good structure and 'species rich' examples to provide a fuller picture of the resource. Hedgerow surveys should always include structure as a feature to be recorded.	CPRE, BOS, Local Groups, TVERC (through the Community Wildlife Recording Project, if funding is forthcoming)

Specific Actions for Cherwell District Council

- Enforce hedgerow protection legislation
- Use Tree Preservation Orders to protect hedgerow trees, especially veteran trees
- Continue to provide grant aid to FWAG. This is likely to change from grant aiding Whole Farm Plans as the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme is introduced. FWAG is the key organisation working in this high priority area and it is vital to maintain funding. Support projects developed by FWAG aimed at conserving biodiversity in farmland. FWAG should be considered a high priority for additional grant aid if suitable opportunities arise.
- Provide grant aid for hedgerow planting. This should be tied to long term management of the hedgerow. Consider tying grants to the inclusion of buffer strips next to the hedge. This could be done by providing higher grants in these circumstances.
- Seek to engage with the farming community through the Cherwell Countryside Forum and ongoing support for FWAG.

5.3 Woodland Habitat Action Plan

1. Current Status

Cherwell District is lightly wooded with approximately 3.5% of the land covered by woodland. It is thought that woodland was lost from much of the District as land was cleared for agriculture by the early farming settlers. The main areas of woodland are associated with the larger areas of parkland and larger estates and much of this is long established broad-leaved, mixed and coniferous plantation. This category covers ancient semi-natural woods, which tend to be the most 'species rich', other long established woodland with a semi-natural structure and also more recent mixed broad-leaved plantations that are to be managed to benefit wildlife.

Broad-leaved Ancient Woodland

This consists of those sites that have been continuously wooded since 1600AD, which have not been replanted with conifers. It is restricted to:

- The northerly outliers of Shotover Forest in the south east of the District. Whitecross Green Wood SSSI, Prattle Wood, Noke Wood and the remains of Studley Wood.
- The woods on top of Graven and Arcott Hill and two woodlands east of Piddington – Piddington Wood and Little Wood.
- A group of woodlands near Bucknell and Stoke Lyne, Stoke Wood, Stoke Little Wood, Stoke Bushes and Twelve-Acre Copse.
- Three woodlands at Shelswell including the County Wildlife Site Spilsmere Wood.

There are other ancient woodland sites that have been replanted, often with conifers, although these retain some elements of an ancient woodland flora. These include Oldfields Copse, which is a County Wildlife Site, Home Wood and Mangthorn Wood in Middleton Park and the Heath, just north of Middleton Park. Large parts of Whitecross Green Wood were replanted with conifers and these areas are now being restored to broad-leaved woodland.

Other Broad-leaved and Community Woodland

Priority Species

Bullfinch
Song Thrush
Spotted Flycatcher
Pearl-bordered Fritillary
(now extinct in Oxfordshire)
Lunar Yellow Underwing

Species of Conservation Concern

Polecat
Black Hairstreak
Brown Hairstreak
Purple Emperor
Green Woodpecker
Hawfinch

Local Character Species

Lesser Spotted
Woodpecker

The most valuable non-ancient broad-leaved woodlands are those long established woodlands similar in structure to semi-natural ancient woodland and the more recent plantings, which are to be managed for nature conservation. These include:

- The County Wildlife Sites of Mollington Wood, Begbroke Wood, Stratfield Brake, Black Leys Wood near Weston-on-the-Green, part of South Newington Valley and a small woodland west of Swerford Park.
- New Halvers Wood – a County Wildlife Site that lies partly in Cherwell District. Bird's-nest orchid has been recorded here.
- The denotified County Wildlife Site of Hanwell Gorse.
- The Spinney at Otmoor, which is included in the SSSI.
- Washford Pits Wood, which is part of the Local Nature Reserve at Kirtlington.
- Grimsbury Reservoir Woodland, part of a County Wildlife Site, owned by Thames Water and managed by the Banbury Ornithological Society.

Lack of woodland, especially in the north of the District, means that such woods are important for woodland birds and a valuable refuge for wildlife. New plantations can provide good habitat for grasshopper warblers and also provided habitat for tree pipit, a species now lost from Cherwell District.

There are also numerous broad-leaved plantations scattered throughout the District. Most are small in size. These include a number of areas planted as community woodland including sites at Kidlington, Launton, Merton, Deddington, Souldern, Islip and Baynards Green. An area of woodland was planted near Thrupp with aid from the Forestry Commission's Community Woodland Grant Scheme and, though it remains in private ownership, access is allowed.

Wet Woodland

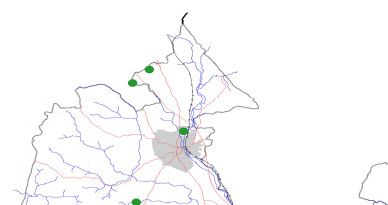
There is very little wet woodland in Cherwell District or indeed Oxfordshire as a whole. Wet woodland would have once been common along the river valleys but was lost as early man converted such areas to farmland. Wet woodland is typically dominated by alder and willows and includes areas of willow carr dominated by smaller willows. Wet woodland can still be found:

- In small pockets along river valleys. Much of this is willow dominated with nettles. Such areas can be found at Enslow Marsh and Hanwell Gorse.
- At BBOWT's Slade Nature Reserve at Bloxham.
- In small areas within other woods although these have not been accurately catalogued. This may include the richer alder woodlands.
- In association with wetland at Weston Fen and with a small lake at Cottisford Pond.
- In recently planted woodland. Alder is a common component of woodland planted next to rivers such as the woodland near Thrupp. Another area of alder woodland has been established by the River Cherwell at Kidlington.

2. Issues

- Lack of management especially traditional management such as coppicing.

Figure 4: Distribution of Semi-Ancient Woodland and Other Woodland in County Wildlife Sites and Nature Reserves



- Lack of accessible woodland for the major towns in Cherwell District.
- Excessive deer grazing damaging woodland flora.
- Grey squirrel damage.
- Removal of dead wood – standing and fallen dead wood is an important habitat feature.
- Past replanting with dense conifer plantations.
- Lack of understanding of woodland management can lead to potential conflict between woodland managers and local people.
- Inappropriate planting on other important habitats.
- Forestry Commission advice to discourage the planting of alder due to Phytophthora.

3. Current Action

- The Oxfordshire Woodland Project has provided advice for a number of woodlands in Cherwell District. In some cases it has worked with the Country Wildlife Sites Project in providing advice such as at Gravenhill Wood near Bicester. Most of the County Wildlife Site woodlands have been surveyed.
- The Oxfordshire Woodland Project played a key role in the planting of the community woodland at Merton. A key element of the Merton woodland is to inform people of the various types of woodland management. It is important to increase understanding of management that benefits nature conservation. Cherwell District Council provided grant aid towards this project. OWP has also worked with the local community at Wendlebury to reintroduce management at Bowlers Copse.
- An important role of the Oxfordshire Woodland Project is to provide training for woodland management. A site just outside the District near Swerford is often used for this, though clearly this attracts people from Cherwell District.
- The Woodland Trust manage Stoke Wood, Piddington Wood and Stratfield Brake. Land next to Piddington Wood has been purchased to extend the wood and Stratfield Brake has also been extended. The Trust is also involved with the community sites of Daeda's Wood at Deddington and Island Pond Wood at Launton. Cherwell District Council provided grant aid towards these sites.
- Whitecross Green Wood is a BBOWT nature reserve. The conifer plantations are being restored to broad-leaved semi-natural woodland.
- Community woodland has also been planted at Souldern, Islip and Baynards Green.
- Grimsbury Reservoir Woodland is managed by the Banbury Ornithological Society on behalf of Thames Water.

- The Forestry Commission provides grants under the English Woodland Grants Scheme, which includes grants for the restoration of semi-natural woodland on ancient woodland sites that have been converted to plantation woodland.

4. Objectives and Actions

Objective – To encourage sympathetic management of existing woodland and planting next to existing sites

Broad-leaved Woodland

The main priority of managing existing sites is being delivered through advice provided by the Oxfordshire Woodland Project and County Wildlife Sites Project, as well as through the existing nature reserves of Whitecross Green Wood, Stoke Wood, Piddington Wood, Stratfield Brake and the Grimsbury Reservoir Woodland. New planting is a much lower priority. With the limited number of sites, planting woodland in much of the District will not provide great benefits for woodland wildlife, as there is limited chance that woodland species could colonise such areas. It is only a priority adjacent to existing important sites as has been undertaken by the Woodland Trust next to Piddington Wood and Stratfield Brake. However, new plantations have been an important habitat for grasshopper warbler and tree pipit in the past.

Objective – To provide new community woodlands in Cherwell District

Community Woodland

All new planting should be composed of native species. While small scale community based schemes may have relatively limited benefits to wildlife conservation when compared to larger scale planting next to existing sites, such sites will attract a range of common birds and invertebrates. In particular, they do provide a focal point where people can enjoy and appreciate wildlife. These sites can also incorporate other habitats. An example is the inclusion of wetland habitat at Stratfield Brake. Grassland habitat often provides the most immediate benefits for wildlife on such sites and, while much of this is lost as the canopy closes, the inclusion of wide rides and glades means that it will be retained in the site. These should always be included in the design of any site.

The Oxfordshire Woodland Project is keen to be involved in new community woodland projects. It welcomes the opportunity to provide background information in support of negotiations with developers for provision of community woodland.

Objective – To establish small areas of wet woodland on suitable sites

Wet Woodland

The priority is to retain the existing areas. Small scale new planting on appropriate non-wetland sites should be encouraged. This helps strengthen the wildlife corridor along the river and provides cover for priority species such as otter to lay up. The re-creation of 100ha of wet woodland is a target within the Oxfordshire BAP. Large scale re-creation is always best targeted to areas with existing species-rich wet woodland, in the same way that new woodland planting should be targeted to areas adjacent to, and linking, existing sites. Therefore, wet woodland planting should involve small scale planting along the river corridor.

Actions	Key Organisations
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Continue to advise on woodland management for key sites	Oxfordshire Woodland Project, CWS Project
Continue management of nature reserve woodlands	Woodland Trust, BBOWT and BOS
Plant at least two community woodlands within the timescale of the Cherwell BAP	CDC, Oxfordshire Woodland Project, parishes and local groups.
Plant small areas of wet woodland on suitable sites	Landowners. EA , FWAG, DEFRA

Specific Actions for Cherwell District Council

- Establish a District Tree and Woodland Plan
- Aim to provide and/or support at least two community woodlands within the timescale of the plan.
- Continue grant aid support for the Oxfordshire Woodland Project
- Support projects that deliver new planting adjacent to existing sites. Banbury and Bicester should be priority targets. Bicester at least has a number of accessible sites in the area although not within walking distance. Banbury is therefore a slightly higher priority.
- Where appropriate to the landscape setting, negotiate with developers for the provision of community woodland in relation to major housing developments including allocated sites for housing developments in the Local Plan.
- To gain support and grant aid, such schemes should include wide rides and glade and at least one other suitable habitat covering at least 25% of any site. For wetter sites adjacent to rivers and streams, areas of wetland habitats should be included and species should be largely composed of wet woodland at trees and shrubs.
-

5.4 Parkland and Veteran Trees Habitat Action Plan

1. Current Status

Parkland is included in the UKBAP along with wood pasture, which is not found in Cherwell District. Typically, it consists of grassland with scattered trees, some of which may be what are known as veteran trees. Some of the parkland has been degraded by conversion to arable crops. The Oxfordshire BAP extends this category to include all veteran trees, as they are not entirely restricted to parkland sites.

Cherwell District has a number of historic parkland sites especially to the west and north of Bicester. These are characterised by the presence of scattered old standard trees, know as veteran trees, usually within a grassland setting. These parklands are historic landscape features and illustrate the coincidence between such features and important sites for biodiversity.

The larger sites in Cherwell District are:

Priority Species

Orange-fruited Elm-lichen
(last record 1980)
Pipistrelle

Species of Conservation

- Kirtlington Park
- Middleton Park
- Bletchingdon Park
- Bignell Park
- Tusmore Park
- Shelswell Park
- Broughton Park
- Wroxton Abbey
- Swerford Park

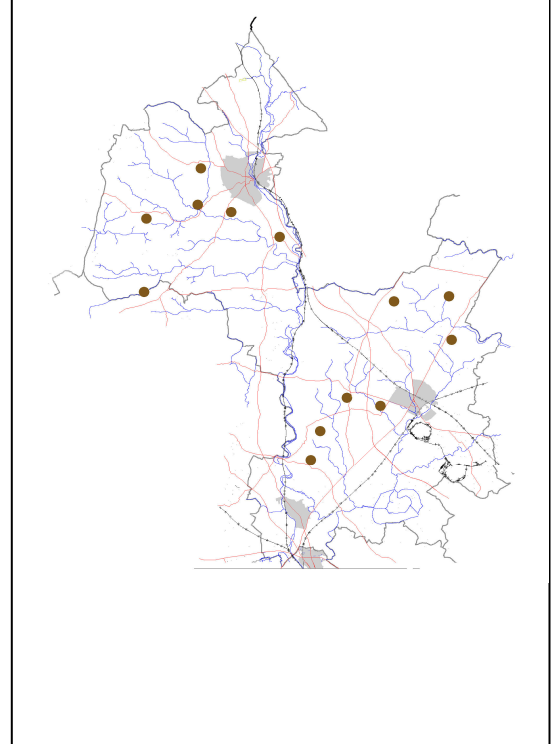
These also include areas of degraded parkland, which have been converted to arable crops. Cherwell District contributes significantly to the area of parkland in Oxfordshire, which holds particularly high concentrations of this habitat in Western Europe.

A desktop survey, funded by English Nature, (*Thames & Chilterns: Parkland and Wood Pastures with Veteran Trees Phase 1-A Provisional Inventory 2002/3: K N A Alexander and J A Lister*) was undertaken to identify all parkland and wood pasture sites in the Thames and Chiltern Region and to grade sites (from 1 to 6) depending on the presence of veteran trees. Grade 1 sites contain confirmed concentrations of veteran trees, grade 2 sites have confirmed presence of at least small numbers of veteran trees and grade 3 sites probably have veteran trees. In Cherwell District, Kirtlington Park and Wroxton Abbey have been classified as Grade 1. Broughton, Shelswell and Tusmore Parks have been classified as Grade 3. The report also identified parkland habitat at Stratton Audley Park, Swalcliffe Park, Wykham Park and at East Adderbury.

Veteran trees can be found elsewhere in the District in hedgerows, farmland, churchyards and villages, though little is known as to their exact distribution.

The key feature of these trees is the presence of dead wood, which supports a highly specialist invertebrate fauna and fungi. This in turn provides a valuable food resource for wood boring birds while cavities provide important nesting sites for birds and roosting sites for bats.

Figure 5: Distribution of Parkland



Base map produced by TVERC
 Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey
 mapping with the permission of the
 Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery
 Office

2. Issues

- Inappropriate tree surgery removing important dead wood habitat.
- Increasing cost of tree surgery driven by insurance premiums.
- Lack of new tree planting to act as long-term replacements and to provide a varied age structure in parkland trees.
- Lack of knowledge – both distribution and specific information on flora and fauna associated with veteran trees in Cherwell District.
- Ploughing in the vicinity of trees causing damage.

3. Current Action

It is recognised in the Oxfordshire BAP that knowledge of, and activities targeting, this habitat has been very limited. English Nature is addressing this by funding surveys throughout the Thames and Chiltern Region including Cherwell District. As a follow up to the desktop study of parkland and wood pasture, detailed surveys have been carried out on grade 1 sites (Kirtlington Park and Wroxton Abbey in Cherwell). If funding is available, grade 2 sites will be surveyed although there are none of these in Cherwell District. Overall, these surveys will give a far better picture of the importance of parkland habitat.

Limited grant aid is available for parkland from Countryside Stewardship, which has been taken up at some sites in the District. CDC is able to grant aid tree surgery as part of its Landscape Conservation Grants scheme.

4. Objectives and Actions

The Oxfordshire BAP is seeking greater emphasis on parkland and veteran trees and the surveys funded by English Nature are a first step in this process. Ideally, surveys should be extended to cover grade 3 sites and so include Broughton, Tusmore and Shelswell Parks, although the grade 2 sites will be the next priority.

The Oxfordshire Woodland Project may be able to provide some advice on the management of veteran trees. The Woodland Project does not have the resources to divert large amounts of time to this but it may be possible to identify specific areas where the input of the Project Officer would be particularly useful.

Objectives

- To identify the resource and increase the understanding of the importance of veteran trees within parkland in Cherwell District.
- To encourage sympathetic management of veteran trees.

Actions	Key Organisations
Agree at least some input into veteran tree conservation with the Oxfordshire Woodland Project.	Oxfordshire Woodland Project, CDC
Consider the survey of sites classified as grade 3 by English Nature	English Nature, CDC

Specific Actions for Cherwell District Council

- Use Tree Preservation Orders to protect veteran trees.

- Provide grants for planting new trees in parkland. These will act as long term replacements for existing trees and profile a more varied age structure of trees in the long term.
- Grant aid for tree surgery should be provided under the proviso that the most important factor is to retain standing dead wood on the tree wherever possible, as this is the key feature to conserving biodiversity.

5.5 Grassland, Grazing Marsh and Heathland Habitat Action Plan

1. Current Status

Lowland Meadows/Neutral Grassland

Although lowland meadow is a more user friendly term than neutral grassland, it does not necessarily reflect the actual location of all this habitat as it does not all occur in the meadows. This is especially true in Cherwell District. The more acidic type of neutral grassland is found on the banks along some of the valleys that cut through the Ironstone in the north west of the District. In all respects, this category refers to unimproved and semi-improved grassland where there has been little or no agricultural improvement.

Most of the species rich meadows are found in the south of the District. These include some of the richest and most historic examples of this habitat in the UK. These sites are mainly cut for hay and then grazed in the autumn and winter. Some of the wetter sites are used only for grazing and, as long as the grazing is not intensive and preferably with cattle, a tussocky wet grassland sward similar to grazing marsh is present. In addition, there are some meadows with a similar tussocky appearance but which lack the variety of grassland species typical of other unimproved sites. Sites include:

- Pixey and Yarnton Meads. An SSSI with a long management history. These are part of the Oxford Meadows Special Area for Conservation.
- Wendlebury Meads and Mansmoor Closes SSSI. Very species rich examples of this habitat.
- Murcott Meadows SSSI and Asham Meads nature reserve.
- Otmoor includes areas of lowland meadow although the richest areas on the rifle range are mainly found outside Cherwell District. Most of the site supports grazing marsh and rush pasture habitat.
- Arccott Bridge Meadow SSSI and a number of County Wildlife sites along the River Ray near Bicester.

Priority Species

Skylark
Grey Partridge
True Fox Sedge
Marsh Fritillary – occurred at Otmoor, but now extinct.

Species of Conservation Concern

Redshank
Curlew
Lapwing
Snipe
Meadow Pipit
Teal
Pintail
Shoveller
Widgeon
Gadwall
Ground Beetle – *Badister meridianalis*
Hoverfly – *Chrysogaster macquati*
Fen Violet

Local Character Species

- A number of other sites south of Bicester including the recently discovered meadows at Gavray Drive. Some sites such as the meadows at Promised-land Farm have declined in the last 20 years.
- Rush Meads SSSI and Langford Meadow near the Oxford Canal at Kidlington.
- Some of the meadows between Kidlington and the River Cherwell also support lowland meadow habitat.

Some of these meadows are examples of ridge and furrow which is an historic landscape feature resulting from medieval ploughing. Ridge and furrow is relatively common in Cherwell District especially along the Ray Valley. While there is some coincidence between unimproved and semi-improved grassland and this feature, many ridge and furrow fields have been improved through the use of fertilizers. However, all such sites are important archaeological and landscape features.

Elsewhere in the District, unimproved and semi-improved meadows are very uncommon. Sites include:

- Bestmoor SSSI located in the Cherwell Valley near Somerton. It supports approximately 90% of the UK population of narrow-leaved water-dropwort.
- A County Wildlife site at South Newington.
- A wet meadow at the BBOWT Slade Nature Reserve at Bloxham.

The other neutral grasslands are the dry banks of the more acidic type of neutral grassland found mainly in the north west of the District. This grassland type is very similar to certain types of acid grassland and a further survey is needed to fully understand it. It is possible that both the acidic neutral and acid grassland are occurring in a mosaic. These are found:

- Along the River Swere near Hook Norton and Wigginton.
- At Hornton Meadows, a BBOWT nature reserve along the Sor Brook.
- At Wroxton and Balscote Mills.
- Near Shenington: this site was highlighted in the 'Towards a District Nature Conservation Strategy' report.
- On Muswell Hill in the southeast corner of the District.
- At the disused Horsehay Quarry.
- At Studley Wood. This is an unusual site. Most of the woodland has been removed and more recently a golf course has been created. Prior to the construction of the golf course, extensive areas of wet somewhat acidic grassland, typical of rides in woodlands in the area, was present. This supports a mixture of woodland and grassland species. However, since the construction of the golf course it is not clear how much of this survives.

A recent detailed survey along the Swere has highlighted the presence of a number of previously unrecorded sites. It is quite possible that further areas of this grassland may be found along other valleys in the north west of the District. The mixed geology of these valley banks means that this grassland is often found in close

association with patches of the more calcareous type of neutral grassland and perhaps acid grassland on some banks.

Rough Grassland

Rough grassland is another type of neutral grassland also found outside meadows. This is unmanaged or little managed grassland dominated by tall grasses and is typical of road verges. This is not an UKBAP priority habitat but is included in the Oxfordshire BAP. It is particularly valuable because it provides good habitat for small mammals and, thus, good hunting ground for birds of prey such as owls and kestrels.

Some sites can be richer in plant species, especially those on the more calcareous soils where colourful wildflowers such as greater knapweed, field scabious and meadow cranes-bill are common. Other wildflowers such as cowslip can also be found. On sites such as disused railways, rough grassland can be found in association with limestone grassland.

Larger areas of this habitat include:

- Horley Nature Reserve on the disused railway.
- Skimmingdish Lane Balancing Pond at Bicester, which is strongly calcareous in nature and has some species associated with limestone grassland.
- The disused railway near Mixbury which supports a mixture of rough and limestone grassland.
- The disused railway between Banbury and Hook Norton including BBOWT's Slade Nature Reserve at Bloxham.
- The M40 has extensive areas of rough grassland on embankments and at junctions.
- At present there is only one Road Verge Nature Reserve in Cherwell District at Ardley. While the road verges in Cherwell District are not as valuable as those in, for instance, the Cotswold area of West Oxfordshire, it is important to recognise the richer verges in order to improve management and to prevent conflicts with road maintenance, pipe and cable laying and planning considerations. These verges may well be mainly the more prolific and more flowery rough grassland verges on the limestone or those with large populations of species such as cowslip. The verge of the A423 north of the A4095 junction at Shipton-on-Cherwell is a good example of this. In the District context, where there is so little unimproved grassland, these are valuable remnants. Additional survey may identify remnants of limestone and even perhaps acid grassland.

Grazing Marsh

This is perhaps a slightly confusing name because this habitat is predominantly grassy habitat where the water level is controlled by ditches. The only areas that meet this definition in the District are:

- Otmoor.
- Bicester Wetland Reserve: a Banbury Ornithological Society reserve on land leased from Thames Water.

This habitat is particularly important for birds. The site at Bicester supports a good number of wintering snipe while redshank, curlew and lapwing breed at Otmoor. The RSPB reserve is significantly increasing the amount of this habitat and the numbers of breeding waders. Numbers of wildfowl are also increasing and it now has nationally important numbers of teal, pintail and gadwall. Otmoor is one of only a few UK locations for the ground beetle *Badister meridianalis* and also the only Oxfordshire location of the hairy dragonfly.

Other Wet Grasslands

Although much of the grassland in the river floodplains has been agriculturally improved, these can still be quite wet and may flood. When this is the case, these areas will attract wading birds and wildfowl. The Cherwell Valley between Somerton and Nell Bridge is particularly important in this respect.

Lowland Calcareous Grassland

In Cherwell District this includes grassland that has escaped agricultural improvement or has developed on non-farmed land on the limestone. It is found mainly on the plateau to the east of the Cherwell Valley and north of Bicester and in pockets in the vicinity of Hook Norton. There are two types of lowland calcareous grassland depending on the underlying rocks. These are limestone and chalk grassland. Chalk grassland does not occur in Cherwell District.

Lowland calcareous grassland is mainly restricted to s along some valleys, disused quarries and railway cuttings. Those areas on the limestone plateau north west of Bicester are somewhat unusual because here the soils are deeper which means there is quite a strong element of neutral grassland.

The main sites are:

- Hook Norton Cutting and Bank SSSI.
- Temple Mills Quarries and adjacent banks.
- Upper Heyford Airfield.
- Disused quarries at Kirtlington, Bletchingdon and Shipton-on-Cherwell.
- Stonepit Hills at Weston Fen SSSI.
- Ardley Quarry and Railway Cutting SSSI.
- Stratton Audley Quarry.
- The disused railway near Mixbury.
- Giant's Cave/The Bretch – another disused quarry with remnant limestone grassland. This site is managed by CDC.
- On banks in the site know as Barford Meadow.

Priority Species

Skylark (large open sites)
Perfoliate (or Cotswold)
Pennycress

Species of Conservation Concern

Meadow Clary
Four Spotted Moth
Meadow Pipit

Local Character Species

Green-winged Orchid

Limestone grassland is also found on some road verges. The nationally scarce meadow clary, a wildflower of limestone grassland, is found on a verge near Ardley. This site is managed as a Road Verge Nature Reserve.

Meadow pipit and skylark nest on the open grassland at Upper Heyford Airfield. The airfield can be very much considered an historic landscape feature which again illustrates the coincidence between such features and important sites for biodiversity that are also apparent in parkland and ridge and furrow meadows.

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland and Lowland Heathland

These are included together because they are both rare and the tiny remnants of heathland are found in close association with acid grassland. The same approach was taken in the Oxfordshire BAP although the HAP was called heathland.

This habitat is very rare in Oxfordshire. The Ironstone areas of Cherwell District have somewhat acidic soils although most of the known unimproved grassland here is the more acidic form of neutral grassland (see lowland meadows). However, there is some doubt in this respect and this may be, at least partly, a type of acid grassland (known as U4 sheep's fescue-brown bent-heath bedstraw grassland).

Some acid grassland types are characteristically less rich in species than other grassland but, nonetheless, are an important part of the biodiversity of Cherwell District. The rarity of the habitat means that any associated specialist invertebrates will also be rare in the District. It is not unusual to find gorse and spindle in association with acid grassland habitats and these are a clear indicator of acidic soils.

Existing information shows acid grassland and heathland is found at the following sites:

- Tadmarton Golf Course where there are also a few heather plants indicating that heathland was once present here. There are good areas of gorse scrub here.
- Hangland Farm Railway Cutting, near Chacombe, has scattered heather amongst acid grassland.
- A field west of Hornton, mentioned in the 'Towards a District Nature Conservation Strategy' report, appeared to be acid grassland though this has not been surveyed.
- A bank to the south of Hornton which was considered, but not approved, for County Wildlife Status.
- Parts of the County Wildlife Site at Wroxton and Balscote Mills are quite acidic in character though the presence of acid grassland has not been confirmed. Gorse is present here.

Priority Species

The very limited number of sites means that the usual heathland and acid grassland priority species do not occur in Cherwell District at present.

Species of Conservation Concern

Common Lizard

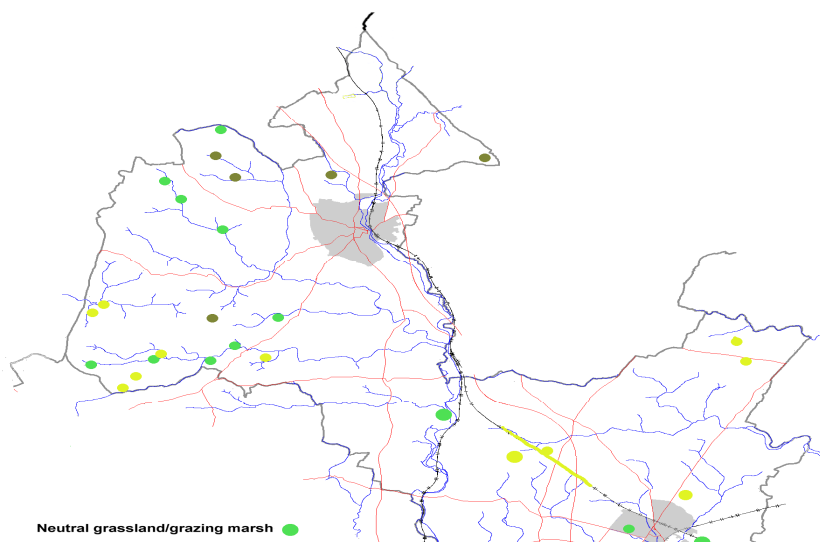
- Poodle gorse near Stratton Audley has remnant areas of acid grassland along with gorse and spindle.
- In the south east corner of the District, on Muswell Hill, the grassland was thought be a possible site for acid grassland although survey work has indicated that it supports the more acidic type of neutral grassland.
- There are small remnant areas in a quarry area at Hanwell Gorse, a denotified County Wildlife Site.

The grassland resource of the Ironstones areas of the District has not been fully surveyed and it is possible that further areas of acid grassland may be found here along the valleys.

2. Issues

- Lack of wet grassland habitat outside Otmoor. Breeding wading birds are very uncommon except at Otmoor.
- Agricultural improvement of grassland sites.
- Change of management from hay to silage production.
- Excessive grazing by sheep damaging the potential value of wet grasslands for birds and invertebrates.
- Lack of management on disused quarries and railways leading to decline in grassland habitat and scrub invasion.
- Lack of knowledge of North Oxfordshire grasslands.
- Development pressure. There is uncertainty about the future of Shipton-on-Cherwell Quarry and potential loss of limestone grassland habitat. Development pressures at Upper Heyford Airfield may have an impact on the grassland.
- Fragmentation: the remnant grasslands, especially the neutral and acid grasslands in the north west of the District and the limestone grasslands, are small and fragmented which increases the risk of extinction of specialist species, especially invertebrates.
- Stratton Audley Quarry is being restored in accordance with an OCC planning consent. Protection of the limestone grassland habitat should be a priority.
- Road verges can be affected by the use of fertilizers and herbicides in adjacent fields. It is worth noting that in West Oxfordshire, where many of the road verge

Figure 6: Distribution of Unimproved Grassland



protection

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3. Current Action

Significant areas in the Upper Ray catchment and along the Cherwell Valley have been entered into the Upper Thames Tributaries ESA. About 50% of this has been entered into tiers which provide benefits for wildlife although few sites are in the more valuable wet grassland tier. This habitat is particularly important for birds. Improving these areas for birds was one of the aims of the ESA. Addressing this lack of wet grassland in the ESA was one of the aims of the RSPB Otmoor Reserve where extensive re-creation of grazing marsh has been delivered. Some other sites, including some County Wildlife Sites, have been entered into the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Important sites such as Gavray Road Meadows at Bicester have been identified in recent years and given County Wildlife Site status. Of those sites recommended for survey in the 'Towards a District Nature Conservation Strategy' report, Muswell Hill has been surveyed and will be recommended as a County Wildlife Site.

Kirtlington Quarry, besides being a geological SSSI, has areas of limestone grassland and is a Local Nature Reserve.

Work by local botanists along the River Swere valley has identified a number of previously unknown wildlife rich grassland sites, flushes and wetland habitat. Detailed information on previously little known sites has also been collected.

There is a long-term desire to re-create acid grassland and heathland habitat on the acidic glacial soils at Tadmarton. It may be possible to work with Tadmarton Golf Course through the County Wildlife Sites project to partly achieve these aims on the golf course. Any opportunities outside the golf course in this area should be supported, if and when, they arise. BOS is in the process of purchasing the freehold of an 18-acre field from Tadmarton Golf Club with a view to establishing a nature reserve and carrying out a heathland restoration programme.

4. Objectives and Actions

Objectives

- To identify and protect the remaining grassland resource in Cherwell District and encourage sympathetic management.
- To support the re-creation of grazing marsh.
- To encourage the re-creation of grassland and heathland.

Actions	Key Organisations
Survey valleys in northwest Cherwell for neutral, acid and limestone grassland.	TVERC, CDC
Identify road verge nature reserves.	TVERC, Local Groups
Undertake surveys along the M40 to identify valuable areas of rough grassland.	Highway Agency
Reassess the treatment of North Oxfordshire acid grassland in the County Wildlife Sites Project.	CWS Project
Target action to the Cherwell Valley between Upper Heyford and Banbury wherever possible within current resources.	DEFRA, FWAG, EA
Continue to restore grazing marsh habitat on Otmoor.	
Seek to protect limestone grassland at Stratton Audley Quarry as part of its restoration.	OCC
Network Rail should work closely with English Nature to improve management of Ardley Cutting.	Network Rail, EN

Specific Actions for Cherwell District Council

- Seek to ensure development proposals at the former RAF Upper Heyford and Shipton-on-Cherwell Quarry protect and enhance the limestone grassland habitat.
- Produce a management plan for Giant's Cave (The Bretch) with the emphasis on restoring limestone grassland habitat.
- Continue management at Kirtlington Quarry to maintain limestone grassland habitat in partnership with Kirtlington Wildlife and Conservation Society.
- Continue management of Kings End in Bicester to maintain wet grassland habitat.
- State that projects targeting wetland and wet grassland in the Cherwell Valley between Banbury and Upper Heyford would be looked upon favourably.
- Continue to grant aid the RSPB.

- Consider supporting BOS with its proposed heathland restoration project in Tadmarton.

5.6 Wetland Habitat Action Plan

1. Current Status

This HAP includes the UKBAP priority habitats of fen and reedbeds. The Oxfordshire BAP also includes flushes with fens. The term fen has been used in a more generic sense and includes swamp vegetation though, in both cases, this is not especially clear as the descriptions concentrate on the more specific true fen habitat.

Reedbeds are a type of swamp vegetation though they are treated separately. In order to highlight true fens as a separate habitat, and to properly consider all types of swamp vegetation, the category of other swamp vegetation is included here.

These types of wetland habitat can be defined as follows:

- True fens develop under certain specific hydrological circumstances and usually have peaty soils. In Cherwell District there is only one fen site at Weston-on-the-Green although at Otmoor, purple moor grass dominated habitat is found in a mosaic with wet grassland and swamp habitat. Purple moor grass is a typical dominant species of one type of fen.
- Swamps are seasonally inundated tall wetland vegetation with tall sedges and reeds and can be found at the margins of ponds and lakes. Swamps are also found in fields next to rivers and at the bottom of the slopes of the narrow valleys in the north east of the District. Small patches of swamp habitat are found at the edge of rivers. Reedbeds, which are dominated by common reed, are a type of swamp habitat.
- Flushes are small areas where spring water spreads over the ground encouraging the development of small areas of marsh habitat often dominated by rushes and smaller sedges.

The Oxfordshire BAP also deals with rivers and ditches, canals, reservoirs, gravel pits and ponds under wetlands. In this report, they will be considered in the Aquatic Habitats Action Plan.

Fen

Priority Species

Reed Bunting
Water Vole
Otter
Bittern (occasional records, but one of the flagship species hoped to be encouraged to return by the RSPB's habitat recreation work on Otmoor).

Species of Conservation Concern

Snipe
Water Rail
Reed Warbler
Sedge Warbler

The only area of fen habitat in Cherwell District is Weston Fen where there is a sizeable area of fen meadow.

Flushes

These are found on or at the base of, valley slopes in the north west of the District. Locations include:

- The Swere Valley where the greatest concentrations are found both on the banks and at the base of the slope nears the river.
- In the valley south of Alkerton.
- Hangland Railway Cutting near Chacombe.
- The County Wildlife Site of Wroxton and Balscote Mills.
- Rye Hill Golf Course
- Shipton-on-Cherwell Quarry

Reedbeds

There are five areas of notable size in Cherwell District. These are at Dukes Lock Pond near Yarnton, a lake within Kirtlington Park, recently created areas in the RSPB Reserve at Otmoor, at the Woodland Trust site at Stratfield Brake and near the lake at the Kidlington Meadows County Wildlife Site.

Other Swamp

These are areas dominated by large sedges (greater and lesser pond sedges and greater tussock sedge) and other reeds (reed sweet-grass and reed canary grass). Swamp habitat is also found as small patches of marginal vegetation along rivers and at the edge of ponds and lakes.

- The largest area of this habitat is found at Enslow Marsh where greater pond sedge dominates much of the site. There are also areas of reed sweet-grass here.
- There is an area of reed sweet-grass dominated swamp next to the River Cherwell at Bletchington Quarry.
- At Rush Spinney near Upper Heyford, greater tussock sedge swamp is present.
- Patches of pond sedge swamp occur within Otmoor and the ditches also support swamp habitat.
- There is an area of mixed swamp vegetation at Horley Pond.
- Swamp vegetation has developed in old borrow pits next to the railway just south of Yarnton.

When swamps dry out, either due to changes in hydrology or a build up of vegetation, the reed and sedge elements are lost, and other tall herb species, especially great willowherb, come to dominate, although some remnants of swamp vegetation may survive. The northern fields at Enslow Marsh are typical examples. There is also a similar area at Bicester next to the Bicester Village retail development.

2. Issues

- Lack of management leading to a build up of vegetation and drying out or invasion by willow.
- Inappropriate pond construction.
- Hydrological changes leading to drying out.
- Uncertainty about the future of Shipton-on-Cherwell Quarry and the potential loss of wetland habitat.

3. Current Action

Wetland has been created at Stratfield Brake on land managed by the Woodland Trust. The Environment Agency provided the design advice. Construction took three months and included excavating four hectares to create large groundwater-fed ponds, carefully designed to mimic an old meandering channel. A complex mosaic of shallow and deep water, surrounding gravel islands and mudbanks, provides prime habitat for wading birds. Twelve temporary ponds within wet grassland benefit the great crested newts, which occur close to the site. A 200 metre long reedbed runs parallel to the canal to encourage water voles to spread from the canal banks into the wetland. Grant aid towards this project was provided by Cherwell District Council.

Twenty-two hectares of reedbed along with similar shallow lagoons and islands are being created at the RSPB reserve at Otmoor. This is the largest scale wetland re-creation scheme in Oxfordshire.

Work by local botanists along the River Swere valley has identified a number of previously unknown wildflower rich grassland sites, flushes and wetland habitats. Detailed information on previously little known sites has also been collected.

Sustainable Wetland Project

This project aims to extend and join up existing 'islands' of priority wetland habitat in key wetland areas to form wetland wildlife corridors. This will buffer existing habitats and species populations and enable wildlife to colonise new sites, halting and hopefully reversing current rates of decline.

A scoping study last year identified 16 key wetland areas for enhancement and restoration. The River Ray Key Area, which lies partly in Cherwell District, was selected as the first areas for attention. The project vision for the River Ray Key Area is to create a wetland wildlife corridor linking BBOWT's Upper Ray Reserve, found near the District boundary in Buckinghamshire, with the RSPB's Otmoor Reserve. This will be achieved by:

- Providing specialist advice to farmers and landowners to improve their land for wetland wildlife.
- Encouraging uptake of agri-environment schemes such as the Upper Thames Tributaries ESA scheme or helping farmers upgrade existing agreements.
- Identifying grant funding opportunities to help pay for habitat enhancement work.
- Identifying and targeting wetland sites for possible acquisition by the Trust, particularly to extend existing reserves or designated sites.

Most other wetland areas are within County Wildlife Sites or SSSIs.

4. Objectives and Actions

With most wetland sites within SSSIs, County Wildlife Sites and Nature Reserves, projects such as the sustainable Wetland Project; and the re-creation schemes at Otmoor and Stratfield Brake, wetland is being relatively well served by current action.

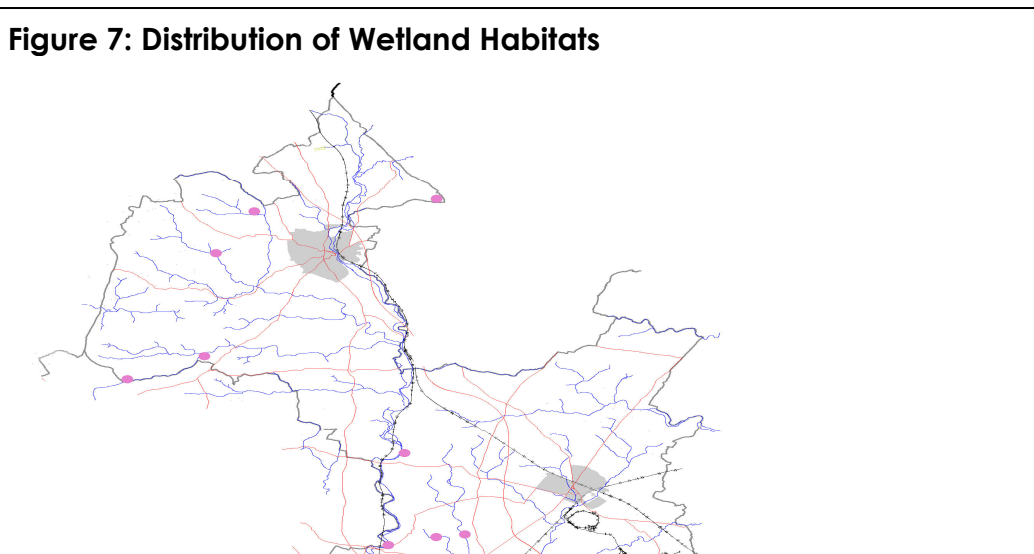
Objectives

- To protect the remaining resource of wetland habitat.
- To manage Enslow Marsh Sedgebed.

Actions	Key Organisations
Protect wetlands from damaging water abstraction proposals	EA
Discourage pond creation on flush areas	FWAG, CWS Project, CDC
Ensure protection of wetlands through strong planning policies.	CDC
Seek to protect remnant wetland habitat at Stratton Audley Quarry as part of its restoration.	OCC

Specific Actions for Cherwell District Council

- Seek to ensure development proposals at Shipton-on-Cherwell Quarry protect and enhance wetland habitat.
- Protect wetlands from hydrological change due to development and land use change. Wetlands are probably most susceptible to changes in land use outside the actual sites. The protection of floodplain areas from development needs to be an integral part of planning policies.
- CDC grant aid for pond creation on wetland should in general be avoided, especially small flush sites. However, restoration of ponds in wetland sites and the creation of ponds within the poorer areas of these sites can add to the diversity of habitat and species. Such restoration and creation needs to be done with expert advice.
- Continue work with relevant organisations to improve management at Enslow Marsh. The condition of the site should be considered favourable within the five-year timescale of the Cherwell BAP.



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5.7 Aquatic Habitats Action Plan

1. Current Status

The UKBAP includes the category of Eutrophic Standing Waters, which are the most nutrient rich aquatic sites. This is the only priority aquatic habitat found in Cherwell District.

The Oxfordshire BAP includes aquatic habitats under wetlands and there is a close association between the two. Swamp habitat in particular is associated with the margins of rivers and lakes and can dominate ditches.

The following categories are covered in this HAP:

Priority Species

Water Vole
Otter
White-clawed Crayfish
Depressed River Mussel
Great Crested Newt
Tassel Sonewort

Species of Conservation Concern

Common Toad
Common Frog
Smooth Newt
Poachard
Water Beetles – *Halipus fucatus*

- Rivers and Ditches
- Gravel Pits
- Reservoirs
- Canals
- Ponds

These habitats are included because they are particularly important for a range of priority species such as otter and water vole.

Rivers, Streams and Ditches

The UKBAP priority habitat of chalk streams does not occur in the Cherwell District. However, rivers, streams and ditches are important for a variety of priority species.

The main rivers in Cherwell District are the Cherwell and the Ray and there are a number of Cherwell tributaries in the north west of the District, including the River Swere and the Sor Brook. The ditches at Otmoor are used to control water levels and are particularly important examples of this habitat. Marginal wetland habitat and willow pollards are important habitat features along rivers and streams.

Canals

The Oxford Canal lies in close proximity to the River Cherwell. The Canal once held strong numbers of water vole and there is still a good remnant population in the south of the District. The depressed river mussel, another BAP priority species, is found in the Canal and the white-legged damselfly, once scarce but now more common, is particularly abundant along its length.

Reservoirs

Cherwell District has two main reservoirs. Clattercote reservoir is used to feed the Oxford Canal while Grimsbury Reservoir is used for public water supply. These are valuable stopping off points for migrating wildfowl.

Water filled Mineral Extraction Sites

- Balscote Quarry is managed as a nature reserve by Banbury Ornithological Society.
- Merton Borrow Pit was dug during the construction of the M40 and is managed as a nature reserve and for recreation.
- Shipton-on-Cherwell Quarry – a disused limestone quarry with water filled pools at its base.

- Stratton Audley Quarry – recently re-excavated limestone quarries. The main importance here has been the associated wetland habitat and limestone grassland. Much of the remaining open water area will be infilled.
- Yarnton Gravel Pits – there are a number of recently dug gravel pits alongside the A40. These attract good numbers of wildfowl, with one pit holding Oxfordshire's largest breeding colony of black-headed gull as well as pairs of common terns. However, none of the pits have nature conservation as an afteruse.
- Wolvercote Pit – an old gravel pit owned by the Environment Agency.

These sites are valuable for birds. Where marginal vegetation is present, they can provide nesting sites for birds and good habitat for aquatic invertebrates. The presence of shallow pools and islands provide particularly good habitat. Such islands provide nesting sites for waders such as the little ringed plover, which is found at Shipton-on-Cherwell and Balscote Quarries. Ringed plover has also bred at Shipton-on-Cherwell in the past.

Lakes and Ponds

The Oxfordshire BAP defines ponds as waterbodies up to 2 hectares in size and lakes as anything larger. There are no large lakes in Cherwell District and the larger sites are only a little over 2 hectares. Therefore, it is sensible to consider them together.

Lakes and ponds are a common feature of many of the parklands in the Cherwell District where they add to the diversity of habitats within these areas. The lakes and ponds within County Wildlife Sites are mainly notified for the associated wetland habitat such as Kirtlington Park Lake (south) and Dukes Lock Pond. Other lakes and ponds of interest are:

- Trow Pool – managed by Cherwell District Council.
- Northbrook Marsh Oxbow Lake – once a meander of the River Cherwell
- Harry Williams Lambs Pool Reserve – a BBOWT nature reserve at Sibford Ferris.
- Cottisford Pond – a large pond included in a County Wildlife Site with wet woodland habitat.
- Adderbury Lakes – owned by Oxfordshire County Council and managed as a nature reserve and for recreation including fishing.

The Ponds Conservation Trust has surveyed numerous ponds in the District and has produced a list of the top fifty ponds in Oxfordshire. There is a concentration of ponds in the south east of the District, especially in and around Otmoor and close to the River Ray. Tassel stonewort, a UKBAP priority species, is found at Otmoor, both on the SSSI and the RSPB reserve, and in a pond next to Wendlebury Meads SSSI. Numerous ponds support great crested newts.

Other ponds included in the list are village ponds at Blackthorn, Kirtlington and Wroxton while a pond near Fringford supports a particularly good range of invertebrates including rare water beetles. Otmoor also has a number of seasonal ponds.

The shallow lagoons that have been created along with wetland habitat at Otmoor and Stratfield Brake are a valuable addition to the resource. A very rich diversity of

plants and animals established in a similar habitat at Farmoor within four years. Such pools are also found at Shipton-on-Cherwell Quarry.

2. Issues

- Most lakes are used for fishing and for recreation. This means that they tend to be less valuable for birds due to disturbance.
- Pollution.
- Water abstraction.
- Invasion by alien species. Some species of introduced plants, such as the New Zealand Pigmyweed and Canadian Pondweed, are very invasive to the detriment of native wildlife.
- Uncertainty about the future of Shipton-on-Cherwell Quarry and the potential loss of open water habitat.

3. Current Action

Rivers, Streams, Ditches and Canals

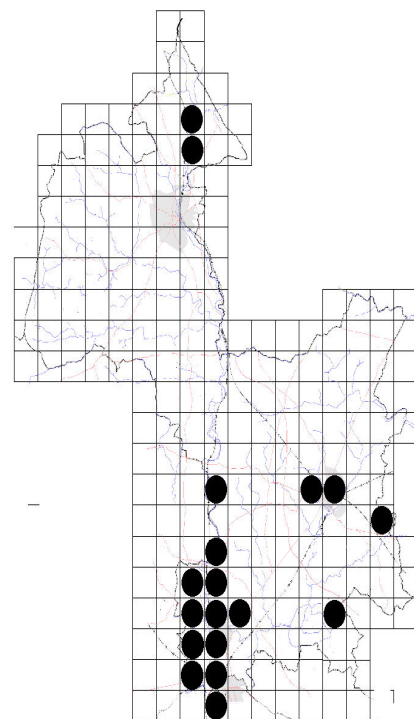
The Environment Agency is responsible for the management of the main rivers and streams in Cherwell District and is also responsible for flood defence. Its programme of maintenance work provides opportunities to improve marginal and in channel habitat. The Agency also works with landowners to strengthen the diversity of habitat along rivers. This includes planting small areas of woodland.

The Agency has been working to provide better flood defence for Banbury. It is possible to provide benefits for wildlife with such schemes if agreements with landowners can be secured.

The Water Vole Project is based with BBOWT. The Project aims to survey for this priority species and provide advice on improving habitat along and adjacent to rivers and streams. The Oxford Canal was a particular stronghold for water vole in the past and still retains good remnant populations in places. In the recent past, an Otter Project was based on the Cherwell in order to improve habitat for this species. Otters have been spreading from the west and, while there are sporadic sightings on the Cherwell, they are not yet thought to be resident. The Environment Agency is a key funder of this type of project.

The Environment Agency is planning to survey the tributaries of the Cherwell for white-clawed

Figure 8: Distribution of Water Vole (1998-2003)



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crayfish in order to assess the status of remaining populations in the north of the District.

The ESA scheme provides payments for the provision of buffers along rivers and streams, which is valuable in protecting watercourses from pollution and strengthening the wildlife corridor.

Reservoirs, Water Filled Mineral Extraction Sites, Lakes and Ponds

The management of sites as nature reserves and the creation of new sites have provided valuable and improved areas of these habitats. Sites include:

- Balscote Quarry Nature Reserve
- Merton Borrow Pit
- New lagoons at Otmoor and Stratfield Brake
- Harry Williams Lambs Pool Nature Reserve

Wolvercote Gravel Pit was being used for the dumping of river dredgings but the Environment Agency has ceased this practice. The site has much potential for nature conservation. One factor is that it lies close to the gravel extraction sites south of Yarnton and could potentially provide a less disturbed site and act as a refuge when birds are disturbed on these pits. The after use proposals for these pits would suggest that disturbance will increase in the future. At present, the Environment Agency is reviewing the future of the site, taking into account its remit for recreation and nature conservation.

A new pond has been created at Merton Jubilee Wood.

Surveys undertaken by the Ponds Conservation Trust have highlighted important ponds in Cherwell District and located previously unrecorded priority species and species of conservation concern.

4. Objectives and Actions

Rivers, Streams, Ditches and Canals

Objective

- To protect and enhance the value of watercourses through appropriate management and the implementation of appropriate policies.

Actions	Key Organisations
Continue to implement enhancements on main rivers as part of the Environment Agency's river management work.	EA
Landowners are responsible for management on smaller streams and ditches. They should seek advice on management and the Environment Agency should promote good practice for the management of streams and ditches.	Landowners, EA

Seek environmental benefits in connection with flood protection.	EA
Increase coverage of buffer strips along watercourses through the Environmental Stewardship Scheme	DEFRA, FWAG
The Oxford Canal is the only currently active canal in Oxfordshire and it lies mainly within Cherwell District. Therefore, refer to the Oxfordshire Canal HAP when it has been fully revised for appropriate actions.	ONCF, BW
Besides protecting rivers and streams through Local Plan policies, include planning policies to protect the floodplain from development.	CDC

Specific Actions for Cherwell District Council

- CDC and British Waterways need to work closely together to protect canalside habitats when developing improved access along the Oxford Canal.
- Publicise and promote the wildlife value of canals.
- Provide grant aid for willow pollarding.

Reservoirs, Water Filled Mineral Extraction Sites, Lakes and Ponds

Objectives

- To improve management of existing key sites.
- To identify additional important sites.

Actions	Key Organisations
Maintain and enhance habitats at Clattercote Reservoir.	British Waterways
Enhance and safeguard biodiversity at Wolvercote Gravel Pit	EA
Designate important ponds as County Wildlife Sites.	CWS Project

Specific Actions for Cherwell District Council

- Seek to ensure development proposals at Shipton-on-Cherwell Quarry protect and enhance the open water habitat.
- Work with Bicester Angling Club and relevant organisations to implement habitat improvements at Trow Pool.
- Provide grant aid for pond restoration and pond creation. Ensure grant aid is dependent on good design and good management principles.

5.8 Settlements Habitat Action Plan

1. Current Status

This category is included in the Oxfordshire BAP. Its inclusion recognises that the closest interaction between people and wildlife is within settlements. The term settlement has been used to mean not just towns and villages but all dwelling and work places.

Within settlements, the buildings provide habitat for a variety of species including priority species such as bats. House martins nest in the eaves of houses, swifts in the nooks and crannies of walls and swallows on rafters in sheds and other outbuildings. Gardens can contain a range of habitats such as hedgerows, ponds, trees and lawns. Bird feeding can play an important role in maintaining bird populations and, in the winter, often attracts birds from the surrounding countryside when food is short.

Other habitats include village ponds, small pockets of woodland, street trees, churchyards and areas of recreational grassland such as town parks, village greens and school fields. All these provide places where people can enjoy seeing wildlife.

There may also be open spaces managed for nature conservation such as Kings End Conservation Area in Bicester. Habitats on the edge of settlements provide further opportunities for interaction and community woodland has been a major contributor in expanding people's opportunities for experiencing wildlife and wildlife habitats.

<p>Priority Species Song Thrush Spotted Flycatcher Pipistrelle Bat Great Crested Newt Large Garden Bumble Bee</p> <p>Species of Conservation Concern House Sparrow Swallow House Martin Starling Other Bat</p> <p>Local Character Species Swift</p>
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A number of priority species and species of conservation concern are found in settlements, especially birds and bats. Song thrush and house sparrows nest in gardens while buildings are important for bats and provide nesting opportunities for birds such as swallows, house martins and swifts. The status of swifts, which nest in the nooks and crannies of building, is unclear and certainly there are indications of decline in some areas as building maintenance reduces nesting opportunities. There is a national group called 'Concern for Swifts' that promotes swift conservation. Trees are also important for providing roosting sites for bats.

This HAP is not only about wildlife in settlements and areas for people to access and enjoy. It is also about encouraging people to participate through voluntary work for nature conservation charities and groups; forming local groups to carry out wildlife surveys; becoming involved in local community sites; and helping to encourage beneficial actions, more generally, for wildlife within a community.

This HAP also covers the important area of education for both adults and children. It is important to provide education for children both in school and through extra curricular activities. Accessible sites give opportunities to provide interpretation leaflets and boards and also to demonstrate management techniques. It is vital to increase people's understanding of management with regard to what and why things have to be done. This is especially relevant to woodland management. Talks and walks are also valuable for increasing knowledge and awareness.

2. Issues

- Reduction in nesting and bat roosting sites through building maintenance and redevelopment.
- Disturbance to bat roosts through building work.
- Excessive duck populations reducing the value of village ponds for other wildlife.
- The lack of accessible areas for people to enjoy, appreciate and learn about wildlife within easy walking distance.

3. Current Action

There are many organisations working with communities. Some work specifically in the nature conservation field such as BBOWT's Community Conservation Project. Others include environmental considerations, including nature conservation, amongst wider socio-economic factors such as the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council.

BBOWT and BTCV provide opportunities for people to get involved as volunteers in aspects of nature conservation such as habitat management and recording. BBOWT's Community Conservation Project includes churchyard and wildlife gardening schemes. BTCV has been looking to establish a Green Gym project in the District, which allows people to get fit through carrying out conservation management. The establishment of such a project is an action point in the Council's Environment Strategy. At present, the plan is to establish such a project in Bicester by 2005 if funding is available. There are many other groups people can

join and participate in wildlife recording such as BOS, OOS and Butterfly Conservation.

Parish Conservation Plans have been a major spur to involving people and numerous groups have formed such as the Kirtlington Wildlife and Conservation Society, who are about to embark on a conservation plan. There is a strong community involvement in the community woodlands at Merton, Launton, Kidlington and Deddington. St Mary's Fields, the parish nature reserve at Kidlington and Merton Jubilee Wood were part of the Jubilee Wildlife Spaces Project which was run locally by ONCF.

The Oxfordshire Woodland Project has been involved with local groups both through the development of Merton Jubilee Woodland and the management of Bowlers Copse at Wendlebury. CPRE have been carrying out hedgerow surveys and now have a significant database. Other local groups have also been carrying out hedgerow surveys, some of which have been supported by small grants from the District Council.

There has been a change of emphasis amongst those involved in encouraging local groups and people from the larger scale projects, such as conservation plans which can take a great deal of commitment, to focus on smaller scale, but just as valuable projects. The ONCF is sending questionnaires to local groups and parishes to find out what they are interested in getting involved with which will also help focus the help they receive.

Cherwell District Council has supported much of this work with grant aid. They also manage a number of sites in the District where public access is encouraged. These include Bure Park, Bicester Fields, Kings End at Bicester and Giant's Cave near Banbury. Grant aid has also been provided for interpretation leaflets and boards at several sites.

Warriner School Farm provides opportunities for local children to learn about farming and conservation. The Farm receives an annual grant from the District Council. There are also field centres outside the District at Hill End, Farmoor and Sutton Courtney. BBOWT has a regular series of talks and walks. A key aspect of Merton Jubilee Woodland will be to demonstrate woodland management.

Schools participating in the Forestry Commission's Forest Education Initiative provide local children with the opportunity to learn about their woodlands and woodland management. This is carried out through classes being held within woodland areas.

The Ponds Conservation Trust (PCT) is in their first year of a 'Ponds for People in Oxfordshire' project. This project aims to survey and improve important ponds in the County as well as involve local communities in the process.

The Woodland Trust has recently launched a major national campaign called Tree for All. The vision of the campaign is to give every child the chance to plant trees. Over the next few years the Trust aims to plant 12 million trees – one for every child in the UK – and involve at least a million children in the process.

4. Objectives and Actions

Objective

- To encourage local people to participate in activities that benefit the local environment, to provide areas where people can access wildlife habitats and appreciate wildlife and to encourage management that is beneficial for wildlife within settlements.

Actions	Key Organisations
Encourage local groups and people to get involved in nature conservation projects	ONCF, CDC, Local Groups, BTCV, BBOWT (including the Community Wildlife Project), PCT, Woodland Trust. Also TVERC if funding is forthcoming for the Community Wildlife Recording Project.
Review land holdings to assess suitability for community woodlands and their potential for community action to manage and re-create other habitats.	CDC, OWP
Banbury Town Council should also review the management of land they own.	Banbury Town Council
Provide at least two community woodlands within the timescale of the plan with Banbury, Bicester and northern villages as target areas.	CDC, Parishes, Local Groups, Oxfordshire Woodland Project
Pursue Local Nature Reserve status for Bure Park at Bicester and possibly for Bicester Fields. This is considered a more likely site for such status than Enslow Marsh because it is more accessible and it is important to control access at Enslow to prevent disturbance to nesting birds.	CDC
Establish a Green Gym project in the District	BTCV, CDC, Bicester Town Council, Cherwell Vale Primary Care Trust
Continue grant aid for Warriner School Farm.	CDC
Grant aid local groups to work on local projects that can contribute to maintaining biodiversity within their area.	CDC
Grant aid interpretation leaflets and boards for nature reserves and to improve access, especially to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.	CDC
Influence developers to include measures	CDC

to benefit biodiversity in planning applications (see below).	
Identify bat roosts within settlements	Oxfordshire Bat Group, Local Groups. Also TVERC if funding is forthcoming for the Community Wildlife Recording Project.
Identify buildings, including churches, which support important swift colonies and seek measures to safeguard and enhance these colonies. Promote swift friendly building maintenance and promote the use of swift nest boxes on domestic properties.	BOS, OOS, RSPB, CDC, Concern for Swifts, Local Groups. Also TVERC (if funding is forthcoming for The Community Wildlife Recording Project).

Specific Actions for Cherwell District Council

- Influence developers to include measures to benefit biodiversity in planning applications. There is much potential to influence developers in positive ways through the planning process. For example, providing suggestions on features that can be incorporated into developments that can benefit priority species and typical species associated with buildings and settlements. These include using bat bricks and bat tiles; encouraging the addition of internal barn owl nesting sites in barn redevelopments (these should be a requirement if redevelopment affects a known barn owl nesting site. Barn owl surveys should be a requirement for proposals to redevelop barns); ensuring house martin friendly roof features are included in new developments; seeking opportunities to incorporate swift bricks (or nest boxes) in new developments, including town centre developments; producing a leaflet in association with ornithological societies and bat groups to give to developers.
- Use the Biodiversity Check list if trials prove successful.
- Continue to support the wildlife gardening initiative throughout the District.
- Consider the establishment of a settlements focus group.

5.9 Earth Heritage Habitat Action Plan

1. Current Status

Exposures of important geological features are notified as Geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Quarries and railway cuttings are particularly important sites. Sites in Cherwell District are:

- Shipton-on-Cherwell Quarry
- Kirtlington Quarry
- Horsehay Quarry
- Stratton Audley Quarries
- Ardley Cutting and Quarries
- Neithrop Fields Cutting
- Hook Norton Cuttings
- Sharps Hill Quarry

Most of these sites also have important biological interest. Even Neithrop Fields Cutting in Banbury forms a useful urban site with some rough grassland habitat. Besides these nationally important sites there are also other sites with important geological features. These are known as Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS). Unlike SSSIs, which are notified purely on scientific grounds, the RIGS are notified on educational, scientific, historical and aesthetic value. To recognise these wider values some of the SSSIs are also RIGS. There are thirteen RIGS in Cherwell District, which are all quarries or rail cuttings.

- Giants Cave, near Drayton
- Temple Mills Quarry North, near Hook Norton
- Temples Mills Quarry South, near Hook Norton
- Greenhill Farm Quarry East*
- Greenhill Farm Quarry West*
- Balscote Quarry
- Park Farm Quarry, near Hook Norton
- Hook Norton Cutting South
- Hook Norton Cutting North
- Kirtlington Quarry
- Starveall Barn Quarry, near Hornton
- Ardley Quarry North
- Ardley Fields Quarry

*also known as Bletchingdon Quarry

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- 2. Issues
- Lack of management or inappropriate management. Exposures can be covered by vegetation or managed for wildlife causing damage to exposures.
- Lack of awareness. Sites can be easily damaged through inappropriate actions. The lack of knowledge means that sites can be damaged by development or landfill without any consideration of geological interest. The perception that they are a secondary or even last priority means geological interest is often overlooked.
- Shipton-on-Cherwell Quarry is likely to be subject to development pressure. It is proposed that Stratton Audley Quarries will become a county park.
- Ardley Quarry may be extended and further dinosaur trackways may be uncovered.
- 3. Current Action

English Nature continues to work to maintain the importance of Geological SSSIs. RIGS had been largely overlooked for many years until the Oxfordshire RIGS group was re-established in 2000. This group is now known as the Oxfordshire Geology Trust. The focus has been on increasing awareness of RIGS. The dinosaur footprint at Ardley Quarry was used as a focus to raise interest from the news media. Thirteen RIGS have been identified in Cherwell District and the Oxfordshire Geology Trust has a database of these and other non-designated exposures and sites. Information concerning RIGS has recently been distributed to Oxfordshire local authorities.

4. Objectives and Actions

Objective

- To increase knowledge and appreciation of Regionally Important Geological Sites and to protect sites through the implementation of appropriate policies.

Actions	Key Organisations
Disseminate information on RIGS to Cherwell District Council, landowners and key management advisors such as the County Wildlife Sites Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxfordshire Geology Trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with TVERC the inclusion of RIGS information in GIS layers provided for constraints checking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxfordshire Geology Trust, TVERC.

Specific Actions for Cherwell District Council.

- Maintain strong Local Plan policies to protect Geological SSSIs and RIGS.
- Work with English Nature to maintain interest at Kirtlington Quarry and Neithrop Fields Cutting.
- Consider geological interest in any proposed work at Giant's Cave.

- Add Oxfordshire Geology Trust to the list of non-statutory consultees for appropriate planning applications.
- Invite Oxfordshire Geology Trust's Director to join the BAP Monitoring Group.

5.10 Scrub Habitat Action Plan

1. Current Status

With so little semi natural habitat in much of the District, scrub assumes added importance for birds. Both the Oxford and Banbury Ornithological Societies consider it as a local priority. Most of this is associated with disused railways and quarries. It is also found at the edge of some woods and along road verges, sometimes developing as an outward extension of hedgerows. It is also a succession habitat and, without management, trees will establish and the habitat will change to woodland. It is particularly important for birds and, in some cases, butterflies and there are close similarities between the importance of hedgerows and scrub. Hedgerows could be described as linear scrub features.

A variety of age structures are important to provide opportunities for the greatest variety of birds. Scrub can be an important source of food for birds especially where hedgerows are being cut at inappropriate times of the year. It must also be recognised that scrub is invasive, especially where there is limited management, and needs to be controlled where it is invading other important habitats.

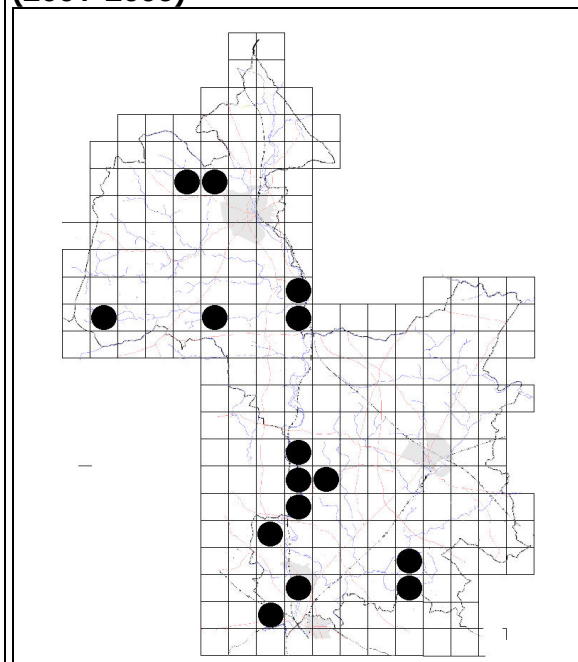
One of the most successful examples of scrub management is St Mary's Fields, the Parish Nature Reserve at Kidlington. Here it provides valuable habitat for bullfinch, song thrush, grasshopper warbler and cuckoo. It also supports a thriving community of migrant warblers including whitethroat, blackcap, and garden warbler. There are also good scrub areas within the RSPB Otmoor Reserve, which has good numbers of turtledoves and bullfinch. Turtle doves are also found at Shipton-on-Cherwell Quarry and on the disused Woodstock branch railway just to the south of the Quarry.

2. Issues

- Lack of management leading to succession to secondary woodland and a lack of different age structure.
- Scrub invasion on other priority habitats.
- 3. Current Action

The management of St Mary's Fields Parish Nature Reserve at Kidlington, with the encouragement of Oxford Ornithological

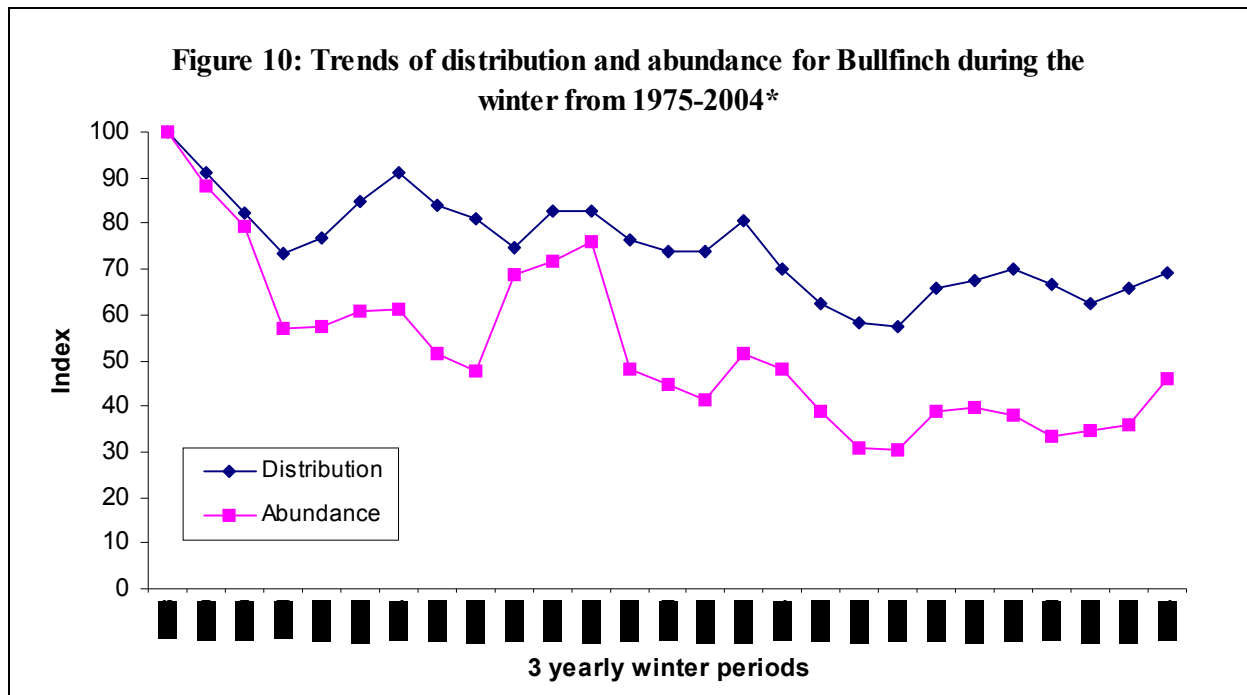
Figure 9: Distribution of Turtle Dove (2001-2003)¹



Base map produced by TVERC
 Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright, Oxfordshire County Council Licence

¹ Distribution is indicative only and not based on detailed

Society, has been the main site where positive scrub management has produced important habitat for a good range of birds including priority species. Scrub is recognised as an important habitat within the RSPB Otmoor reserve. Other work has involved the removal of scrub from important habitats, such as the limestone grassland and geological features at Kirtlington Quarry.



*information from Banbury Ornithological Society's Random 1km Square Survey. The years 1975-78 are used as a baseline.

4. Objectives and Actions

Objective

- To manage the existing scrub habitat and to improve the appreciation of the importance of scrub in Cherwell District.

Action	Key Organisations
Encourage appropriate management of scrub within County Wildlife Sites.	CWS Project.
Provide detailed information on the importance of scrub for birds to highlight the importance of the habitat.	OOS, BOS.
Encourage landowners to retain and manage scrub areas.	FWAG.
Identify good scrub areas on road verges for inclusion as road verge nature	TVERC, Local Groups, BOS, OOS.

reserves.	
Scattered scrub on other important habitats should be controlled.	All land managers.

Specific Actions for Cherwell District Council

- Manage scrub habitats at Kirtlington Quarry and Giant's Cave.

6. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Priority Habitats and Conservation Work

There are many organisations, groups and projects active in nature conservation in Cherwell District. Much of the work that they carry out is aimed at UKBAP and/or Oxfordshire BAP priorities.

The following table summarises the relationship between the work of these organisations and priority habitats and species.

Organisation	Action	Habitats and species
BOWT	Manage Nature Reserves. County Wildlife Sites Project - advice on management of County Wildlife Sites. Water Vole Project - survey and advice on water vole conservation. Sustainable Wetlands Project. Community Wildlife Project	Woodland, grassland. All habitats. Water Vole, rivers and wetlands. Wetlands Settlements
Banbury Ornithological Society	Bird recording and land use survey Management of a few sites.	Monitoring priority bird populations. Aquatic, grazing marsh and woodland habitats.
Bicester Friends of the Earth	Hedgerow survey. Wildlife gardening initiatives.	Hedgerows Settlements
BTCV	Develop new, support existing, and provide training for, community conservation	Most habitats.

	<p>groups.</p> <p>Develop and support Green Gyms.</p> <p>Develop and support Millennium Volunteers programme (16-24 year olds).</p> <p>Provide community consultation services.</p>	
British Trust for Ornithology	Monitoring bird populations.	Birds
British Waterways	Management of Oxford Canal and Clattercote Reservoir.	Aquatic habitats.
Cherwell District Council	<p>Planning control.</p> <p>Grant aid for County and local projects.</p> <p>Countryside Forum.</p> <p>Management of a few sites.</p>	<p>Protection of all habitats.</p> <p>Wetland, aquatic and limestone grassland habitats.</p>
CPRE	Hedgerow survey.	Hedgerows
CLA	Management of priority habitats through landowner membership.	All habitats.
DEFRA	<p>Countryside Stewardship.</p> <p>Upper Thames Tributaries ESA.</p>	Cereal field margins, hedgerows, grasslands and parkland.
English Nature	<p>Notification, protection and management of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.</p> <p>Species protection.</p> <p>Grant aid for key projects.</p>	Grasslands, woodlands, fen, geological sites.
Environment Agency	<p>River and watercourse management. Recreation and restoration of wetlands.</p> <p>Funding key projects such as the Water Vole Project.</p>	Rivers, streams, ditches and wetlands.
Farmers and other land managers	Management of priority habitats.	All habitats.
Forestry Commission	Grant aid for woodland	Woodland

	management. Advice on woodland management. Responsible for felling licences.	
FWAG	Advice to farmers. Whole Farm Conservation Plans.	Cereal field margins/farmland. Potentially advise on all key habitats if present on a farm.
Highways Agency	Management of verges and land associated with the M40	Grassland
Local groups (e.g. Kirtlington Wildlife Conservation Society, River Swere Project, Butterfly Conservation, Oxfordshire Badger Group, Oxfordshire Reptile and Amphibian Group) and people	Recording and managing local sites.	Potentially all habitats.
National Farmers' Union	Management of priority habitats through membership.	All habitats.
Network Rail	Management of important sites.	Grassland
ONCF	Co-ordinating biodiversity action. Working with communities.	All habitats and species. Settlements and potentially all habitats.
Oxfordshire Bat Group	Recording of and providing advice on specially protected species (in association with English Nature).	Bats, settlements, veteran trees.

Oxford Ornithological Society	Monitoring bird populations and key sites. Encouraging suitable management at some sites.	Birds Wetland, scrub, woodland, wet grassland.
Oxfordshire County Council	Minerals Planning Control. OWLS Road Verge Nature Reserves. Grant aid for County and local projects.	All habitats. Grassland
Oxfordshire Geology	Identifying RIGS, disseminating	Earth Heritage (geological

Trust	information on their importance and advising on management.	sites).
Oxfordshire Woodland Project	Advising on woodland management. Woodland management training and encouraging good practice. Markets for woodland management products. Assisting with community woodland projects.	Woodland Settlements
Ponds Conservation Trust	Surveying and advising on pond management.	Ponds
RSPB	Otmoor reserve. Research and monitoring.	Grazing marsh, reedbed, hedgerows and scrub. Birds
TVERC (hosted in Oxfordshire by Oxfordshire County Council)	County Wildlife Sites survey. Encouraging and assisting recording. Gathering, managing and providing information to support all aspects of biodiversity action.	All habitats and species.
Thames Water	Support for conservation projects and sites.	Most habitats.
Warriner School Farm	Farm management and outreach work.	Farmland, settlements
WildCRU	Rivers Project	Farmland
Woodland Trust	Management of nature reserves.	Woodland and wetland.

CDC Funding and Grant Aid

Working in partnership with individuals, groups and organisations has been crucial to the successful achievement of many of the objectives and key actions within the Cherwell District Nature Conservation Strategy. The continuation of these relationships will be crucial to the success of the Cherwell BAP.

As CDC owns and manages very little land or relevant sites, funding those organisations and projects that can directly influence sympathetic management of priority habitats and species is key to the identification, protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the District. Projects that are currently jointly funded on an annual basis by CDC and other Councils within the County are the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum (ONCF); the Berks and Oxon Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, commonly known as FWAG; the County Wildlife Sites Project; the Oxfordshire Woodland Project (OWP); and the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC). Those projects that are funded independently by CDC on an annual basis are Warriner School Farm in Bloxham and Bicester Friends of the Earth. There is also a small amount of

funding for Community Conservation schemes. In addition to this, the RSPB Otmoor Reserve has been awarded a Countryside Grant in five out of the past seven years. Two-year funding agreements now exist between CDC and most of these projects and the intention is to set up three-year agreements from April 2006. Such agreements increase the commitment of the CDC to these projects as well as their funding security.

Many other organisations and projects have received grant funding from the Council over the past five years towards nature conservation projects and sites, many of which are mentioned within the District Nature Conservation Strategy review in Appendix 1. Funding will continue to be available for such projects, subject to the approval of annual budgets, from the Council's Countryside and Nature Conservation grants scheme.

There are a multitude of individuals and Parish groups that are very active in the District, all of which are making huge contributions to Cherwell's biodiversity. In conjunction with ONCF, which is working closely with local groups throughout the County, and through the Cherwell Countryside Forum, this close association with local people will continue.

7. MONITORING THE CHERWELL BAP

Accountability

The Cherwell BAP is a strategy for action for the next five years, which is intended to be accountable. Specific targets have not been set within the five-year period, as many of the actions are ongoing, but the document will be rigorously reviewed and updated annually. This will provide an opportunity to monitor progress as well as include any changes that occur in terms of new priorities that are identified; new projects and initiatives; and changes relating to partner organisations.

The Cherwell BAP Monitoring Group (formerly the Cherwell Nature Conservation Strategy Monitoring Group) will meet once a year to assess progress and whether any changes are required. Local representatives from both the urban and rural settlements within the District will be invited to join the Group. Each year, a report will be made to the winter meeting of the Cherwell Countryside Forum. In the fifth year, the BAP will be fully reviewed and revised in preparation for the following five years.

Assessment of Progress

There are five main ways in which progress in delivering BAP actions will be monitored:

- All grant aided organisations and projects will be required to report on their specific work in the Cherwell District.
- Council departments will be asked to report on achievements such as the provision of landscape grants, management of Council land, benefits and protection achieved through the planning system and conflicts/problems between biodiversity and other issues.
- Other actions agreed, as part of the BAP will also be reported on by the relevant organisations.
- For many actions, summary information from the Oxfordshire BAP reporting system will be requested where it relates to actions in the Cherwell BAP. Conversely, progress on Cherwell BAP actions will be fed into the Oxfordshire BAP reporting system and used to contribute to Oxfordshire BAP targets.
- The mapping of habitats by TVERC can provide much more accurate information on the extent of habitats in Cherwell District. This information will be constantly updated and can be linked to information on the condition of habitats. Yearly summaries will help to gauge changes in the extent of habitats in the District.

APPENDIX 1: CHERWELL DISTRICT NATURE CONSERVATION STRATEGY 1999-2004

REVIEW OF OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 1

To work towards a comprehensive record of the nature conservation resource in the District.

Key Elements:

- **To commission North Oxfordshire and Muswell Hill Grassland Surveys (within 5 years).**

The County Wildlife Sites (CWS) Officer was refused permission to survey the Muswell Hill County Wildlife Site. However, the fields to the north have been surveyed as a proposed CWS. No progress has been made with the North Oxfordshire sites due to lack of financial and staff resources.

- **To support a County Wildlife Site Survey for the District (within 5 years).**

An annual grant of £2000 has been awarded to the Oxfordshire Biological Records Centre since April 1999. In 1999/00, this funded a County Wildlife Sites Ecological Information Summary which summarised the information available for the County Wildlife Sites in Cherwell; detailed the survey requirements to bring information up to date and to cover areas where information was lacking; and gave priorities for site survey. Between 2000/01 and 2002/03, this grant was awarded to the County Wildlife Sites Survey Project. Funding has continued into 2003/2004 as part of an annual contribution to the new Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre.

- **To commission ecological surveys of the urban fringes of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington (within 5 years).**

Phase 1 ecological surveys of the sites allocated for development in the deposit draft of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011 were completed in 2001/2002. Some of these sites are on the urban fringes of Banbury and Bicester. More detailed surveys, as recommended in the phase 1 report, were commissioned in 2002/2003 for sites where there is some potential for protected species (badgers, bats, newts and water voles). These sites included land off Howes Lane, Bicester, Bicester Airfield and southwest Bicester.

- **To develop a District hedgerow survey (within 5 years).**
 - **Support Banbury Ornithological Society to review its hedgerow information (within 2 years).**

BOS reviewed its hedgerow information in SP52 (including Bicester, Chesterton, Middleton Stoney, Upper Heyford, Fritwell and Ardley) during 2001/2002. A small grant was awarded to the project to cover expenses. During 2002/2003, BOS reviewed its hedgerow information in SP43 which includes the Barfords, South Newington, Milcombe, Bloxham, Deddington, Broughton, North Newington, Adderbury, Bodicote, Lower Tadmarton, the southern half of Banbury and the Cherwell between west of Souldern and Banbury.

■ **Identify those hedgerows that meet the criteria for protection under The Hedgerow Regulations 1997, in co-operation with the Council for Protection of Rural England (CPRE) (within 5 years).**

Approximately nine hedgerow surveys are underway, at various stages of activity – Bodicote, Lower Heyford, Chesterton, Shipton-on-Cherwell, Bicester, Islip, Launton, Steeple Aston and Oddington. Eight parishes have completed surveys but not all have involved the District Council and not all have taken the CPRE approach – Kirtlington, Bloxham, Wendlebury, Charlton-on-Otmoor, Drayton, Deddington, Caversfield and Sibford Ferris. The Barfords survey is not being progressed currently.

■ **Promote and encourage the preparation of 35 Hedgerow Survey/Parish Conservation Plans/Community Nature Plans (within 5 years) (see Objective No.9).**

Of the 18 surveys mentioned above, only 10 have involved the District Council's promotion and/or encouragement. It was agreed at the November 2000 meeting of the Monitoring Group that this target should focus on Community Nature Conservation Projects, which are more manageable for local communities, rather than Hedgerow Surveys/Parish Conservation Plans/Community Nature Plans, which require a huge time commitment. Funding is available from the Community Hall, Recreation and Countryside capital grant scheme and the Landscape Conservation revenue grant scheme for community conservation projects. Schemes funded within the five years of the Strategy are listed on a separate sheet.

● **To support local surveys through contact with relevant individuals/groups and provision of relevant training (ongoing).**

■ **Establish contact list of professionals and volunteers who are able to carry out survey work (within 2 years).**

'In Contact' has been established and is updated when new information is received. A web link has been created between the nature conservation section of the CDC website and the nature conservation directory on the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum's website.

■ **Support at least six surveys/projects each year.**

Several Parishes have received small grants towards the administrative costs of carrying out a hedgerow survey as well as support in the form of information. CPRE Oxfordshire was awarded a grant of £200 in 2002/03 towards updating and managing the County hedgerow survey database.

■ **Support at least two training sessions each year.**

In 1999/00, three hedgerow survey-training sessions were organised and two hedge laying courses were funded directly by the Council. Since then, training sessions have been supported through the Council's annual funding of the Oxfordshire Woodland Project and Warriner School Farm.

OBJECTIVE 2

To improve access to information.

Key Elements:

- **To help fund the centralised database at the County Museum Records Centre (ongoing).**

■ **Grant aid annually and establish a service level agreement.**

See update under Objective 1, County Wildlife Site Survey. A draft service level agreement between the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre and the District Council has been drawn up.

OBJECTIVE 3

To exercise the Council's responsibility to protect important sites and species through the planning process and the use of appropriate legislation.

Key Elements:

- **To keep Local Plan policies up to date in line with national guidelines (ongoing).**

This is currently being considered in the context of reviewing the Local Plan. The Revised Deposit Draft Cherwell Local Plan 2011 was published in September 2002. Representations received to this plan will be considered by the Council in early 2004. It is anticipated that the public local inquiry to consider objections to the plan will commence in late 2004/early 2005.

- **To improve the local consultation process prior to the allocation of land for development within the Local Plan through the increased involvement of local groups at an earlier stage (within 2 years).**

A list of local nature conservation contacts was added to the Local Plan database, all of whom were sent consultation papers at an early stage and notified of the draft deposit and revised draft deposit plan.

- **To include a policy relating to ecological surveys in the consultative draft Local Plan requiring pre-development surveys where possible (within 2 years).**

The Revised Deposit Draft Cherwell Local Plan 2011 includes a policy on Ecological Surveys (EN23) – “Before determining an application for development which may affect a known or potential site of nature conservation value, applicants will be required to submit an ecological survey to establish the likely impact on the nature conservation resource”.

- Include ecological survey requirement in development briefs for major development sites - *Ongoing*
- Require pre-development surveys from planning applicants for sites on and adjacent to SSSI's and Alert Map sites where development could have an impact on the nature conservation resources - *Ongoing*
- **To take the finding of the English Nature ecological survey into account in the future planning of Upper Heyford airbase (ongoing).**

This formed part of the development brief.

- **To require all landscaping schemes to be submitted in support of planning applications to include at least 75% of native species grown from native stock (within 2 years).**

Native species are required in landscaping schemes where appropriate. It is estimated that the majority of schemes include at least 75% of native species.

- **To make effective use of Section 106 agreements and planning obligations to require sympathetic management (ongoing).**

This has been, and continues to be, achieved in relation to developments at Hanwell Fields, Banbury; Bure Park, Bicester; and Bicester Fields.

OBJECTIVE 4

To produce a Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Key Elements:

- **To compile a summary table of those habitats and species within the District which require priority actions plans (within 2 years).**

A report entitled 'Towards a Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan', which is an update on the progress of the biodiversity planning process in Cherwell, has been circulated to the Monitoring Group. In summary, it concludes that it is premature to produce a Cherwell BAP, as the District Council does not yet have all the information that is necessary to produce such a document. However, this information is being slowly gathered by various projects at a County level. Also, the intention is to merge the nature conservation and biodiversity planning process from 1 April 2004.

- **To progress and support the preparation of species/habitat action plans (within 5 years).**

No progress made.

- **To target priority species/habitats through Landscape Conservation grants (within 5 years).**

No progress made.

- **To compile an audit of rare species (within 5 years).**

No progress made.

OBJECTIVE 5

To adopt sympathetic management practices on land, which the District Council owns, or is responsible for, which can be of benefit to wildlife.

Key Elements:

- **To carry out a 'green audit' of the Council's own grounds maintenance activities (Leisure Strategy target POSO2.5) (within 5 years).**

The Council's use of pesticides was audited in 1999/2000. The majority of green waste from the grounds maintenance contract is now recycled, although this was difficult in 2003/04 in the north of the District as the recycling centre had to make way for the construction of Hennef Way. It is hoped that full recycling will be resumed in 2004/05. A full green audit is likely to follow on from the Best Value Review in 2005 and the need to re tender the grounds maintenance contract.

- **To survey and complete a database of all the trees within parks, open space areas and streets within Banbury (Leisure Strategy target POSO2.1) (within 5 years).**

All trees within parks, open spaces and along main streets in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington have been surveyed.

- **To ensure that native species are widely used within landscaping schemes on land which the Council owns or is responsible for (ongoing).**
- **Ensure at least 75% of the trees and shrubs planted by the Council are native species grown from native stock (within 2 years).**

Native species are required in landscaping schemes where appropriate. It is estimated that the majority of schemes include at least 75% of native species.

- **To convert a total of fifteen acres of amenity grassland to wild flora/nature conservation areas within the parks and open space areas of Banbury (Leisure Strategy target POSO2.4) (within 2 years).**

No progress made.

- **To designate one new Local Nature Reserve each year (Leisure Strategy target CO5.1).**

A management brief has been drawn up for Enslow Sedgebed and an application for its Local Nature Reserve status is being prepared. A management plan is to be drawn up for Neithrop Fields SSSI and submitted to English Nature before its designation can be considered. Bure Park in Bicester is still being considered for designation.

- **To organise Cherwell in Bloom and encourage Britain in Bloom to place more emphasis on the inclusion of wildlife gardening and nature conservation within they're judging criteria (within 2 years).**

Both events include the following within their judging criteria – nature conservation and biodiversity, opportunities to establish habitats, biological recording, education and work programmes, other nature projects e.g. designated areas for creation and understanding of wildflowers. Since 2002/03, a specific wildlife gardening category has been introduced in Bicester by the local Friends of the Earth. Also, CPRE organises an annual nature conservation award for villages and towns within the County.

OBJECTIVE 6

To encourage farmers and land managers to sympathetically manage land for the benefit of wildlife.

Key Elements:

- **To support the preparation of Whole Farm Conservation Plans and encourage the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (ongoing).**
 - Grant aid the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) to encourage the preparation of 10 Whole Farm Conservation Plans and give advice on Countryside Stewardship (within 5 years).

£3000 has been awarded to FWAG for the past five years towards its advisory service throughout the District and part funding the preparation of Whole Farm Plans (WFPs) (£2000 was given annually between 1990 and 1999).
- **To promote the establishment of unintensified and sustainable land management through the floodplain and river corridor of the River Cherwell and its tributaries, to the benefit of riparian and aquatic wildlife habitats (ongoing).**
 - Support the Upper Thames Tributaries Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) through close consultation with the ESA Officer.

The Landscape Services Manager attends the twice-yearly ESA Liaison Group meetings.

- **To promote sustainable land management practices by giving relevant information through the Countryside Forum (ongoing).**

Countryside Forums (and relevant Environment Forums) between 1999-2004 are listed on a separate sheet.
- **To promote the Landscape Conservation grants scheme through wider distribution of the leaflet and promotion of successful schemes (where approval is given) (ongoing).**

A press release was issued in November 1999 promoting the grants scheme.

A special project was launched for the new Millennium to promote further tree planting. No promotion in 2000/01 as already sufficient demand for scheme.

Press release and letter to schools in October 2001. Press release coinciding with

National Tree Week in October 2002. Press release planned for National Tree Week 2003 to include grant aided planting at Bicester Community College.

OBJECTIVE 7

To encourage creation, restoration and sympathetic management of key wildlife habitats.

Key Elements:

- **To encourage appropriate management of County Wildlife Sites in the District (ongoing)**

- Facilitate the preparation of voluntary management briefs for County Wildlife Sites in the District through the support of a co-ordinated County Wildlife Sites Project (within 2 years).

Between 1998/99 and 2003/04, an annual grant of £4000 has been awarded to the County Wildlife Sites Project.

- **Extend Landscape Conservation grants to include tree surgery to help preserve veteran trees on parkland estates and in other prominent locations where public access exists (within 2 years).**

Achieved. Eight grants have been given to tree surgery projects over the period of the Strategy.

- **To encourage suitable tree planting and management in historic parks (ongoing).**

- **Target through Landscape Conservation grants (within 2 years).**

No progress made. A reduction in this grants budget in 2003/2004 will make this difficult to achieve within the timeframe of the Strategy.

- **To encourage woodland planting to extend existing County Wildlife Site woodlands (ongoing).**

- **Target through Landscape Conservation grants (within 2 years).**

No progress made. A reduction in this grants budget in 2003/2004 will make this difficult to achieve within the timeframe of the Strategy.

- **Extend the Oxfordshire Woodland Project in the District to include larger County Wildlife Site woodlands (within 2 years).**

This is a condition of the Council's annual funding of the Woodland Project and will be included in the proposed service level agreement with the Project.

- **Establish closer links with the Forestry Commission to achieve effective co-ordination of grants (within 2 years).**

The Council's Arboricultural Officer has received mailings of the Public Register of New Planting and Felling Applications during the five years of the

Strategy. The Commission was consulted on, and responded to, the preparation of the Cherwell BAP.

■ **Support the work of the Woodland Trust through grant aid where appropriate (ongoing).**

The establishment of Stratfield Brake, Kidlington was supported with funding from the District Council. A £5,000 grant was awarded to the Piddington Wood extension project in 2002/03; and in 2003/04, a £3,856 grant was awarded towards an 'Access for All' path in Island Pond Wood, Launton and a £1,000 grant was awarded towards reed bed planting at Stratfield Brake. Two further potential grant applications involve an access path in Stoke Wood and interpretation boards at Stratfield Brake.

● **To identify urban/urban fringe habitats and wildlife corridors (ongoing).**

■ **Encourage establishment of urban wildlife groups for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington through the work of BBOWT (within 5 years).**

Bicester Friends of the Earth is committed to conserving and enhancing the countryside in and around Bicester. It receives a small annual grant from the District Council. The Banbury Ornithological Society (BOS) manages three nature reserves in the District (woodland adjacent to Grimsbury Reservoir, Balscote Quarry and Bicester Wetland Reserve) and is continually involved in survey work. The Oxford Meads Wildlife Group, which is affiliated to BBOWT, is active in and around Kidlington; and a list of individuals interested in wildlife sites has been drawn up in relation to the St Mary's Fields Project.

■ **Support urban survey work through guidance and, where appropriate, grant aid (ongoing).**

Bicester FOE continues with its hedgerow survey in Bicester and the Banbury Ornithological Society is continually reviewing its hedgerow information, which includes areas within the Cherwell District. Some funding has been given towards this.

■ **Co-ordinate with aims of Open Spaces strategy (within 2 years).**

The Open Spaces Strategy has never been published. The draft Strategy includes suitable objectives.

● **To encourage the County Council to establish 10 road verge nature reserves (within 5 years).**

No progress made due to lack of staff resources.

● **To encourage the re-creation of limestone grassland and heath on appropriate sites through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (ongoing).**

No progress made due to lack of staff resources.

● **To encourage the enlargement of County Wildlife Sites in the District through the promotion and targeting of suitable grants for conservation work, and if appropriate, the purchase of land (ongoing).**

No progress made due to lack of staff resources.

- **To make effective use of management agreements (Wildlife and Countryside Act Section 39) to encourage landowners voluntarily to adopt sympathetic management of important wildlife sites (ongoing).**

No progress made due to lack of staff resources.

OBJECTIVE 8

To encourage area management approach to the protection and management of wildlife habitats.

Key Elements:

- **To support Area Management Projects such as Whole Farm Plans, Parish Conservation Plans, the Upper Thames Tributaries Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) and the Cherwell Otter Habitat Project through close consultation with relevant Officers (on going).**

FWAG, the County Ecologist, the ESA Officer, English Nature, the Environment Agency and BBOWT are all members of the Nature Conservation Monitoring Group. FWAG is grant aided annually, Parish Conservation Plans and the like are promoted and encouraged (see Objective 1) and the twice-yearly ESA Liaison Group meetings are attended by the Landscape Services Manager.

- **To support the aims and principles of the Environment Agency's catchment plan and catchment planning process (ongoing).**

The Council is always consulted by the Environment Agency about this plan and process and has the opportunity to comment and support.

- **To support the Otmoor RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) Reserve through grant aid (within 5 years).**

The Otmoor Reserve has been awarded five grants over the past seven years - £2,043 in 2003/2004, £5000 in 2002/2003, £5000 in 2000/2001, £5000 in 1999/2000 and £10,000 in 1997/98.

OBJECTIVE 9

To encourage greater public participation in nature conservation activities.

Key Elements:

- **To encourage the formation of at least three local environmental/urban wildlife groups in co-operation with BBOWT (see Objective 7) (within 5 years).**

See update under Objective 7.

- **To encourage the involvement of young people in conservation tasks by supporting the activities of BBOWT and BTCV (ongoing).**

A meeting was held in September 2003 with staff from BTCV and health professionals with a view to developing a Green Gym in Cherwell. This could involve the involvement of young people in conservation tasks.

- **To promote local involvement through the existing Cherwell Countryside Forum and the proposed Cherwell Environment Forum (ongoing).**

Cherwell Countryside Forums and relevant Environment Forums between 1999 – 2004 are listed on a separate sheet.

- **To promote wildlife and organic gardening (ongoing).**

- ▣ **Organise three local talks each year.**

Two local talks were given in 1999/00 and one in Hook Norton in 2000/01. The Gardeners' Wildlife Challenge initiative involved four events at garden centres in the District during 2001/02, two events in 2002/03 (Hurrans Garden Centre, Banbury and Exeter Hall, Kidlington) and two events in 2003/04 (Banbury Show and event in Bicester in March 2004).

- ▣ **Promote the objectives of the Henry Doubleday Research Association (HDRA) (ongoing).**

A representative from HDRA spoke at an Environment Forum in 1999/00 about organic gardening. Promoted through Gardeners' Wildlife Challenge (events and newsletters) since 2001/02.

- ▣ **Approach local garden centres/nurseries to increase the availability of native plant material and products to aid organic gardening (within 5 years).**

No progress made.

OBJECTIVE 10

To increase awareness of the nature conservation resource.

Six copies of Nature Conservation News were published and distributed, mainly to Parish Councils and Countryside Forum members, between November 1999 and June 2002. Further copies were not produced due to work pressures.

Key Elements:

- **To provide interpretation facilities on Council managed sites (ongoing).**

- ▣ **Provide interpretation facilities and information leaflet for one Council managed site each year.**

Not achieved as the Council manages very few appropriate sites. Interpretation boards will be provided for Enslow Sedgebed, probably in 2004/05. A leaflet is to be produced for Kirtlington Quarry once the bridge is in place across the canal.

- ▣ **Co-ordinate with aims of Open Spaces Strategy (within 2 years).**

The Open Spaces Strategy has never been published. The draft Strategy includes suitable objectives.

- **To provide additional educational facilities for nature conservation (ongoing).**

- ▣ **Encourage school use of parks and urban fringe sites (ongoing).**

Warriner School Farm, Bloxham has been awarded a grant of £1000 for five consecutive years towards its outreach work to schools and the community.

- **Promote appropriate nature conservation sites for local schools e.g. Kirtlington Quarry Local Nature Reserve (ongoing).**

Coral Arts was funded in 2002/2003 by the District Council and others to work on a project with Kirtlington Primary School which relate to Kirtlington Quarry. Contact has been made with owners of suitable sites to encourage them to invite schools for visits.

- **Provide interpretation of appropriate sites with information targeted at schools (ongoing).**

Contact has been made with owners of suitable sites to make them aware of Council funding for interpretation. An interpretative leaflet for Adderbury Lakes was grant aided in 2002/03. Potential grant application from the Woodland Trust towards interpretation boards for Stratfield Brake.

- **Assist Bicester Town Council with the design and planting of a tree trail linking the parks and urban open spaces (Leisure Strategy target POSO2.3) (within 2 years).**

This target will not be met, as no funding is available.

OBJECTIVE 11

To improve access to appropriate sites of nature conservation interest and the wider countryside.

Key Elements:

- **To identify and promote sites of interest where access can be encouraged without threatening the wildlife resource (ongoing).**

Progress yet to be made at Neithrop Fields SSSI, Giants Cave and Enslow Sedgebed.

- **To improve access to the wider countryside through circular walks and countryside events (ongoing).**

- **Establish a consultation process to be applied when creating new circular walks (within 2 years).**

Relevant conservation organisations, such as BBOWT and BOS, will be consulted over new routes.

- **Identify and promote one new circular walk each year.**

Deddington Circular Walk was published in April 1999. Both the Shutford Circular Walk and Shenington with Alkerton Historic Village Trail were completed in 2001. Horley/Hornton have started a circular walk project and should complete in early 2004. The Jubilee Ride, a nine-mile circular bridle route, was published in 2002. Each of these routes has involved the Council's Landscape Officer (Access) working in partnership with local

individuals and groups and, in the case of the bridle routes, the British Horse Society.

- **Increase nature conservation information within circular walk leaflets, and as part of the countryside events programme (within 2 years).**

Both the winter and summer countryside events programmes in 2000/2001 included several events with a wildlife or conservation theme, including BTCV and BBOWT's conservation tasks. However, the countryside events programmes have been reduced and amalgamated with the overall leisure services events guide 'What's On in North Oxfordshire' so inclusion of nature conservation information is more difficult. Every effort will be made to include such information in future circular walk and bridleway projects.

- **To seek opportunities to plant community woodlands (ongoing).**

- **Prepare proposals for at least one new community woodland on the urban fringe of Banbury or Bicester and submit an application for funding to the Millennium Commission (Leisure Strategy target POSO2.2) (within 2 years).**

Not achieved on the urban fringe of Banbury and Bicester. The Woodland Trust, in partnership with the Launton Environmental Group, was awarded a grant of £5000 in 1998/99 towards the planting of Island Pond Wood. This community wood was planted in December 1999. Ardley-with-Fewcott Woods was awarded nearly £5000 in 2000/2001 for tree planting and path improvements. A newly planted community wood in Merton has been supported with a 2002/03-grant award of £5000 towards a footpath extension from the village to the wood.

- **Liase with County Council, Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust with a view to woodland planting on land in public ownership (within 2 years).**

Community woodland planted at Stratfield Brake by Woodland Trust in 1998 on land belonging to County Council.

- **To provide better access facilities for people with mobility or sensory impairments (ongoing)**

- **Provide facilities for one site each year.**

Direct provision is difficult as the Council owns and manages very few appropriate sites. Contact has been made with owners of suitable sites to make them aware of Council funding for improving access. Council grants have improved access to Arley-with-Fewcott Woods and Merton Wood, as detailed above. A grant of £3,856 was awarded in 2003/4 towards an 'Access for All' path through Island Pond Wood. Potential grant applications from BBOWT towards 'Access for All' leaflet; and from the Woodland Trust towards access path within Stoke Wood.

OBJECTIVE 12

To review the District Nature Conservation Strategy on an annual basis.

Key Elements:

- **To establish a nature conservation monitoring group as a sub-group of the Countryside Forum (within 2 years).**

The group meets annually in November.

- **To review the Strategy annually with a report to the winter meeting of the Countryside Forum.**

Achieved, except in 2002/3 due to work pressures and the different theme of the Forum at the winter meeting 2003 (launch of the Rural Strategy).

- **Update percentage estimates of priority habitat cover within the District after 5 years.**

Not yet possible.

APPENDIX 2: BIODIVERSITY PLANS AND STRATEGIES

Internet Links are provided but it should be noted that these may change.

England Forestry Strategy - A New Focus on England's Woodlands

In 1998 the Government published a Forestry Strategy for England. The strategy 'A New Focus for England's Woodlands' sets out the Government's strategic priorities and programmes for forestry in England. It was prepared by a consortium of organisations including the Forestry Commission, English Nature, DEFRA, the Environment Agency and the Countryside Agency.

The Strategy has four priorities, which includes 'Forestry for the Environment and Conservation covering the natural and historic environment and the Government's objectives for biodiversity and climate change'.

- Internet Link: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/hcou-4ucf8j>

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English Nature - Natural Areas

Natural Areas are sub-divisions of England, each with a characteristic association of wildlife and natural features. They provide a way of interpreting the ecological variations of the country in terms of natural features, illustrating the distinctions between one area and another. Each Natural Area has a unique identity resulting from the interaction of wildlife, landforms, geology, land use and human impact. Documents defining the priorities for nature conservation in each natural area have been produced. Cherwell District covers parts of the Midland Clay Pastures, Thames and Avon Vale, Cotswolds and, in the very north east of the District, the West Anglia Plain.

Internet Link: http://www.englishnature.org.uk/science/natural/na_search.asp

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency has produced, or is in the process of producing, a number of plans and strategies relating to the various aspects of its work. These are:

- Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for the Environment Agency (Thames Region). This concentrates on the species and habitats where it is the lead or key organisation.
- Thames Catchment Flood Management Plan.

- Fisheries Action Plan (in production).
- Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (in production).
- Local Contribution. An internal document produced in 2002.
-

DEFRA: Our Strategy 2003-06

This is DEFRA's corporate strategy for 2003-2006 setting out in outline its priorities and objectives.

Internet Link:

http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/strategy0306/defra_strategy_pt1.pdf

Countryside Agency: A Strategy for Sustainable Land Management in England

This paper sets out the Countryside Agency's vision for sustainable land management.

Internet Link: http://www.countryside.gov.uk/Images/CA%2064_tcm2-12157.pdf

Highway Agency Biodiversity Action Plan

This document is part of a long-term strategy for the conservation of habitats and species on the motorway and trunk road verges of England. The aim is to help the Agency achieve its objectives for conserving and, where possible, enhancing biodiversity.

Internet link:

<http://www.highways.gov.uk/aboutus/corpdocs/biodiversity/section2.htm>

Cotswold AONB Management Plan

The only part of the District in the AONB is at Epwell. The only priority habitat identified within the plan and found at Epwell is cereal field margins. Epwell is very much in the Ironstone area of the north of Cherwell District and more acidic and neutral grasslands would be expected to occur rather than the more typical limestone grassland of much of the Cotswolds.

Neighbouring Biodiversity Action Plans

Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Biodiversity Action Plans, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Biodiversity Action Plan

Biodiversity Action Plans have been produced for Warwickshire, Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. These have similar habitats to Cherwell and similar priorities and English Nature's Natural Areas cross the county boundaries. Therefore, there may be room for cross border projects. An example is the

Sustainable Wetlands Project in the Ray Valley. Acidic grasslands are found in south western Northamptonshire though, like Cherwell District, these are rare but clearly are a key feature of the area. This area is defined by English Nature's Natural Areas as Midland Clay Pastures.

Internet links:

- Warwickshire Biodiversity Action Plan

[http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/web/corporate/pages.nsf/\(DisplayLinks\)/C6E28DF1EBA4ACB580256C86004BB58C](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/web/corporate/pages.nsf/(DisplayLinks)/C6E28DF1EBA4ACB580256C86004BB58C)

- Northamptonshire Biodiversity Action Plan

<http://www.wildlifebcnp.org/northants-bap/Contents.htm>

- Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Biodiversity Action Plan

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/countryside/biodiversity/biodiversity_action_plan/contents.stm

APPENDIX 3: Local Consultation

Cherwell Link Article

Help Protect the Wildlife of Cherwell District

Cherwell District Council is currently producing a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) which will identify all the important habitats and species within the District. This will help the Council to use its nature conservation resources wisely to protect and enhance priority sites, animals and plants.

It is crucial that habitats and species that are special to **you** are included in a Cherwell BAP. The following habitats, species and sites have already been suggested as being important in the District:

Farmland – skylark, brown hare

Hedgerows – pipestrelle bat, brown and black hairstreak butterfly

Woodland – lesser spotted woodpecker, bird's nest orchid

Parkland – tawny owl, bats

Unimproved grassland and heathland – fen violet, common lizard, four spotted moth, meadow pipit

Wetland – water vole, otter, snipe

Water habitats – great crested newt, toad, dragon and damsel flies

Buildings and gardens – bumble bee, swift, house martin

Geological sites – railway cuttings and quarries

Scrub – song thrush, cuckoo

Please consider the following questions and send your comments to Sue Marchand, Landscape Officer, Cherwell District Council, Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA. Tel: (01295) 221707 or e-mail sue.marchand@cherwell-dc.gov.uk you can also find out more on the Council's website, www.cherwell-dc.gov.uk/leisure/landscape and www.cherwell-dc.gov.uk/countryside/nature conservation.

1. What do you consider to be the most important animal (mammal, bird, invertebrate, etc.) and plant species in your area and why? Please list a maximum of five animals and five plants in priority order (listing the most important one first).
2. What do you consider to be the most important habitat (woodland, wetland, farmland etc.) in your area and why? Please list a maximum of five in priority order.
3. What do you consider to be the most important wildlife site(s) in your area and why? Please list a maximum of five in priority order.
4. What do you consider the Council's priorities should be to improve biodiversity within the District and why? Please list a maximum of five priorities in order of importance.

APPENDIX 4: COUNCIL PLANS AND STRATEGIES

References to Nature Conservation/Biodiversity are listed.

1. ADOPTED CHERWELL LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

C1 The council will seek to promote the interests of nature conservation. Development which would result in damage to or loss of sites of special scientific interest or other areas of designated wildlife or scientific importance will not normally be permitted. Furthermore, the council will seek to ensure the protection of sites of local nature conservation value. The potential adverse affect of development on such sites will be a material consideration in determining planning applications.

C2 Development which would adversely affect any species protected by schedule 1, schedule 5 and schedule 8 of the 1981 wildlife and countryside act, and by the e.c. Habitats directive 1992 will not normally be permitted.

C3 Where appropriate, proposals for interpretative facilities and schemes that provide or increase access to wildlife and geological sites will normally be permitted.

C4 The council will seek to promote the creation of new habitats. In urban areas the council will promote the interests of nature conservation within the context of new development and will establish or assist with the establishment of ecological and nature conservation areas, where such areas would further the opportunity for environmental education and passive recreation and would not conflict with other policies in the plan.

C5 The council will seek to protect the ecological value and rural character of the following through the control of development:

- (i) The Oxford Canal and River Cherwell
- (ii) The Flood Plain of the River Cherwell
- (iii) Salt Way, Banbury
- (IV) The Mineral-Railway Footpath Route and Geological Site of Special Scientific Interest, Banbury
- (v) The Urban Woodlands To The South Of St. Louis Meadow, at Grimsbury Green And To The North Of Grimsbury Reservoir, Banbury
- (VI) Otmoor And The Flood Plain Of The River Ray

C6 Development adjacent to the River Thames will normally be resisted.

2. LOCAL PLAN POLICIES: CHERWELL LOCAL PLAN 2011 REVISED DEPOSIT DRAFT INCORPORATING PRE-INQUIRY CHANGES

EN22 development proposals will be expected to incorporate features of nature conservation value within the site. Features of value should be retained and enhanced wherever possible. The use of planning conditions or planning obligations will be sought to secure their protection and management, or the provision of compensatory measures where appropriate.

EN23 before determining an application for development, which may affect a known or potential site of nature conservation value, applicants will be required to submit an ecological survey to establish the likely impact on the nature conservation resource.

EN24 the council will seek to promote the interests of nature conservation through the control of development. Proposals which would result in damage to or loss of a site of ecological or geological value will not be permitted unless:

In the case of an internationally important site, there is no alternative solution and there are imperative reasons of over-riding public interest for the development;
or

In the case of a nationally important site, the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the ecological or geological value of the site and the national policy to safeguard the national network of such sites; or

In the case of a site of regional or local importance for its ecological or geological value, the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the ecological or geological value of the site.

In all cases where development is permitted, damage must be kept to a minimum. The council will use conditions or planning obligations to protect and enhance the site's ecological or geological interest and to provide mitigation and compensatory measures where appropriate.

EN25 development which would adversely affect any species protected by schedule 1, schedule 5 and schedule 8 of the 1981 wildlife and countryside act, and by the e.c. habitats directive 1992, or its habitat will not be permitted.

EN27 development proposals should incorporate the creation of new habitats, particularly those concerning priority habitats or species, wherever possible. The council will promote the interests of nature conservation within the context of new development and will establish or assist with the establishment of ecological and nature conservation areas, where such areas would further the opportunity for environmental education and passive recreation.

EN28 the council will seek to protect and enhance the ecological value, biodiversity and rural character of the following through the control of development:

The Oxford Canal and River Cherwell and their associated corridors

The Flood Plain of the River Cherwell

Salt Way, Banbury

The flood plain of the River Bure and Langford Stream, Bicester

Otmoor and the flood plain of the River Ray

Species rich calcareous grassland at former RAF Upper Heyford

EN29 development which would have an adverse effect on the River Thames Valley will not be permitted.

3. ADOPTED COUNTY STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES

EN5 the following sites of at least national importance will be protected from damaging development:

- a) Sites of European wildlife importance

- b) National nature reserves and sites of special scientific interest; and sites, which support specially protected species.

On other sites of acknowledged nature conservation importance development will be permitted only if there is an overriding need or if damage to the ecological interest can be prevented by the use of conditions or planning obligations.

EN6 The Local Planning Authorities Will Promote:

- a) Management agreements to help protect and enhance sites and features important for nature conservation
- b) Opportunities for creating new habitats

EN7 development which would damage woodlands and hedgerows which are important for landscape, ecological, amenity or forestry reasons will not be permitted. The local planning authorities will encourage the planting of appropriate new woodlands and trees.

4. COMMUNITY PLAN

Theme 6 – Protect and enhance the local environment

Aim 3 – Preserve the countryside, wildlife, protect parks and open spaces.

- Protect and improve the landscape, natural habitat and woodland heritage.
- Protect Cherwell's natural woodland heritage – adopt a Tree and Woodland Plan and associated management programme; undertake a full audit of ancient trees
- Establish a tree planting and nature conservation grant scheme to promote community involvement, public access and improved education
- Implement the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan in the Cherwell Valley area
- Introduce a Green Gym project to encourage conservation and healthy activity.

Aim 8 - Increase environmental awareness and promote local community action

- Provide opportunities for groups to develop projects which enhance the local environment -provide grant support to groups for the development of 25 local environment projects by 2005; support groups wishing to access external sources of funding for the development of local environmental projects
- Extend the Oxfordshire Farming and Education Initiative to all Cherwell Primary Schools.

Theme 8 – Rural perspective

Aim 4 – Preserve Cherwell's environmental character in rural areas, recognising growing pressures and challenges: improve understanding and respect for the countryside.

- Increase understanding of Cherwell countryside issues through improved maps, information, publicity, local media, features in Cherwell Link and events, including promoting the role of the Cherwell Countryside Forum
- Promote greater access to the countryside for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, emphasising public footpaths and bridleways and, where appropriate, the Oxford Canal.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY

Theme C – Preserve the countryside and wildlife and protect parks and open spaces

- Continue to run the Countryside Forum to promote co-operation between diverse organisations to encourage the protection, enhancement and enjoyment of the countryside.
- Support an improved Local Records Centre which would provide clear and up to date biological records
- Introduce a 'Green Gym' project which will encourage improvements to health through active nature conservation volunteer work
- Produce a Biodiversity Action Plan for Cherwell
- Support projects that contribute to the aims of the Biodiversity Action Plan for Cherwell
- Encourage identification of new areas of nature conservation value in Cherwell through the County Wildlife Sites Project.
- Designate new local Nature Reserves.
- Support local projects for the enhancement of conservation through the provision of grants, assistance and advice
- Introduce a Tree and Woodland Plan for the appropriate management of trees within the Cherwell district.
- Continue to support the appropriate management of Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Countryside Stewardship in the Cherwell District
- Support conservation schemes and promote good model examples of conservation and sustainable land management on local farms.
- Undertake a landscape assessment of the river Cherwell catchment area and to support projects, which contribute to the desired outcomes of the assessment.
- Ensure provision of new parks and open spaces incorporating principles of sustainability and biodiversity.
- Develop the educational potential of local parks through the Green Flag initiative

- Link open spaces in Bicester to create a linear Park running through the Town
- Encourage participation in the Gardeners Wildlife Challenge
- Encourage participants of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington in Bloom to consider wildlife criteria, increase their use of native plants, perennials and adopt an organic approach to fertiliser, pest and weed control

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6. CULTURAL STRATEGY

Theme: Health Improvement

- Develop a Green Gym project within the District, offering exercise opportunities through community based conservation activities.

Theme: Sustainability and Environmental Enhancement

- In consultation with partner organisations, to identify key Tree and Woodland initiatives to help ensure the sustainability of our natural woodland heritage.

7. RURAL STRATEGY

Theme D Preserve the environmental character of Cherwell's rural area

- D1** Promote sensitive development and protect the rural environment
- D 1.1** Through the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, introduce further Whole Farm Conservation Plans
- D 1.2** Develop Enslow Marsh as a local nature reserve and identify two further nature reserves.
- D 1.3**
- D 1.4** Establish a Tree and Woodland Plan
- Prepare proposals for at least one new community woodland on the urban fringes of both Bicester and Banbury.
- D3** Improve understanding of the countryside and education of its users
- D 3.1** Extend the Oxfordshire Farming and Education Initiative to all primary schools.
- D3.2**
- D3.3** Promote appropriate accessible countryside sites through a new leaflet.
- Raise profile and understanding of Cherwell countryside issues through improved maps, information, publicity, local media, features in Cherwell Link and events, including promoting the role of the Cherwell Countryside Forum (see Community Plan, Theme 8, Aim 4).
- D3.4**
- D3.5** Provide interpretation facilities at each publicly accessible woodland/nature reserve.
- Promote and support nature conservation projects which are aimed at community involvement, public access and education

APPENDIX 5: TEXT OF THE BIODIVERSITY CHECKLIST

Wildlife and your planning application.

South Oxfordshire is an attractive place to live with its historic towns and rich countryside. Many important habitats and species thrive in this setting both in the rural and urban areas. However, wildlife is under threat and many of our most important habitats and species are declining. South Oxfordshire District Council, as a planning authority requires all planning applications to take wildlife into account. In this way we can help to conserve the rich natural heritage of South Oxfordshire. With careful planning you can also create new habitats for wildlife as part of your application. This leaflet is designed to help you assess what wildlife may be affected by your proposal. The presence of wildlife will not necessarily prevent your application from being accepted and by following the simple guidance on this sheet you will help ensure your proposal is wildlife-friendly. If you think your application may affect wildlife then it is important that the issues are addressed before the application is submitted.

Bats

In response to the serious decline in the numbers of bats Government legislation makes it illegal to kill, injure or disturb a bat or their roosts, both occupied and unoccupied.

Bats often roost in roof and wall spaces and any building work in these areas can disturb them. This includes the blocking up of bat entrance holes. If your application covers work on an occupied dwelling and you are concerned that it may affect bats, please contact the Species Officer at English Nature on 01635 268881 for further advice.

If your application covers work on any other building and may affect bats, a survey will have to be undertaken by a qualified professional. Trees with cavities that are affected may be used by bats and also require a survey. English Nature can supply a list of licensed bat surveyors if required. The results of this survey should be made available to the planning authority to help them assess your planning application. A Department of the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) licence may be required before you can start work.

Further information on the legal protection afforded to bats and the DEFRA licensing procedure is available from DEFRA's web-site: www.defra.gov.uk

Bats can be very discreet visitors and you may not have noticed their presence. They cause no harm to buildings and can make great houseguests by helping to keep down the number of insect pests in your garden. You can actively encourage bats by installing bat boxes in your garden, bat bricks or shuttering in the eaves.

Please answer the following and append to your submitted planning application form.

1. Do you think that your proposal may affect bats?

If, **Yes** go to 2. If, **No** go to 3

2a. For development to an existing dwelling:

Have you contacted the Species Officer at English Nature for further advice?

If **Yes**, please append a summary of any advice given.

Now answer question 3.

2b. For any other development:

Has a survey been undertaken by a licensed bat surveyor?

If **Yes**, please append a copy of the survey report.

Now answer question 3.

3. Are badgers, birds, ponds, amphibians, trees, hedgerows or water voles likely to be affected by your proposal?

If so please attach details.

Please ensure that you follow this guidance and address any issues arising before you submit a planning application.

Badgers

Badger setts are protected by law. Badgers need large areas for gathering their food so occupy large territories. If your application in any way affects a badger sett or there is one nearby then you should contact the Countryside Officer on 01491 823133 for advice.

Birds

All nesting birds and their nests are protected by law so ensure that any work that could disturb them (for example tree felling or hedge clearance or building work) is carried out outside the breeding season (the breeding season runs from the beginning of February to the end of August).

Ponds

Many ponds support amphibian species such as frogs, toads and newts, which are

all, protected by law. Because of their rarity, Great Crested Newts are fully protected and any work affecting the pond and surrounding habitat may require a special licence.

If your application affects a pond that you know to contain amphibians then please contact the Species Officer at English Nature on 01635 268881. If you do not have a pond, consider creating one to attract more wildlife to your garden.

Trees and Hedgerows

Native trees and hedgerows are important for wildlife and the landscape. Old trees are particularly valuable for wildlife, especially those with holes and deadwood. It is important that your planning application takes account of all trees on the site. You will need to consider the condition of the trees and the benefits they provide and how they could be protected during development. If your application includes planting then use native trees and shrubs to encourage wildlife - a list appropriate to your area can be provided by the Forestry Officer on 01491 823775.

Some hedgerows are protected by law, if your application involves the removal of part or the whole of a hedgerow then please contact the Countryside Officer on 01491 823133.

Watercourses

Watercourses from the smallest ditches and streams to the largest rivers support a wide range of wildlife.

Work affecting banks of streams may impact on water voles and their burrows. The number of water voles have dramatically declined over the last 15 years and the law prohibits disturbance of its habitat. It is also important that land adjacent to watercourses is protected, if your application is likely to affect any watercourse please contact the Countryside Officer on 01491 823133 for further advice.

Your Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Supported By: English Nature, Seeda, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire And Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust

For Office Use

Application No:

Development Proposals:

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