Public Document Pack

Committee: **Executive**

Date: **Tuesday 7 October 2025**

Time: **6.30 pm**

Venue **39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD**

Membership

Councillor David Hingley (Chair)	**Councillor Lesley McLean (Vice-Chair)**
Councillor Tom Beckett	Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor Jean Conway	Councillor Nick Cotter
Councillor Ian Middleton	Councillor Robert Parkinson
Councillor Rob Pattenden	

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest that they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

3. Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting

The Chair to report on any requests to submit petitions or to address the meeting.

4. Minutes (Pages 9 - 18)

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2025.

5. Chair's Announcements

To receive communications from the Chair.

6. Urgent Business

The Chair to advise whether they have agreed to any item of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.

7. Notice of Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 19 - 96)

Report of Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to notify the Executive of recommendations from the March 2025 meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and to request an Executive Response.

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To note the reports and recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1.2 To agree that an Executive Response be prepared for each set of recommendations, for consideration and agreement, within two months of this notice.

8. Bicester Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) Implementation Report (Pages 97 - 124)

Report of Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety

Purpose of report

A consultation was recently undertaken on a proposal to renewal the current Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for Bicester town centre. This report provides the Executive with the background to the proposal, a summary of the consultation undertaken and the feedback from stakeholders and the details of the potential scope of the Order. The report asks the Executive to decide whether to renew the current PSPO in Bicester town centre.

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To renew the Public Spaces Protection Order for Bicester town centre taking into consideration the outcomes of the public consultation and the feedback received from stakeholders.

1.2 The basis of the order will be items (a)-(e) as set out in the consultation in section 4.14 and the order will apply to the area set within the red border in appendix 1.

1.3 To agree the order can remain in place for up to 3 years.

9. Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Pages 125 - 372)

(Appendix 2d is a link available in the report under the list of appendices)

Report of Corporate Director Communities

Purpose of report

To endorse the publication of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To endorse the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy and approves its publication by Oxfordshire County Council.

10. Response to Motion: Primary Care Facilities in North Oxfordshire (Pages 373 - 378)

Report of Corporate Director Communities

Purpose of report

To agree the response to the motion raised at the Council meeting on 21 July 2025 with regard to supporting the Integrated Care Board (ICB) in making provision for Primary Care Facilities.

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To affirm its clear commitment to supporting the ICB in meeting its responsibilities for the planning, commissioning and management of NHS services for the population of Cherwell.

1.2 To request that officers offer regular, structured meetings with the ICB to support this commitment.

1.3 To note the important role the Council has in holding the ICB to account for the appropriate and timely provision of Primary Care and its supporting infrastructure.

11. Award of Grant to Banbury Museum Trust (Pages 379 - 384)

Report of Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing

Purpose of report

Cherwell District Council is the principal funder of The Banbury Museum Trust. This report sets out the reasoning for an award of grant funding until March 2027.

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To award Banbury Museum Trust a grant for their continued operation until 31 March 2027.

12. Growth and Regeneration Funding 2025/26 - 2027/28 (Pages 385 - 396)

Report of Corporate Director Communities

Purpose of report

To secure project funding to the Growth & Regeneration and Development Management Services within the Place and Regeneration Directorate to address capacity constraints and to support priority projects including the Housing Delivery Action Plan, Local Area Energy Planning, inputting into the Oxford Growth Commission and enabling infrastructure to support complex development sites.

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To accept an award of £300k funding from MHCLG to be spent in 2025/26 on investment in capacity funding to support the acceleration of infrastructure and housing delivery in Bicester as part of the Bicester Garden Town Programme.

1.2 To transfer £600k from the projects reserve to a new earmarked “Growth and Regeneration Projects Reserve” and to allocate £100k of this in 2025/26. This funding will add capacity to the other two Area Oversight Group areas of Banbury and Kidlington (and the 4 surrounding parish areas of the Local Plan Partial Review 2020) to accelerate housing and employment delivery through projects detailed in the report.

1.3 To delegate to the Corporate Director Communities (post title will change to Executive Director Place and Regeneration effective 15 October 2025), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, the programme management and change control of funding to meet the identified projects, and subject to approval of the project business plans by Executive Committee as identified within the report.

13. Cherwell Futures Programme (Pages 397 - 412)

Report of Corporate Director Resources and Transformation

Purpose of report

To seek approval for the next phase of Transformation to transition to the Cherwell Futures Programme. Following a comprehensive review by the Executive and analysis of progress made in 2024-25, the programme's focus has been strategically narrowed to focus on three priority areas: Planning, Environmental Services, and Customer Engagement (Single Front Door).

This approach will provide clear assurance on targeted savings and establish a definitive means of implementation. Depending on the full scope of the project agreed, it is anticipated to achieve between £3 million and £4 million in savings per annum over the medium term (6-18 months) from approval.

The report asks the Executive to allocate an initial £400k in funding to enable work on the priority areas identified, and to agree that a further £1.1m can be accessed subject to strict governance and oversight procedures.

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To approve the Cherwell Futures Programme to prioritise the three key areas of Planning, Environmental Services, and Customer Engagement (Single Front Door), as the core focus for the next phase of work.

1.2 To approve the allocation from the Projects Reserve of £0.4 million to fund initial support and preparatory work required for the three prioritised areas noted in recommendation 1.1 above, together with transferring £1.1 million from the Projects Reserve to a new Cherwell Futures Reserve for implementation and resource costs, subject to Executive approval, as required by the Council's Reserves Policy.

1.3 To approve the proposed delivery model referenced in section 4. This model aims to bring more project management in-house to reduce risk and maximise cost-effectiveness, using external support only where necessary.

14. Finance Monitoring Report August 2025 (Pages 413 - 438)

Report of Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer)

Purpose of report

To report to Executive the council's forecast year-end financial position as at the end of the August 2025. Further detail can be found in the report and its appendices.

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To consider and note the contents of the council's financial management report as at the end of August 2025.

1.2 To approve the Use of Reserve and Grant Funding Requests in Appendix 4.

1.3 To approve the amendments to the capital programme in Appendix 5.

1.4 To approve the proposed, write offs set out in exempt Appendix 6.

15. Exclusion of the Press and Public

The following item contains exempt information as defined in the following paragraphs of Part 1, Schedule 12A of Local Government Act 1972.

1 – Information relating to any individual

2 – Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual

3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Members are reminded that whilst the following item has been marked as exempt, it is for the meeting to decide whether or not to consider it in private or in public. In making the decision, members should balance the interests of individuals or the Council itself in having access to the information. In considering their discretion members should also be mindful of the advice of Council Officers.

No representations have been received from the public requesting that this item be considered in public.

Should Members decide not to make a decision in public, they are recommended to pass the following recommendation:

"That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the ground that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information."

16. Finance Monitoring Report August 2025 - Exempt Appendix (Pages 439 - 446)

Councillors are requested to collect any post from their pigeon hole in the Members' Lounge at the end of the meeting.

Information about this Agenda

Apologies for Absence
Apologies for absence should be notified to democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or 01295 221534 prior to the start of the meeting.

Declarations of Interest
Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item.

Local Government and Finance Act 1992 – Budget Setting, Contracts & Supplementary Estimates
Members are reminded that any member who is two months in arrears with Council Tax must declare the fact and may speak but not vote on any decision which involves budget setting, extending or agreeing contracts or incurring expenditure not provided for in the agreed budget for a given year and could affect calculations on the level of Council Tax.

Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012
This agenda constitutes the 5-day notice required by Regulation 5 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 in terms of the intention to consider an item of business in private.

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Queries Regarding this Agenda
Please contact Natasha Clark, Democratic and Elections democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk, 01295 221534

Shiraz Sheikh
Monitoring Officer

Published on Monday 29 September 2025

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 2 September 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor David Hingley (Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership) (Chair)
Councillor Lesley McLean (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration) (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management
Councillor Nick Cotter, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Also Present:

Councillor Amanda Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group
Councillor David Rogers, Deputy Group Leader, Cherwell Conservative and Independent Alliance
Councillor John Broad

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Les Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group
Councillor Donna Ford

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Julia Harrington, Head of Regeneration and Growth
Tom Gubbins, Wellbeing Manager
Charlene Greenaway, Transformation Consultant
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation

Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services
Richard Smith, Head of Housing
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader

24 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

25 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group, Councillor Rogers, Deputy Leader of the Cherwell Conservative and Independent Alliance, who would be speaking in respect of item 10, Response to Motion: Government Review of Local Authority Funding; and Councillor Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group and Bicester West ward member, Councillor Broad, Bicester West ward member, and Councillor Ford, Bicester East ward member, who would each speak on item 9, Bicester Market Square Project.

26 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

27 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair’s announcements.

28 **HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) Fuel**

The Assistant Director Environmental Services and Corporate Director Communities submitted a report which looked at the issues of cutting vehicle fleet emissions by the adoption of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel to replace standard diesel fuel. The report considered the reduction in emissions and the potential increase in revenue costs from moving to HVO.

Resolved

(1) That the change from standard diesel to HVO diesel commencing from Autumn 2025 leading to a substantial reduction in emissions during 2025/26 & 2026/26 be supported.

(2) That the small increase in fuel costs as a result of moving to HVO, which can be contained within the existing fuel budget, be noted.

Reasons

To move to HVO fuel with the implementation plan commencing from Autumn 2025 will reduce fleet emissions in 2025/26 with the full year effect in 2026/27.

Alternative options

Option 1: Continuing using diesel until either Battery Electric Vehicles or Hydrogen Vehicles are available at an affordable price. Fleet emissions will remain very high until the current Large Goods Vehicles are replaced. This may take a considerable number of years

29 **Domestic Abuse Policy**

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to seek approval for a new Domestic Abuse Policy.

Resolved

(1) That the new Domestic Abuse Policy be approved.

Reasons

The new Domestic Abuse Policy outlines the Council's role and responsibilities and how residents receive advice and support.

It provides an overview of what residents can expect from the Council when they approach the Council for support with domestic abuse and how the Council will ensure that their circumstances are handled confidentially, sensitively and non-judgmentally.

It provides an overview of the housing support that is provided by the Council, particularly through the housing options team, housing register and through the Sanctuary Scheme, which provides additional security measures to properties.

It outlines the multi-agency role and multi-agency arrangements that the Council is part of and that are in place within Oxfordshire to coordinate responses, provide support and monitor perpetrators.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to bring forward a Domestic Abuse Policy. The Council has statutory duties in delivering housing services and participating in multi-agency arrangements regarding victim and perpetrator management, however, there are no statutory duties to have a domestic abuse policy. The Council is aiming to achieve an accreditation in recognition of its practice and focus on this area, and a policy is an important part of achieving this. This option is therefore rejected.

30 **Made in Banbury**

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report which presented a new cultural strategy for Banbury and an exploration of the economic impact of investment in the cultural sector offer a perspective on the importance of cultural organisations for the district. This report highlighted the connection between the council's wellbeing strategy, the Banbury Area Priority Plan and the development of coordinated investment.

Resolved

(1) That Made in Banbury, a cultural strategy for the Town, be endorsed.

(2) That the impact investment in arts and culture can have on the local economy be acknowledged.

(3) That the Banbury Quays Consortium be supported in their coordination of marketing cultural offers to audiences under a shared 'Made in Banbury' approach across the district with a grant of £3000 from existing funding allocations for each of the next two years.

(4) That the implementation and delivery of the action plan be monitored.

(5) That, given the independent nature of the cultural strategy, the area oversight groups be asked to consider culture in their placemaking plans, ensuring the arts organisations of the district contribute to the cultural development of the district overall.

Reasons

Culture has an important role to play in the delivery of successful placemaking strategies and in the economic health of our Towns. In endorsing the work of the sector through these plans and providing an enabling and supportive policy context for the development of place, activity and employment, Cherwell District Council can effect change. The quality of life local residents enjoy is positively impacted by a vibrant cultural sector and the range of recommendations will help support the sectors efforts to provide a range of opportunities for audiences and residents wanting to pursue a career in the creative industries.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not endorse Made in Banbury and the consequent actions
This has been rejected as the strategy and action plan support the published policies of the Council and the small financial contribution can be achieved from existing funding over the next two years.

31 **Bicester Market Square Project**

The Corporate Director of Communities submitted a report to provide an update to the Executive on the progress of the Market Square, Bicester

regeneration and public realm improvement project and to seek approval to continue to the next stage of the project, and ultimately on to complete the project, subject to all of the required procurement processes being undertaken successfully. This report details the next steps of the design work required to the concept plan, seeking the required planning permissions, approval of the draft programme and budget approvals based on the estimated cost plans undertaken as part of stage 1 of the project.

Executive members commented that the project was positive for Bicester acknowledging it was a work in progress and compromises were necessary.

Councillor Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group and Bicester West ward member, Councillor Broad, Bicester West ward member, and Councillor Ford, Bicester East ward member, who would each speak on item 9, Bicester Market Square Project.

In addressing Executive, Councillor Broad commented on the importance of car parking, noted that bike racks were included but no motorcycle parking and expressed his support for opposition to traffic calming.

In response to Councillor Ford's comments regarding the public engagement, how the proposed concept design was chosen and the importance of the project being right, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration explained that there had been a high number of responses from the survey and it was considered the concept design was a true representation of the outcome of the public engagement. The comments regarding the public engagement exercise were noted and consideration would be given to using the Bicester Town Council publication, Garthe Gazette, on the future.

In response to Councillor Sibley's comments regarding the impact of the closure of London Road, the Chair confirmed a solution for the London Road crossing was being sought and he would provide an update when he could.

In response to Councillor Sibley's comments that the Market Square shouldn't be treated in isolation from the town centre, that retail outlets on the Bicester outskirts were booming due to free parking and he hoped for two-hour free parking in the centre of Bicester and that feedback as the project moved forward would be appreciated, the Chair confirmed that he was committed to keeping Members informed. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration explained that whilst this was a standalone project, an holistic approach was being taken with regard to the impact on other parts of Bicester town centre.

Resolved

(1) That the progress of the project to date, including the public engagement process and how the proposed concept design was developed, be noted.

(2) That the concept design presented for development to the next stage be approved.

(3) That it be approved that the £881,000 from Oxfordshire County Council town centre s106 funds be added to the currently approved £4.25m capital programme budget for this project to give a maximum total project budget of £5,131,000 to complete this project in full.

(4) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director Communities, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration and the Assistant Director of Finance, to agree the tranches of budget for each stage of the project as required, into the capital programme to enable completion of this project.

(5) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director Communities, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration and Assistant Director of Law and Governance, to approve the appointment of the preferred Consultant & Contractor and to work with the Councils project team to deliver this project following the required Council procurement processes.

(6) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director Communities, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration in conjunction with the and the Assistant Director of Law and Governance the decision on the specific contract options & construction route to deliver the project in full (which is currently proposed as a two-stage contract process) (NEC 4E x22) following the Councils required procurement processes.

(7) That the current draft programme of works and estimated timescales of each stage of work, as provided by WSP, as part of their Stage 1 feasibility work be noted.

(8) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director Communities, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration to confirm approval to submit the planning application of the detailed design.

Reasons

The Bicester Market Square improvement project has been in the public domain for many years. A report to the Executive was presented on 4 September 2023: Bicester Garden Town Programme - Market Square Project Business Need & Next Stages.

This report follows the stages of the project over the last two years to date; specifically following an internal review in summer 2024 with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration in conjunction with the Corporate Director Communities, the project has progressed with a full public engagement process completing, as well as confirming project “why” and project priorities.

The outcome of the public engagement process has been a preferred concept design, together with a draft programme which outlines next steps, together

with estimated cost plans depending on choice of materials to deliver this project.

The cost plans are estimating the preferred plan can be delivered within a total maximum project budget of £5,131,000, (dependent on material choices) with £180,000 spent to date.

This report therefore sets out recommendations to take forward the next steps of this project onto successful delivery and completion.

Alternative options

Option one: To approve a previously available design from the one presented which does pedestrianise the Market Square. This is not an option for the local businesses and community of Bicester; during engagement this was a very clear message along with the request to retain some parking and if possible, at the current level.

Option two: To approve one of the other presented designs. This would not be the preferred design from the public and business engagement, but it is possible to deliver one of the other concept designs at this stage.

Option three: To pause or stop this project now and not continue to the next stage. This would save the project budget to be spent on other projects or Council priorities; however, this project has been discussed within the community for over 20 years and during the last year the team have been working very closely with our Portfolio Holder who has been supporting this project.

32 **Response to Motion: Government Review of Local Authority Funding**

The Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report to respond to the motion raised at the Council meeting of 21 July 2025 by Councillor Edward Reeves in relation to Government Review of Local Authority Funding.

Councillor Rogers, seconder of the motion at the 21 July Council meeting, addressed Executive. Councillor Rogers thanked officers for their ongoing hard work, with the business rates reset always being included in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and expressed hope that the MPs representing the Cherwell district would help lobbying.

Councillor Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group, addressed Executive and echoed thanks to officers for their hard work in long term planning for the business rates reset. Councillor Watkins advised that Sean Woodock, MP for Banbury had confirmed his support for Cherwell and that he had spoken with the Deputy Prime Minister and asked that she look at Cherwell’s situation.

The Chair thanked Councillor Watkins for the positive update on the support of Sean Woodcock MP and confirmed that Calum Miller MP for Bicester and Woodstock was also supporting Cherwell.

Resolved

(1) That the Executive's response to the motion be noted.

Reasons

The Leader and officers have taken opportunities to maximise the amount of influence on the Government to ensure that it is aware of the financial challenges that Cherwell would face if anticipated changes were implemented without any financial safeguards being put in place.

Alternative options

No alternative options have been identified.

33 **Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2025 - 2026**

The Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer) and Assistant Director Customer Focus submitted a report to report to Executive the council's forecast year-end financial, performance and risk position as of the end of Quarter 1 2025, further detail can be found in the report and its appendices.

Resolved

(1) That the contents of the council's finance, performance and risk management report as at Quarter 1 2025/2026 be noted.

(2) That the reprofiling of projects in the capital programme be approved.

(3) That the release of £40k from Policy Contingency for pump priming The Hill be approved.

Reasons

The report updates Executive on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2025/26, Quarter 1 performance position and updated Leadership Risk Register. Regular reporting is key to good governance and demonstrates that the council is actively managing its financial resources sustainably.

Alternative options

Option 1: This report summarises the council's forecast financial position up to the end of End of Year 2026, and a snapshot of our Performance and Risk positions for Quarter 1 2025-26, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

34 **Budget Process 2026/2027**

The Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report to inform the Executive of the proposed approach to the 2026/27 Budget Process and provides context and background information on the existing Medium-Term Financial Strategy and information on latest government announcements relevant to the Strategy.

Resolved

(1) That the Budget Process for 2026/27 be approved.

(2) That the base assumptions to be used for the 2026/27 budget be approved.

(3) That a five-year period for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2030/31 and five-year period for the Capital Programme to 2030/31 be approved.

Reasons

The Council has a legal obligation to set a balanced budget and ensure it maintains a suitable level of reserves each year. The process laid out in this report will allow CDC to develop budget proposals that will allow it to meet these legal obligations.

Alternative options

The Council has a legal obligation to set a balanced budget and evaluate its level of reserves to ensure they are held at a suitable level. Therefore, there are no alternative options other than to carry out a budget process that reviews the levels of reserves and identifies a budget proposal that can be delivered within the overall level of resources available to the Council.

35 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 8.08 pm

Chair:

Date:

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This report is public	
Notice of Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	7 October 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	N/A – Chair/Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	N/A – Chair/Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Report of	Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, Shiraz Sheikh

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to notify the Executive of recommendations from the March 2025 meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and to request an Executive Response.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To note the reports and recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1.2 To agree that an Executive Response be prepared for each set of recommendations, for consideration and agreement, within two months of this notice.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSC) have statutory powers to make recommendations to the Executive, as detailed in Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000. The Executive has a statutory duty to respond to recommendations made, detailed in section 9FE of the same Act.

2.2 OSC has four working group reports to submit to Executive. Three include a number of recommendations. There is a fourth recommendation to be considered, generated from a separate agenda item considered by OSC.

2.3 When Executive has received notice of recommendations (this report), the Executive has two months to respond.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	Signed off on the basis that there are no financial implications. Rachel Ainsworth, FBP (Resources), 22 August 2025			
Legal	Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSC) have statutory powers to make recommendations to the Executive, as detailed in Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000. The Executive has a statutory duty to respond to recommendations made, detailed in section 9FE of the same Act. Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law and Governance/Monitoring Officer, 11 September 2025			
Risk Management	There are no risk implications arising directly from this report, however following the recommendations from this report mitigates the risk, for both OSC and Executive, of not being complaint with requirements as detailed in Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 01 September 2025			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact				Not applicable, as this is notice of recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?				
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?				
Climate & Environmental Impact				Not applicable, as this is notice of recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee
ICT & Digital Impact				Not applicable, as this is notice of recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Data Impact				Not applicable, as this is notice of recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Procurement & subsidy				Not applicable, as this is notice of recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Council Priorities	All priorities			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	N/A			

Supporting Information

3. Background

3.1 Four OSC working groups were constituted during the 2024-2025 Municipal Year – Food Insecurity, Climate Action, Planning Application Appeals, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). The EDI group was a joint group with Personnel Committee.

3.2. Three of the working groups – Planning Application Appeals, Climate Action and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion produced a series of recommendations, that have been considered and endorsed by OSC.

3.3. The fourth working group on Food Insecurity produced an end of inquiry report that provided commentary on their work,but did not include any recommendations.

3.4. In addition to the four working groups, OSC made a recommendation to Executive following consideration of an item relating to the Cherwell Community Safety Partnership.

4. Details

Planning Application Appeals

4.1 OSC held a whole Committee ‘spot light review’ meeting in February 2025, focussing on Planning Application Appeals, having particular regard to planning application refusals overturned at appeal, the reasons for costs implications and lessons learned.

4.2 The Committee agreed five recommendations, that were presented and endorsed by OSC at their meeting on 18 March 2025. The recommendations are attached at appendix 1.

Food Insecurity

4.3 The Food Insecurity working group was initially established in 2022, and continued during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 municipal years. Membership of the group was not limited to OSC members, and it was chaired by Councillor Rebecca Biegel.

4.4 The group produced an end of inquiry report that was considered and endorsed by OSC at their meeting on 18 March 2025. The report is attached at appendix 2.

Climate Action

4.5 The Climate Action working group was initially established in 2022, and continued during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 municipal years. Membership of the group was not limited to OSC members, and in 2024-25 it was chaired by Councillor Grace Conway-Murray.

4.6 The group produced an end of inquiry report that included eight recommendations. The report and recommendations were considered and endorsed by OSC at their meeting on 18 March 2025. The report is attached at appendix 3.

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

4.7 The EDI working group was initially established as a joint group with Personnel Committee in 2022, and continued during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 municipal years. Membership of the group was limited to OSC and Personnel members, and in 2024-25 it was chaired by Councillor Rebecca Biegel.

4.8 The group produced an end of inquiry report that included 10 recommendations. The report and recommendations were considered and endorsed by OSC at their meeting on 18 March 2025. The report is attached at appendix 4.

Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership

4.9 At their meeting on 11 March 2025, OSC received presentations from the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and the Chief Superintendent of Thames Valley Police, in relation to the Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership.

4.10 Following questions regarding an updated Community Safety Partnership plan for 2024 onwards, the Committee resolved to recommend ‘that the Executive, as a matter of urgency, ensure that the Cherwell Safer Community Partnership

Plan be reviewed and updated and presented to this committee early in the next municipal year'.

Next steps

4.11 Executive is asked to note the reports and recommendations of the four working groups, as well as the general recommendation relating to the Community Safety Partnership Plan, and to ensure that an Executive response is prepared for each one.

4.12 The response should provide the Executive's decisions in respect of the recommendations made, along with any additional specific actions the Executive agrees to take.

4.13 Once agreed by Executive, OSC will be notified of each response. Where relevant, OSC will track the implementation of decisions and/or any actions agreed.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

Option 1: Not to provide an Executive response. This is rejected, as it would be contrary to Section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000. Regardless of Executive's decision relating to the various recommendations, a response must be submitted to OSC.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 The recommendations ensure both OSC and Executive comply with requirements as detailed in Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000.

Decision Information

Key Decision	No
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Planning Application Appeals recommendations
Appendix 2	Food Insecurity Working Group – End of Inquiry Report
Appendix 3	Climate Action Working Group – End of Inquiry Report
Appendix 4	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group – End of Inquiry Report
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer – Scrutiny & Democratic Lead
Report Author contact details	01295 221534 democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, Shiraz Sheikh (Monitoring Officer).

Planning Application Appeals Working Group Recommendations

The recommendations from this scrutiny working group are as follows: -

Lessons Learnt

R1) That a Lessons Learnt review be carried out on the planning applications process and documented and made available to members of the planning committee and officers to improve learning and development and contribute to ongoing service improvement.

Member Training

R2) That focused member development workshops be included in the member development programme for members of the planning committee (and substitute members), with an agenda work plan produced for these workshops, addressing known issues and risks that may arise in consideration of overturning officer recommendations to the planning committee, to include the potential loss of Section 106 monies and Considering officer recommendations and the possible implications of overturning officer recommendations should they result in being successfully contested as appeal.

R3) That focused member development be included to address the role of planning committee specifically in consideration of planning applications against the Local Plan criteria, to help improve the robustness of planning decisions that overturn officer recommendations and help to reduce the risk of successful appeals.

Action Plan

R4) That the Action Plan being developed address known issues in addressing the robustness of the consideration of member proposals to reject planning applications where officer recommendations would be overturned in planning committee, so that the risk of being successfully contested at appeal may be reduced.

Information request:

That the Action Plan be bought to the overview and scrutiny committee for review.

Monitoring Improvement

R5) That a monitoring framework be developed to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan and improvements and development to the planning applications process with a reports to a future meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee, to include key metrics (RAG rated) and implementation milestones.

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Food Insecurity

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

March 2025

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Executive Summary

This Food Insecurity Scrutiny Working Group was originally established in 2022 and was continued in 2023-24 and re-established again in 2024-25. The Food Insecurity Scrutiny Working Group was set up to provide oversight and assurance and contributions from elected members, through the review progress of the implementation of the Cherwell Food Action Plan and make recommendations and suggestions for consideration by the Executive Member for Wellbeing and Housing Services department.

The Scrutiny Working Group was originally established following the adoption of a Council motion which declared a food poverty emergency a commitment to the following actions:

- Designating a Food Champion
- Establishing & reporting to O&S the scale of the food poverty crisis in Cherwell
- Drawing up a Cherwell Food Action Plan to support local communities
- Developing a promotional campaign relating to underclaimed Health Start Food vouchers
- Supporting local communities to reduce food waste.

Prior to the food poverty emergency being declared, in June 2022 the Executive had endorsed and committed to the Oxfordshire Food Strategy.

The Oxfordshire Food Strategy sets out a vision where everyone in Oxfordshire can enjoy the healthy and sustainable food they need every day. A critical part of implementing the Oxfordshire Food Strategy has been the development of local Food Action Plans for each district, to ensure that the Food Strategy reflects local priorities and reflects the unique nature of the City and each of the Districts. These have been led by representatives from across the food system, through the Food Action Working Groups (FAWGs -are the multistakeholder groups who helped devise the plan). The Food Action Plan for Cherwell district is a multi-stakeholder plan, with a range of organisations taking responsibility for action.

The Cherwell Food Action Plan identifies initial actions spanning 2024 – 2027. Throughout this period, the Scrutiny Working Group is reviewing progress against targets and metrics and refine the actions, providing oversight and assurance and also provide contributions from the Working Group through the review progress of the implementation of the Cherwell Food Action Plan.

This report outlines the Scrutiny Working Group's assessment of the Cherwell Food Action Plan, focusing on its key priority areas. At each meeting, actions within the identified priority areas were reviewed, with a particular emphasis on tackling food poverty and diet-related ill health, as well as building vibrant food communities.



Members of the Scrutiny Working Group

The following Members were appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2024-2205 municipal year:

Councillor Rebecca Biegel - Chair
Councillor Phil Chapman – Vice Chair
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke.

Aims and Objectives

The Aims and Objectives for the Scrutiny Working Group agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are:

To review implementation of the Cherwell Food Action Plan and any associated issues and make recommendations and suggestions for consideration by the Executive Member and Wellbeing and Housing Services department.

The Scrutiny Worming Group focused on Food Insecurity in Cherwell and on implementation and development of the Cherwell Food Action Plan but avoided drifting into other interrelated Wellbeing strategies and services.

Witnesses to the Inquiry

The Scrutiny Working Group has spoken with both internal and external expert witnesses during its inquiry, including Councillor Rob Pattenden - Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities, Councillor Ian Middleton – Executive Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, who is also the Council's appointed "Food Champion, they have been involved with the Scrutiny Working Group throughout 2024-2025.

The Scrutiny Working Group has also worked with Departmental Officers Nicola Riley, Assistant Director of Wellbeing and Housing Services, Edward Frape, Senior Healthy Place Shaping Officer and Libby Knox, Food and Wellbeing Officer, who have provided support, briefing reports and answered questions at each of our meetings.

The Scrutiny Working Group also received oral evidence from expert witness Alison Drake from the Bicester Foodbank.



Councillor Phil Chapman at the Scrutiny Working Group visit the Banbury Larder

During the inquiry members of the committee have visited the Banbury Larder and seen first-hand the work going on there to support the community.

1. Tackling Food Poverty

1.1. The Food Insecurity Scrutiny Working Group has met throughout 2024-2025 in continuation of its work from previous years to oversee the delivery of Food Insecurity activities in Cherwell. This report outlines the Scrutiny Working Group's assessment of the Cherwell Food Action Plan from its work during this year, which has included tackling food poverty and diet-related ill health, as well as building vibrant food communities.

Priority Area 1: Tackling Food Poverty and Diet-Related Ill Health

Presentation of Deprivation Data

1.2. The Food and Wellbeing Officer presented deprivation data through the Priority Places for Food platform. This data examined alongside our existing knowledge of the areas of deprivation allowed us to identify those most in need. Using statistical data and feedback from local partners assisting residents in need helped ensure our efforts were best directed. The Working Group utilised this data to provide a steer to the Portfolio Holder and departmental officers with targeted suggestions to support these initiatives.

Support for Schools in High Deprivation Areas

1.3. In April 2024, letters were sent to all schools in targeted areas with higher deprivation levels, offering support to enhance their curriculum through free school food and nutrition programmes, facilitated by the CDC Food and Wellbeing Officer.

Rural Support Initiatives

1.4. For rural areas, the Food and Wellbeing Officer provided advisory and logistical support and in Hook Norton this led to the establishment of the Hooky Neighbours Pantry, which then enabled the group to successfully apply for funding, through the programme of Cherwell District Council Food Grants.

Household Support and Community Food Grant Funding

1.5. Officers presented evaluations on Household Support Funding (HSF) and Community Food Grant funding. Following consideration of this, the Scrutiny Working Group suggested establishing a new community food grant to further the Cherwell Food Action Plan objectives through HSF6 grant funding. A specific suggestion was made by the working group to ensure targeted support for diverse cultural groups, particularly the Afro-Caribbean community. This resulted in the Redeemed Christian Church of God, in collaboration with the Nigerians in Banbury group, receiving grant aid for their work in the

community as part of the HSF standard grant-making process.

Expansion of Food Voucher Distribution

1.6. Officers presented data on food voucher distributions across three main providers in Cherwell:

- North Oxfordshire Community Foodbank (Kidlington)
- Bicester Trussell Foodbank
- Banbury Trussell Foodbank

1.7. The Scrutiny Working Group identified a lack of vouchers being issued in Banbury, despite its high deprivation levels. Officers were instructed to investigate the distribution process and expand access. Consequently, three additional partners were included in the voucher distribution scheme:

- Home-Start (Banbury, Bicester and villages)
- The Sunshine Centre (Banbury)
- Sunrise Multicultural Project (Banbury).

Site Visits and Presentations

1.8. Throughout the year the Scrutiny Working Group received regular updates from Cherwell Council officers and was able to scrutinise the progress of implementing the Food Action Plan, developed by Good Food Oxfordshire and Cherwell-based organisations, including the District Council. It has also received evidence from external organisations and undertaken site visits to gain insights into how projects are working on the ground.

1.9. In December 2024 members of the Scrutiny Working Group visited The Banbury Larder and reviewed the impactful work of volunteers in redistributing surplus food.



Members of the Food Insecurity Scrutiny Working Group visiting the Banbury Larder Food Bank in Banbury.

1.10. In January 2025 the Scrutiny Working Group received oral evidence and a presentation from Alison Drake, the Manager of Bicester Foodbank, which is a Trussell Trust supported food bank. She provided a presentation on the organisation's work in combating poverty and hunger. Key highlights included the provision of on-site hot meals, food education initiatives, cooking classes, and efforts to ensure a balanced selection of fresh and staple foods.



2. Building Vibrant Food Communities

Priority Area 2: Building Vibrant Food Communities with the Capacity and Skills to Enjoy Food Together

Distribution of Support Service Information

2.1. Officers presented updated support service leaflets for review. The Scrutiny Working Group provided feedback on distribution strategies, ensuring that signposting information was made available through the following channels:

- Cherwell District Council website
- Public libraries
- GP surgeries
- Warm Welcome network (community centres, faith groups, etc.).

2.2. Regular updates were shared with the Scrutiny Working Group for ongoing feedback and improvements. These are all available online too: https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/118/communities/977/cost-of-living-support

Community Food Grant Applications

2.3. The Scrutiny Working Group reviewed 19 successful applications for community food grants, funded through Household Support Funds received from Oxfordshire County Council. The Working Group applied scoring and funding criteria to ensure alignment with the Cherwell Food Action Plan's objectives and the £28,000 allocated HSF funding.

2.4. The Group supported an initiative to improve the spread of funding. They agreed it was fair to allocate every worthwhile application some funding. The Executive Portfolio Holder approved a range of funding that allowed a percentage of a grant to be allocated. The range of allocations were 100% or 50% or 25% depending on the applications score against the grant criteria.

Community Cooking Initiatives

2.5. New grant applications included funding for community cooking projects aimed at building capacity and skills for shared food experiences. These initiatives promote social cohesion and enhance food literacy within local communities.

3. Conclusion



Bicester Food Bank display

3.1. The Scrutiny Working Group has provided a strong steer and key suggestions to improve the reach and effectiveness of the Cherwell Food Action Plan.

- The expansion of food support services
- Targeted funding for underrepresented communities
- Enhancing community engagement initiatives.

3.2. Continued monitoring and evaluation will ensure that these actions contribute effectively to reducing food insecurity and fostering resilient food communities in Cherwell as part of the standard performance monitoring framework.

3.3. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agrees the programme of Scrutiny work carried out each year at its first meeting in June, after having been established by full Council in May. This includes the work of the Scrutiny Working Groups. The Food Insecurity Scrutiny Working Group was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2023, in response to the cost of living crisis.

3.4. During 2023 to 2025 the Food Insecurity Scrutiny Working Group has provided oversight and a steer to the Executive Portfolio Holder and the Council's Food Champion, on the implementation of the Council's Food Insecurity Action Plan by officers. Members and officers have felt this to be a valuable way to engage non-executive Members and officers together in this important area of work.

3.5. The Scrutiny Working Group has helped the Executive build upon existing initiatives, strengthen partnerships with community organisations, and implement sustainable solutions that address the root causes of food insecurity. Additionally, ongoing data collection and assessment will ensure that interventions remain effective and responsive to evolving needs. Disbanding the group may prematurely risk losing momentum and leaving vulnerable populations without essential support, making continued action essential for long-term impact.

3.6. It is therefore felt that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should give consideration to re-establishing the Food Insecurity Working Group for another year into 2025-2026, in consideration of the fact that food insecurity remains a persistent issue that requires long-term, sustained efforts to create meaningful change.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Councillor Rob Pattenden - Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities, Councillor Ian Middleton – Executive Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, who is our Council's "Food Champion", for their support and involvement throughout this year.

Thank you in particular to the Council officers Nicola Riley, Assistant Director of Wellbeing and Housing Services, Edward Frape, Senior Healthy Place Shaping Officer and Libby Knox, Food and Wellbeing Officer, who have provided support, briefing reports and answered questions at each of our meetings.

Thank you to Bicester Food Bank for proving evidence to our scrutiny inquiry. Thank you to Alison Drake from the for taking the time to attend our meeting to tell us about all of the excellent work at the Bicester Foodbank and sharing her insights and best practice.

Thanks also to the Banbury Larder who welcomed us to their vibrant community networking community restaurant and foodbank. Thanks to Taraji Ogunnubi and the team of helpers and volunteers who welcomed the Scrutiny Working Group to the Banbury Larder, where we attended a festive party at Marlborough Road Methodist Church in December. Members were able to tour the Community larder but also see the fantastic joined up community provision with a 'warm space', free kitchen for tea and biscuits, a monthly lunch club, the job club and Citizens Advice Information Point (CHIP).

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is appointed by Cherwell District Council to carry out the local authority scrutiny functions.

Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Barry Wood

Formal Minutes

Minutes of proceedings are available to view or download from the Council website at https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=116

Committee Staff

The current staff of the committee are:
Michael Carr - Interim Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet - Democratic and Elections Officer.

Contacts

Email: democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Cherwell District Council

March 2025

www.cherwell.gov.uk

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Climate Action

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

18 March 2025

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Executive Summary & Recommendations

The Climate Action Scrutiny Inquiry was established by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a further year in 2024-2025 to review the implementation and development of the Council's Climate Action strategy and action plan in pursuit of the corporate net zero targets. This includes reducing the District Council's own greenhouse gas emissions, as well as reducing the area of the district greenhouse gas emissions as a whole.

Members of the Scrutiny Working Group

Councillor Grace Conway-Murray – Chairman
Councillor John Broad - Vice-Chairman
Councillor Barry Wood
Councillor Isabel Creed
Councillor Les Sibley

Aims and Objectives

i). Examine the work of Cherwell Council's Climate Team and other teams in pursuit of the corporate net zero targets
ii). Monitor progress on reducing Cherwell Council's greenhouse gas emissions
iii). Monitor progress of reducing the district's greenhouse gas emissions
iv). Provide guidance on the strategic direction of Cherwell Council's climate action.

Cherwell Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, and as part of this committed to ensure its own operations and activities are carbon net zero by 2030 do its part to support the district as a whole to become carbon net zero.

To achieve this, the Council has published a Climate Action Framework and an associated Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2024.

Witnesses to the Inquiry

The Scrutiny Working Group has considered evidence from the Executive Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities, Councillor Tom Becket and the Council's lead officers for Climate Change; Jo Miskin - Climate Action Manager, Environmental Services and Hitesh Mahawar - Climate Change Programme Manager, as well as expert witnesses during its inquiry.

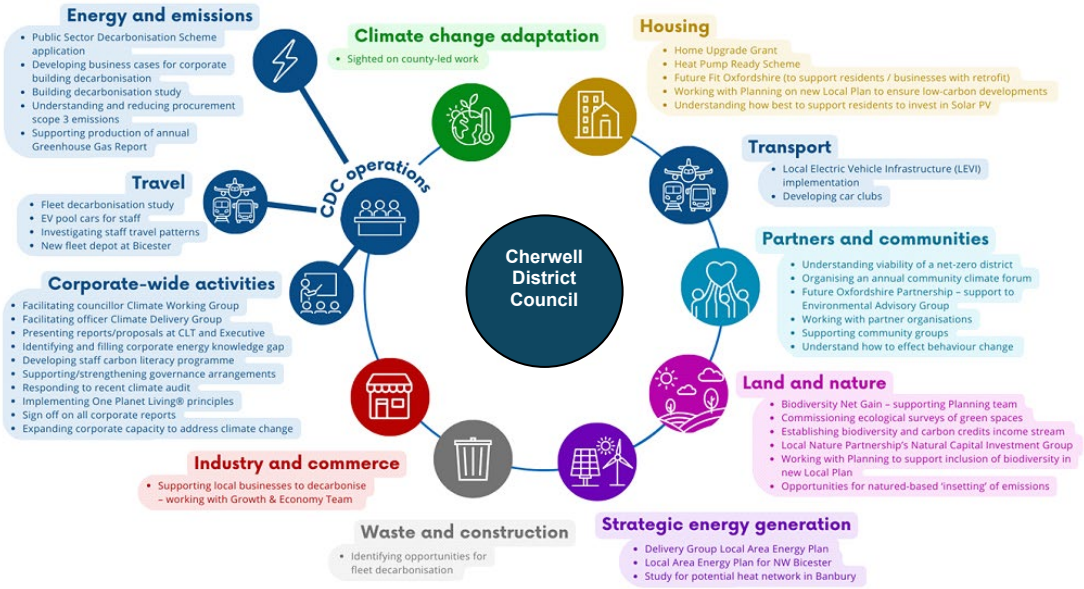
We have also received evidence from Mona Walsh Assistant Director of Property and Christina Cherry - Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager at Cherwell Council.

In addition, we have received evidence from external expert witnesses Dr Marco Raugei - Senior Lecturer and Senior Research Fellow in Mechanical Engineering, Oxford Brooks University and Andy Wainwright MSc CEng FIET - Whole System Manager, Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks.

In evidnce the Scrutiny Working Group considered
the context to the Climate Change Programme and key elements fo the Climate strategy in Cherwell, including:

- Governance Arrangements
- Strategy and Action Plan
- Cherwell Council and District Emissions
- Recent Achievements
- Challenges in Reaching Net Zero
- Next Steps.

The Working Group has considered the climate impact of local plans and how they contribute to the Climate Action Plan, as well as the solar strategy for the district. Officers from the planning department discussed the climate impact of planning applications.



Cherwell Council's approach requires new relationships with its stakeholders, new expectations and engagement with its supply chain, and a review of where it is best placed to support others to take action.

The Council reports against its climate action framework in order to inform future corporate planning in the council. The Council also reports on its carbon emissions over time to help monitor, evaluate, review and communicate progress.

The Climate Action Scrutiny Working Group met throughout the 2022-2024 municipal years and reviewed progress on climate action as well as supporting the development of the Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2024.

On 15 October 2024, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that this Scrutiny Working Group continue its work through the 2024-2025 municipal

year. At the completion of its work for 2024-25, the Scrutiny Working Group agreed on eight recommendations to the Council's Executive, made through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendations

In recognition to Cherwell Council's 2030 Net Zero target, we recommend the following to be approved by Executive and implemented.

A New Council Climate Action Strategy

Recommendation 1
That a new Council Climate Action Strategy be prepared for agreement by the Executive and full Council, with clear strategies, ambitious yet realistic objectives to deliver year on year reductions in the Council's carbon emissions, strategies, and targets to reduce District area emissions, to be agreed by full Council in 2025.

Corporate Priorities

Climate action needs to sit as a higher corporate priority than is currently the case, given that the required progress is not being made.

Recommendation 2
That Climate Action be made a higher key corporate priority, reflected in the Council key priorities (be agreed by Council), to be reflected in the Council's Corporate Plan, service delivery plans, and its annual and quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports, with ambitious but realistic measurable targets and performance measures.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Recommendation 3
That the Council request that more detailed Environmental Impact Assessments be included in reports to the Planning Committee.

Recommendation 4
That an evaluation and feasibility assessment of interim options and measures to replace the Council fleet of vehicles with alternatives for less CO2 emissions.

Buildings Emissions

We recognise, in the light of the increase in Cherwell Council's emissions in 2023 - 2024, the need for much greater focus on reducing buildings emissions to achieve 2030 Net Zero target.

Recommendation 5
That the Council agree much greater focus, plans and targets, for reducing buildings emissions to achieve 2030 Net Zero targets, with clearly assessed deliverable measures to be put in place over the next five years, with clear objectives, milestones, and implementation dates.

Recommendation 6
That Council buildings be refurnished with space heating systems replace gas powered radiators and insulation for energy conservation.

Recommendation 7
That the feasibility of introducing air-to-air heat pumps in buildings throughout the entire Council estate.

Investment in Renewable Energy

We acknowledge that investment is needed in Cherwell Council's corporate capacity to manage and optimise renewable energy and new technologies.

Recommendation 8
That the Council agree hypothecated investment in Cherwell Council District corporate capacity to manage and optimise renewable energy and new technologies.

1 Introduction

1.1. In July 2019 Cherwell Council resolved to call on the Leader to declare a 'Climate Emergency'[1] and pledge to make Cherwell District Council carbon net zero by 2030.

1.2. The Council also asked the Leader to:

- Call on the government to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible;
- Continue to work with partners across the Cherwell and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies;
- Endorse the cross party position taken by Local Government Association (LGA), in particular to call on the Government to explore supporting domestic implementation of Sustainable Development Goals through funded partnership roles within each local authority area.



Biodiversity at Bloxham Slade Nature Reserve

Since then, the Cherwell District Council has confirmed the declaration of a Climate Emergency, and committed to ensure the Council's own operations and activities are carbon net zero by 2030 and do its part to support the district to become carbon net zero. To carry this out the Council has agreed a Climate Action Framework and Climate Action Plan 2023-2024, which is no revised for November 2024 to April 2026.

1.3. The Climate Action Strategies and initiates and managed and coordinated by the Council's Climate Team. The Council's Climate Team is made up of a Climate Action Manager, a Climate Change Programme Manager, Climate and Natural Environment Officer and Sustainable Business Development Officer.

Governance Arrangements

1.4. The Climate Strategies themselves are corporately owned and led by the full Council, the Council's Executive, the Corporate Leadership Team and Council departments.

1.5. The SRO reports through the Council's Strategic Programme Board and Corporate Management Team, as well as to the Portfolio Holder for Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities, the Leader and the Council Executive, with oversight from the Climate Action Scrutiny Working Group and the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

[1] https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/documents/g3238/Public%20minutes%20Monday%2022-Jul-2019%2018.30%20Council.pdf?T=11

1.6. All reports that go to Executive and Corporate Leadership Team to continue to include an Environmental Impact section.

1.7. The Climate Action Scrutiny Working Group has reviewed overall progress of Action Plan.

1.8. It was noted that in the Climate Action Plan it states that the Executive and officers will report twice a year to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on climate change progress, so this is something to ensure happens in the 2025-2026 committee cycle and Scrutiny Work Programme.

Cherwell Council Spheres of Influence

1.9. Cherwell District Council, as a substantial orgainsation within the area, as a major provider of local public services and also as a local planning authority, has varying degrees of influence over climate action and carbon reduction, working with partner organisations within the area where is can on its own have less direct influence.



1.10. The main direct influence we have is over our own building estate, operations, and fleet of vehicles. After that, the Council can have significant influence through its Local Plan and local planning decisions, as well as over partner organisations and services that are provided by the Council. The Council also seek to influence as a community leader through its own campaigns.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

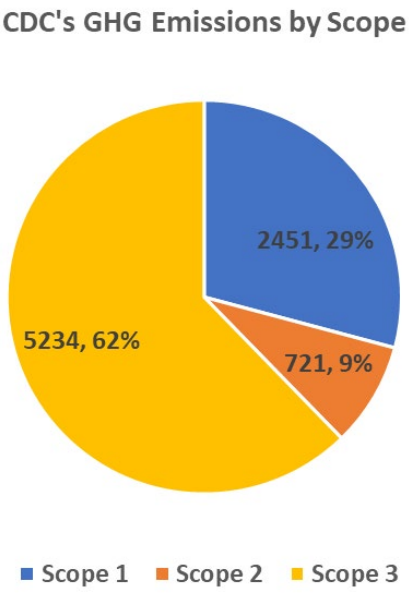
1.11. During this inquiry the Scrutiny Working Group has considered Cherwell Council's Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Cherwell District Council's emissions have gradually been reducing over time but became stagnant in the past five years and has now slightly increased in the latest 2023-2024 reporting year.

2. Climate Action Strategies and Action Plan

2.1. Of the total emissions in the District, the Council has limited control over the majority of emissions but could still do a lot more to reduce its own emissions.

2.2. The Transforming Cherwell Action Plan 2023-2024 sets out the activities needed over the 12 months until October 2024, to reduce the emissions of both the Council and the Cherwell district. Emissions are categorised into 'scopes', in particular, Scopes 1, 2 and 3.

- Scope 1 – includes direct emissions from the burning of fuels, e.g., gas/petrol/diesel
- Scope 2 – includes indirect emissions from the generation of electricity
- Scope 3 – includes indirect emissions from an organisation's supply chain.



2.3. The target for Cherwell Council is to be carbon net zero by 2030. This relates only to Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, where the Council has a strong degree of influence.

Cherwell's Climate Action Plan

2.4. Within the Action Plan there are also actions which relate to Scope 3 emissions, which need to be better understood in order to plan for reductions, (e.g., by working closely with the supply chain).

2.5. The Scrutiny Working Group reviewed the Cherwell District Council Climate Action Plan This plan was revised during the autumn of 2024, in close consultation with all services of Cherwell District Council.

2.6. This built on the previous Climate Action Plan 2023-24, which was based upon Climate Change Framework 2020, which sets the Council's ambitions for both the council and the wider district to become carbon net zero.

2.7. The plan reflects several initiatives which are taking place across the county in which Cherwell District Council is a participant, in particular the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PaZCO) report and plan, which has been endorsed by Cherwell Council.



2.8. PaZCO is overseen by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, whose officer and councillor Environment groups have representation from Cherwell District Council.

2.9. The Climate Action Plan takes into account the following documents:

- Cherwell Council Climate Action Plan 2023-24
- Cherwell Council Climate Action Framework 2020
- Cherwell Council Carbon Management Plan 2022
- Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan
- One Planet Living – Gap Analysis of Cherwell Council's Policies.

2.10. The actions on the natural environment have also been reviewed and supported by Oxfordshire's Local Nature Partnership, of which the Council is a member. Biodiversity enhancement has a significant part to play in helping us with our climate change response.

2.11. The Action Plan includes the activities needed to reduce the emissions of both the Council and the Cherwell district until April 2026. Over 125 actions have been identified.

A New Council Climate Action Strategy

2.12. During the inquiry, the Scrutiny Working Group heard that it was time to refresh and review the Council Climate Action Strategy and we have considered options and emphasis for the new strategy, taking into account the Council's current business pressures, climate action performance and current prospects and ambitions for climate action locally and nationally.

2.13. In view of this, we are recommending the development of a new Council Climate Action Strategy for Cherwell, with clear strategies, ambitious yet realistic objectives to deliver year on year reductions in the Council's carbon emissions, strategies, and targets to reduce District area emissions.

2.14. This needs to be developed in the near future and set new ambitious yet realistic targets for carbon emission reduction both for the Council and the District as whole. As the plan affects the organisations across the departments and corporately it will need to be subject to cross departmental consultation and agreed corporately but also agreed by the Executive. Such a plan should also ideally be brought to full Council for agreement and form part of the Council's Policy Framework.

Recommendation 1
That a new Council Climate Action Strategy be prepared for agreement by the Executive and full Council, with clear strategies, ambitious yet realistic objectives to deliver year on year reductions in the Council's carbon emissions, strategies, and targets to reduce District area emissions, to be agreed by full Council in 2025.

Corporate Priorities

2.15. The Council is ageing a new Corporate Plan and Priorities. We believe that Climate action needs to sit as a higher corporate priority than is currently the case, given that the required progress is not being made. We are therefore recommending that Climate Action be formally agreed by the Executive, the

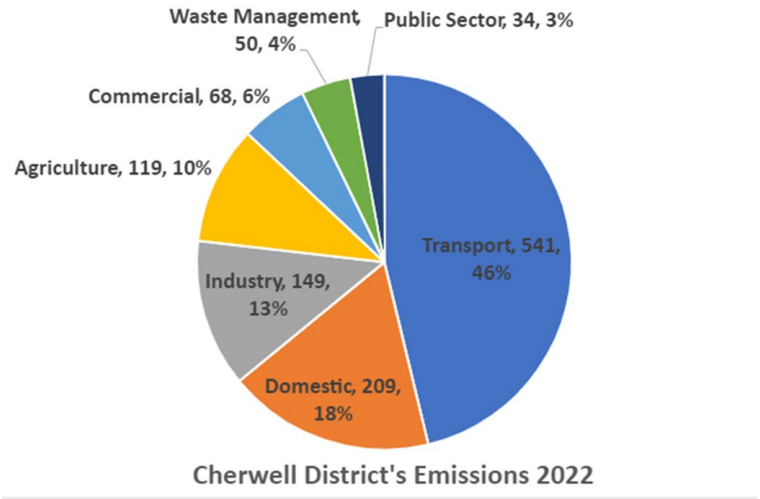
corporate Leadership Team and by the Council as one of the key corporate priorities, reflected in the Council service delivery plans, and its annual and quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports, with ambitious but realistic measurable targets and performance measures.

2.16. In this way it is hoped that climate action will be better integrated into the services delivery plans and the Council's budget setting.

Recommendation 2
That Climate Action be made a higher key corporate priority, reflected in the Council key priorities (be agreed by Council), to be reflected in the Council's Corporate Plan, service delivery plans, and its annual and quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports, with ambitious but realistic measurable targets and performance measures.

3 Cherwell District Area

3.1. Looking at the sectors that contribute most to climate change proportionately provides a view on the areas that need to adapt most to meet our Districts carbon reduction objectives.

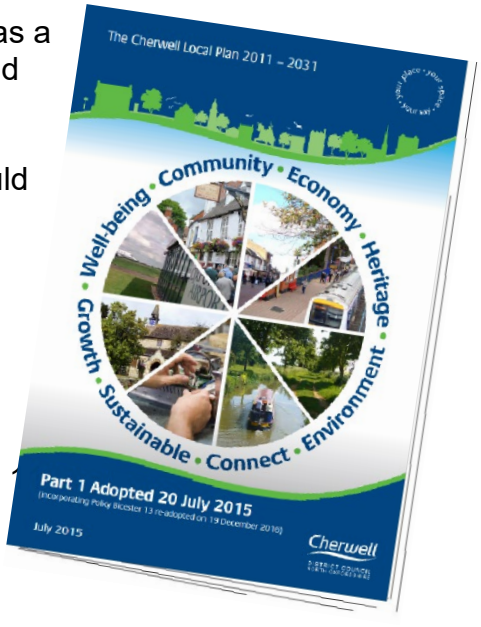


3.2. The Council can only Directly control a part of this and other areas it can exercise influence, especially working with in partnership with other local organisations.

3.3. During the inquiry we have considered the Council's influence over carbon emissions in the District area. Apart from control over its own emissions as a significant local organisation, the Council has inference over carbon emissions as the Local Planning Authority and through its Local Plan.

<u>Cherwell's Local Plan</u>

3.4. The Local Plan is a document that sets out a vision and a framework for the future development of the District area as a whole, including interrelated policies and strategies for land development use and specifications for development controls. Including issues such as housing, employment, and business and they identifies where development should take place and areas where development should be restricted.



3.5. It is prepared by Cherwell Council as the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the wider community and is reviewed at least every five years. Once in place, Local

Plans become part of the statutory development plan, which is the starting point for determining local planning applications.

3.6. Cherwell's Local Plan includes a Strategic Objective Theme "*Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change and Ensuring Sustainable Development",* which sets out the principles that underpin the local planning approach.

3.7. These include promoting net-zero carbon new developments, through sustainable construction standards, nature-based solutions and low embodied carbon to ensure new developments deliver the highest viable energy efficiency, including the use of decentralised energy and support a local zero-carbon energy system that reduces Cherwell's reliance on global fossil fuels and prioritises community energy.

3.8. The Council's Local Plan aims to deliver developments that efficiently use local natural resources that minimise and are resilient to the impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events such as flooding, drought and heatwaves and prioritising active travel and increase opportunities for public transport, high standards of connectivity and Reducing dependency on the private car as a mode of travel, facilitating the creation of a net-zero-carbon transport network.

Renewable Energy Farms

3.9. One of the issues that was considered is the extent to which the Council can set aside land for renewable provision, such as "wind farms" for wind electricity generation or "solar farms" for solar electricity generation. The Scrutiny Working Group heard in evidence that Cherwell's Local Plan does not allocate any land for renewable energy in the district. There are, however, several sites that have been granted planning permission, but we do not include them in the Local Plan.

3.10. A "wind farm" or wind power plant is a group of wind turbines in the same location used to produce electricity. Wind farms vary in size from a small number of turbines to several hundred wind turbines covering an extensive area.

3.11. "Solar farms" or rather *photovoltaic power stations*, are large-scale grid-connected photovoltaic power system (PV system) designed for the supply of electrical power onto the grid. They are different from most building-mounted and other decentralised solar power because they supply power at the utility level, rather than to a local user or users.

The Botley West Solar Farm

3.12. A significant local development application, which impinges on Cherwell area, is the proposed Botley West photovoltaic power plant. Botley West is a proposed £800m solar farm, covering about 1,000 hectares (2,471 acres) of Oxfordshire countryside, with 90% of it owned by Blenheim Estates. The project is considered a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, meaning

the application must be considered by the government, not local councils, although as part of the planning process, relevant parties, including the local authorities in which the development sits, can submit their response to the plans.

3.13. The Botley West application is a National Strategic Infrastructure Project (NSIP). NSIPs include significant developments like wind farms. They are decided by the Planning Inspectorate[2], with Cherwell District Council as a consultee as the local authority.

3.14. During the scrutiny inquiry we received oral evidence from expert witness Dr Marco Raugei - Senior Lecturer and Senior Research Fellow in Mechanical Engineering, Oxford Brooks University. Dr Marco Raugei provided a brief introduction to his research on renewable energy, photovoltaics and energy transition scenarios and answered questions on the committee.

3.15. The Scrutiny Working Group put questions to Dr Marco Raugei on various interrelated to the Cherwell Climate Action strategy and plans and considering the technical feasibility of options and alternatives being considered. This included the feasibility of domestic solar panels, generation, and storage of solar energy, as well as network infrastructure and technology.

3.16. A key consideration is how to overcome constrained electrical grid capacity and difficulties in securing connections, an issue that is already posing a challenge for housing and commercial developments across Oxfordshire.

3.17. The Scrutiny Working Group also received oral evidence from Andy Wainwright - Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks – (SSEN). Andy Wainwright gave a presentation covering the role and work Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) carries out as an energy supplier within Cherwell and their goals for decarbonization and Net Zero.

3.18. The Scrutiny Working Group put questions to Andy Wainwright on the involvement of energy companies within Local Plan development, the infrastructure delivery plan, and the Capacity of the network versus demand brought by speculative development.

3.19. The Scrutiny Working Group have reviewed Cherwell's new Draft Solar Strategy and on 10 March 2025 considered a presentation from the Council's consultants, *Local Partnerships*, with an opportunity to ask questions.

[2] The Planning Inspectorate is an executive agency of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government with responsibility for making decisions and providing recommendations and advice on a range of land use planning-related issues across England. The Planning Inspectorate deals with planning appeals, nationally significant infrastructure projects, planning permission, examinations of Local Plans and other planning-related and specialist casework.

Environmental Impact Assessments

3.20. During the scrutiny inquiry we received oral evidence from Christina Cherry, the Council's Planning Policy, the Council's Conservation and Design Manager, on planning policy and Cherwell District Councils Climate goals. The Scrutiny Working Group put questions to Christina Cherry on the inclusion of climate and environmental impacts within planning applications as well as the integration of climate actions within the Local Plan, NPPF and Development Plan.

3.21. In considering the process of assessing local planning applications, Members felt that grater clarity might help to improve the local planning decision making, especially when the Councils climate priorities have been included in the Local Plan. It was felt that when reports come before the Planning Committee, it was not always as clear as it could be what the climate considerations might be on weighing up a planning application.

3.22. The Conservation and Design Manager was able to offer some advice on this, although also cautionary advice, as the planning process can be quite a technical area, and the Planning Committee is a quasi-judicial process that can only consider planning applications against criteria allowed legally and within the agreed Local Plan specifications and policies.

3.23. Members felt that greater detail in the reports might help identify relevant considerations on climate considerations allowed and in view of that the Scrutiny Working Group is recommending that the Executive and Council consider requesting that more detailed Environmental Impact Assessments be included in reports to the Planning Committee.

Recommendation 3
That the Council request that more detailed Environmental Impact Assessments be included in reports to the Planning Committee.

Oxfordshire LEAP

3.24. The Local Area Energy Plans are important for identifying the local activities and projects needed to manage the transition to cleaner energy in a fair and equal way.

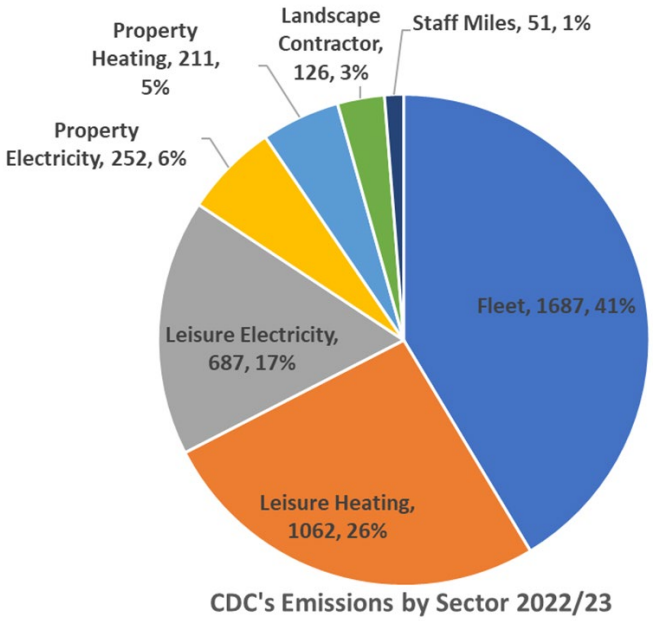
3.25. Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council and West Oxfordshire, Cherwell, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils have joined together, under the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, to deliver pioneering local area energy plans (LAEPs) for Oxfordshire, to address climate change and secure cleaner, more affordable energy for the county. The six Oxfordshire councils are working together to develop Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs) for Oxfordshire. Ove Arup & Partners have been appointed as experienced lead consultants in the development of the Local Area Energy Plans.

3.26. On 18 February 2025 Members of the Scrutiny Working Group attended an Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Planning (LEAP) online briefing for members and senior officers from all Oxfordshire local authorities. (You can read more about this Partnership here.)

3.27. This was an opportunity to learn about the Oxfordshire local area energy planning process and how it is critical to reaching net zero in Oxfordshire, and to hear about how and when you will be able to input into the work, as well as the local area energy planning process in Oxfordshire, including the reasons for doing it, what the process is, the role of the councils and what the outputs and next steps will be.

4. Cherwell's Council Emissions

4.1. We have reviewed Cherwell Council's own Greenhouse gas emission and looked at this broken down by category. Considering emissions by sector, it can be seen that the majority of the Council's carbon emissions are from buildings (54% if we include Property and Leisure) the fleet (41%).



CDC's Emissions by Sector 2022/23

4.2. Since 2008-2009, Cherwell Council's greenhouse gas emissions have reduced by 40%.

4.3. In 2022/23 Cherwell Council's annual emissions were down 3% from the previous year to 4077 tonnes of CO_2, with:

- 42.9% from leisure centres' electricity and heating
- 41.4% from the fleet
- 11.4% from corporate buildings electricity and heating
- 3 per cent from landscape maintenance
- 1.3 per cent from business mileage.[3]

4.4. The Council's greenhouse gas report show how the Council is reducing the carbon emissions of its estate and operations[4], however it should be noted that the rate of progress is slower than that required to reach 2030.

[3] 2020 Climate Action Framework "Transforming Cherwell", Cherwell District Council.
[4] https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/69/pollution/942/greenhouse-gas-report

Cherwell Council's Offsetting

4.5. During the inquiry we also considered carbon offsetting as part of the Council's strategy for achieving net zero. Carbon offsetting is a carbon trading mechanism that enables entities to compensate for offset greenhouse gas emissions by investing in projects that reduce, avoid, or remove emissions elsewhere.

4.6. When carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere, its climate impact can be cancelled out by absorbing equal amounts of carbon from the atmosphere. Organisations and individuals can thus compensate for the climate impact of their greenhouse gas emissions by supporting projects that reduce or store carbon emissions.

The Council's Fleet

4.7. During the inquiry we have also considered the options for the renewal of the Council's fleet of vehicles to less carbon intensive technologies, including the financial impact versus the environmental impact. officers advised that a study into electric vehicles was in progress. It was noted that recommendations from the CAWG could feed into that report to be presented in the 2025/26 municipal year.

4.8. The Council's fleet of vehicles is a significant contributor to the Council's own carbon emissions. This includes the Council's fleet of refuse collection vehicles. We have heard, however, that the cost of replacing the Council's fleet is currently prohibitive, with estimates of £500,000 per vehicle. This will likely make replacing these vehicles a longer-term ambition.

4.9. In consideration of the fact that these vehicles are a significant contributor to the Council's carbon emissions, we are however, recommending that the Executive carry out an evaluation and feasibility assessment of interim options and measures to replace the Council fleet of vehicles with alternatives for less CO2 emissions.



A Cherwell District Council Electric Van with Kevin Busby - Fleet Supervisor, behind the wheel

Recommendation 4
That an evaluation and feasibility assessment of interim options and measures to replace the Council fleet of vehicles with alternatives for less CO2 emissions.

Buildings Emissions

4.10. During the inquiry the Scrutiny Working Group considered the carbon emission from the Council's own estate, including leisure centres and Council buildings. During this the Council is just now planning a move of its main offices from Bodicote House in Bodicote to Castle Quay in Banbury. This is an opportunity to reduce the Council's own carbon emission on its estate, as the new building is likely to be much more energy efficient.

4.11. Overall, however, reducing the Council's own carbon emissions to reach its targets remains challenging and recent data has shown a recent increase in emissions. We recognise, in the light of the increase in Cherwell Council's emissions in 2023 - 2024, the need for much greater focus on reducing buildings emissions to achieve 2030 Net Zero target. In view of this, we are recommending that the Council agree much greater focus for reducing buildings emissions to achieve 2030 Net Zero targets, with clearly assessed deliverable measures to be put in place over the next five years.

Buildings Emissions Targets

4.12. The Council does not currently have any KPIs for decarbonisation of its own estate and given that this should be a priority issue for the Council, as we have recommended, these need to be developed.

4.13. The new KPIs should be carefully considered so that they effectively measure implementation of these priorities, with careful consideration across several settings/situations and reflecting the varying degrees of control that the Council has.

Recommendation 5
That the Council agree much greater focus, plans and targets, for reducing buildings emissions to achieve 2030 Net Zero targets, with clearly assessed deliverable measures to be put in place over the next five years, with clear objectives, milestones, and implementation dates.

4.14. Cherwell Council only has direct responsibility and control of some buildings and others are leased to third parties and they as tenants have responsibility for the day to day operation of the buildings. The Council's targets and KPIs will have to reflect this, and we will need to work with third parties to achieving shared objectives.

Castle Quay

4.15. The new Council main offices at Castle Quay centre have not been assessed or audited for carbon footprints, although the Council has already concluded this move. Furthermore, there is no date at present for when this will happen, or result be available.

4.16. Specific data on carbon emissions for move to Castle Quay offices is therefore not yet available. The working assumption, as confirmed in the business case for the move, is that the smaller floor area and more efficient systems will use less energy. The new offices will have an EPC B rating whereas Bodicote House is an EPC E rating.

4.17. Although we expect that the new Council offices would likely be an improvement in energy efficiency and carbon emissions, as they are a more modern build, we would assume that such as assessment should be included in the near future. This would need to be procured.

Decarbonising the Future

4.18. We have considered what further specific measures could be put in place to take decarbonisation of Cherwell Council's buildings forward in the future. One of the main ways we can do this is by Reducing heat loss from Cherwell Council building stock by improving fabric of the buildings, both thermal and airtightness, to minimise heat loss/energy use. This may however be costly and require staff and resources.

4.19. It should also be possible change lights fittings in building to LED and introduce controls that minimise the time that the lights are on. This is, potentially, much less costly and a "quick easy win".

4.20. The Council could also Improve ventilation with heat recovery where possible and provide controls that manage ventilation rates according to occupancy numbers (CO2 sensors) variable speed control on fans. This may, however, also be costly and require staff and resources.

4.21. During the scrutiny inquiry the Scrutiny Working Group was able to receive evidence and put questions to Assistant Director of Property on measures is the Council putting in place de-carbonisation of Cherwell Council's buildings.

4.22. We asked the Assistant Director of Property what measures the Council is putting in place decarbonisation of Cherwell Council's buildings. She told us that Salix grant applications for heat pump installation and solar panel



A Solar Car Port at Bicester Leisure Centre

installations have been undertaken at some leisure centres and community buildings, although outputs are still to be verified and recorded due to problems in commissioning and operation of the equipment.

4.23. A photovoltaic study on Cherwell Council's properties for potential photovoltaic installation and possible outputs with economic was undertaken in 2023/24. Photovoltaic installations are currently being considered on eight Cherwell Council buildings, contingent on viability and feasibility assessment that are currently being carried out.

4.24. The Scrutiny Working Group heard in evidence that several completed schemes are not delivering the expected benefits because installed systems were not properly understood, training and maintenance regimes not understood or implemented. This is an important area for learning to improve future developments.

4.25. We also heard that the Resources and Transformation (Property) department do not always have capacity or capability in regard to the installation and ongoing maintenance. Work must be planned and scheduled without the assumption that Property department has all resources required.

Heating Our Buildings

4.26. One of the more technical options and alternatives we have considered during the inquiry is the way in which the Council buildings are heated, with leisure centres using more advanced systems, such as air to air heating systems. Other alternatives are space heating systems, which are more efficient in heating particular areas as needed with less heat wasted. A "Space Heater" is a heater used to warm the air in an enclosed area, such as a room or office. We discussed this with the departmental officers and with our expert witness.

4.27. We are commending that the Executive consider making Council buildings refurnished with space heating systems replace gas powered radiators and insulation for energy conservation.

Recommendation 6
That Council buildings be refurnished with space heating systems replace gas powered radiators and insulation for energy conservation.

4.28. An air source heat pump (ASHP) is a heat pump that can absorb heat from air outside a building and release it inside. It uses a similar process as an air conditioner, but in the opposite direction. ASHPs are the most common type of heat pump usually tend to be used to heat individual houses or flats rather than blocks, districts or industrial processes.

4.29. We are recommending that the Executive consider the feasibility of introducing air-to-air heat pumps in buildings throughout the entire Council estate.

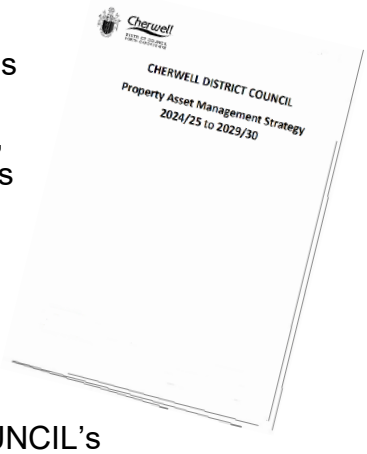
Recommendation 7
That the feasibility of introducing air-to-air heat pumps in buildings throughout the entire Council estate.

Assessment and Feasibility

4.30. It is essential that options and decisions about decarbonising the Council's estate are properly assessed and considered. Full and proper early engagement and coordination with the Council's Property (Resources and Transformation) department is necessary.

4.31. As a minimum this should include:

- the scheme design,
- the appropriateness of scheme, legal implications, (including procurement etc).
- the budget implications and allocations for installation and ongoing maintenance,
- value for money assessments,
- the Council's capacity to deliver and capacity to manage post installation.



4.32. Meeting the challenge of reducing the Council's carbon emissions on its own estate necessarily requires corporate leadership and coordination between departments across the Council, including, crucially Environmental Services, which coordinates the Council's Climate Action Strategies and Resources and Transformation, which manage the Council's estate and property portfolio assets, in line with the Council's Asset Management Plan.

Investment in Renewable Energy

4.33. We acknowledge that investment is needed in CHERWELL COUNCIL's corporate capacity to manage and optimise renewable energy and new technologies.

Recommendation 8
That the Council agree hypothecated investment in Cherwell District Council corporate capacity to manage and optimise renewable energy and new technologies.

5 Conclusions

5.1. During this scrutiny inquiry we have considered some of the main issues facing the Council in its ambitions to, both as a community leader and local planning authority. Weve considered the two main strategic dimensions; the strategy for reducing carbon emissions for the District and the strategy and

objectives for reducing carbon emissions for the Council estate and housing the Council can control.

5.2. Across the inquiry we have considered six main themes: -

1. Decarbonisation of Cherwell Council's buildings (Property)
2. Decarbonisation of Cherwell Council's fleet (Environmental Services)
3. Offsetting of residual emissions (Environmental Services)
4. Finance/funding for climate projects (Financial Services and Environmental Services)
5. Council's performance on reducing emissions (Environmental Services)
6. Energy Infrastructure - Planning and Land allocation (Planning Policy).

Recent Achievements

5.3. The Scrutiny Working Group noted the following key achievements:

- £6 million invested in Cherwell District Council buildings
- Over 10% of the fleet is electric
- Further energy efficiency actions in our buildings
- EV pool car
- £20k for Solar PV at our Leisure Centres.

Challenges to Reaching Net Zero

5.4. The Scrutiny Working Group also noted the following Challenges in Reaching Net Zero:

- Cost
- Technology
- Behaviour change
- Impacts on our communities
- Internal collaboration
- Resources
- Scale of Issues and Influence

Key Observations

5.5. In addition to the scrutiny recommendations and observations made throughout this scrutiny report, Member of the Scrutiny Working Group made the following key observations:

- The hold ups are not technical although new technology is appearing rapidly and needs to be incorporated when practical.

- The difficulties are financial and require innovative methods to allow residents and businesses to take advantage of low carbon systems

- as in all cases doing so does reduce the running costs for everyone whilst also reducing the carbon being produced.

- There is a danger that large low carbon electricity systems such as solar PV power stations on hectares of countryside are approved but do little or nothing to help residents and businesses in the Cherwell District with reducing their costs or carbon production every day.

- Invest today and make huge savings in future as energy costs increase from the grid or invest in solar "farms" for the country but live with the massive rises in the costs of energy for each resident and business.

Next Steps for Cherwell

5.6. We have considered the next steps for Cherwell Council, which will form part of the development of the future strategy. This incudes, the completion of new climate Studies Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) applications (Government funding through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, for sustainable, low-carbon adaptation), Financing Cherwell Council's decarbonisation plans, improving organisational knowledge of Scope 3 carbon emissions and reducing them) and LAEP, LEVI, Adaptation, Natural Capital, Business Emissions

Lessons Learnt

5.7. With regards to the development of the Council's own carbon reduction initiatives, such as fitting a retrofitting sustainable energy systems, we believe it is vital to consider lessons learnt before proceeding with future projects.

5.8. It is essential that options and decisions about decarbonising the Council's estate are properly assessed and considered. Full and proper early engagement and coordination with the Council's Property (Resources and Transformation) department is necessary.

5.9. Some key observations for lessons learnt include:

a) Several completed schemes are not delivering the expected benefits because installed systems were not properly understood, training and maintenance regimes not understood or implemented.

b) Property do not always have capacity or capability in regard to the installation and ongoing maintenance. Work must be planned and scheduled without the assumption that Property has all resources required. The service comprises a small team and is working at high capacity.

c) Options and decisions should be aligned with the Asset Management Strategy (Property Strategy).

d) An adequate budget for “whole” project needs to be built in, with feasibility, consultants/advisors, fees, additional works needed to install kit and/or adapt for installation.

e) Ongoing maintenance and integration into existing systems etc – needs to be built in

f) Need for a robust project plan and Business Case

g) Occupier engagement/consent is needed – as Cherwell Council do not actively manage all sites.

h) There is a need to check all sites are suitable for the installations proposed structural, location, setting.

i) Full advance consideration of integrated procurement issues is important.

j) Benefits to Cherwell Council – over and above carbon/net zero – should also be quantified and built into the project scheme.

k) Budget, whether grant, in house or a combination must be sufficient to cover pre, during and post installation. Property do not have resources to take on management of additional work/kit without adequate resources.

The Scrutiny Process and Next Steps

5.10. The EDI Scrutiny Working Group was established to carry out this inquiry and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which it is hoped will adopt the report and recommendations. Once the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have agreed the Scrutiny Report and Recommendations, these will be referred to the Executive for consideration and an Executive Response.

5.11. There is a two month period within which the Executive should agree its response to the scrutiny report and recommendations. The Executive may agree, reject or amend the scrutiny recommendations made.

5.12. The agreed scrutiny recommendations (Executive decisions) made can then be implemented by the Resources and Transformation department and other Council departments as necessary.

5.13. After a suitable period of time, the Overview and Scrutiny should request an update on the progress of implementing the Executive Response and decisions made. This is likely to be around one year from when the scrutiny report was agreed, (or whenever might be an appropriate time to review if sooner).

5.14. We hope that this scrutiny inquiry has been able to make some constructive contribution to the oversight and development of the Council's challenge to tackle climate change.

Acknowledgements

We would like to say thank you to all of those members and officers who have contributed evidence to the Scrutiny Working Group Inquiry, with particular thanks the expert witnesses who have given their time to contribute their valued expertise.

Thank you to our Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities Councillor Tom Becket and to our lead Climate Change officers; - Jo Miskin - Climate Action Manager, Environmental Services and Hitesh Mahawar - Climate Change Programme Manager for supporting the scrutiny inquiry throughout this year.

Thank you also to the Council officers that have attending and answer technical questions for us, particularly Mona Walsh Assistant Director of Property and Christina Cherry - Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager.

Thank you to Marco Raugei - Senior Lecturer and Senior Research Fellow in Mechanical Engineering, Oxford Brooks University and Andy Wainwright MSc CEng FIET - Whole System Manager, Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks for attending and presenting evidence.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is appointed by Cherwell District Council to carry out the local authority scrutiny functions.

Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Barry Wood

Formal Minutes

Minutes of proceedings are available to view or download from the Council website at https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=116

Committee Staff

The current staff of the committee are:
Michael Carr - Interim Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet - Democratic and Elections Officer.

Contacts

Email: democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Cherwell District Council

March 2025

www.cherwell.gov.uk

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Equality Diversity and Inclusion

A scrutiny review of the Cherwell District Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategies and Delivery.

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

18 March 2025

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Executive Summary & Recommendations

The Scrutiny Inquiry was established to review the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategies, including, principally, the *Including Everyone* framework. This included reviewing the implementation of the Council's *Including Everyone* framework, reviewing the performance against the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives, review the development of the Council's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives for 2025-2026 and reviewing the arrangements for engagement and feedback with groups with 'protected characteristics' to help inform policy and approach.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee re-established this Scrutiny Working Group and membership on 15 October 2024 and agreed the Terms of Reference and Objectives at its meeting on 26 November 2024.

Members of the Scrutiny Working Group

This Scrutiny Working Group is made up of members of the Personnel Committee and members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Members of the Scrutiny Working Group for 2024-2025 were: -

Councillor Rebecca Biegel - Chairman
Councillor Gemma Coton – Vice Chairman
Councillor Barry Wood
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Dr Chuckwudi Okeke.

Aims and Objectives

Aim:

To review the implementation of the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategies (the Including Everyone Framework).

Objectives:

i). To review the implementation of the Council's Including Everyone Framework.
ii). To review the performance against the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives.
iii). To review the development of the Council's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives for 2025-2026.
iv). To review the arrangements for engagement and feedback with groups with 'protected characteristics' to help inform policy and approach.

This inquiry has focused on Equality Diversity and Inclusion policies and strategy and performance (i.e. relevant to the public sector equalities duties

provided in the Equality Act 2010) and not broader community engagement issues.



The Council's *Including Everyone Framework* outlines the Council's approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion and sets out its vision to providing inclusive services, workplaces and communities, equitable access to services and equality of opportunity.

Cherwell District Council's Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion strategies are set out on the Council's website here: https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/5/your-council/1109/equalities-diversity-and-inclusion

The goals and commitments of Cherwell District Council's *Including Everyone Framework* are set every four years. Sitting beneath this Framework are three annual action plans, that reflect the different ways in which Cherwell Council is working to make its organisation services and communities more inclusive.

The action plans have indicators to help measure progress against the goals. Implementation is being overseen by the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Member working group and reporting should align with quarterly business plan monitoring.

Framework Action Plans

Cherwell Council has three inter-connected strands that help organise its Equalities Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) work and has set goals and commitments against each of these strands. These are tracked and measured in a set of annual action plans, which sit underneath this framework.

Cherwell Council's quarterly performance reports detail progress made to date against the following objectives and measures for each strand:

- Inclusive communities
- Inclusive services
- Inclusive workplace.

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of a protected characteristic. The nine protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex

- sexual orientation.

This encompasses how the Council plans to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different “protected characteristics” groups.

Key Lines of Enquiry

The Key Lines of Enquiry used to guide this scrutiny inquiry were:

Q1) What are the Council’s statutory duties, including the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
Q2) What are the Council’s strategies and key objectives delivery of EDI strategies and responsibilities?
Q3) What are the arrangements for EDI in Procurement and Commissioning and the Council’s legal responsibilities for services by our partners and contractors?
Q4) To what extent and how is the Council working towards achieving a diverse workforce and offering equality of opportunity in employment, recruitment selection, training, and development?
Q5) To what extent and how is the Council ensuring that the workplace is free from discrimination, victimisation, or harassment of any kind where staff are treated with respect?
Q6) To what extent do the Council policies provide clear guidance to all employees about what is expected of them and what they can expect from us as an employer?
Q7) To what extent and how is the Council pro-active in promoting and supporting equality in the workforce?
Q8) What Equality training is provided for staff to ensure they are made aware of their rights and responsibilities?
Q9) What are the consultation and engagement arrangements relevant to delivery of the Council’s EDI strategies and responsibilities?
Q10) How does the Council measure EDI progress and informs the public and our staff about progress on EDI.

<u>Witnesses to the Inquiry</u>

The Scrutiny Woking Group heard evidence from the following witnesses during 2024-2025:

- Councillor Chris Brant – Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services (attending two of the meetings)
- Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing
- Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
- Shona Ware - Assistant Director of Customer Focus
- Celia Prado-Teeling - Performance Team Leader

- David Cruchley - Senior Youth Partnerships Manager, Oxfordshire Youth.

Recommendations

Equality and Service Delivery

Recommendation 1
That a refreshed Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy and framework be developed and agreed by the Executive for ratification by full Council in 2025, with refreshed EDI objectives Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to ensure that they link directly and cross reference to the Council's EDI strategy framework, with KPIs clearly referenced against the delivery of each EDI strand.

Recommendation 2
That the Council's Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy focus and cross reference directly and specifically to the delivery of the key statutory responsibilities from the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Recommendation 3
That Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) audits of public facing services be undertaken to ensure maximum accessibility and inclusion.

Recommendation 4
That the Council review all policies plans and projects to make sure that they have up to date EIA assessments in place.

Equality in Employment

Recommendation 5
That the Council further explore opportunities to achieve further accreditation and better publicise the accreditation that the Council already has.

Recommendation 6
That the Council's recruitment process be reviewed to make it more inclusive and remove irrelevant barriers to recruitment.

Recommendation 7
That the Council should actively facilitate the creation of staff diversity networks and embed this approach.

Equalities Communications and Engagement

Recommendation 8
That the Cherwell District Council Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2025 – 2029 include strategies and actions for monitoring response rates among individuals from each of the Protected Characteristics. This should involve incorporating diversity monitoring questions in all consultation and engagement surveys, providing essential evidence for decision-making across all areas of Council policy and service delivery.

Recommendation 9
That a full Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) audit of the Council website and communications be undertaken to ensure that the Council web communications effectively engage with all sections of the community.

Measuring Progress

Recommendation 10
That the Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) objectives / KPIs reflect meaningful outcomes to be delivered for each key strand, as well as measurable outputs and outcomes (metrics) with milestones and implementation dates.

1 Introduction

1.1. The Equality Act 2010 came into force in October 2010 and legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. The Act covers nine protected characteristics, and these are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful. The characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment[1]
- Marriage Or Civil Partnership (In Employment Only)
- Pregnancy And Maternity
- Race
- Religion Or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

1.2. The Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires that all public bodies, such as the Council, consider all individuals when conducting their day-to-day work, shaping their policies, and delivering services. The Act also outlines the 'protected characteristics' – the specific aspects of identity protected from discrimination.

1.3. As an organisation providing services to a diverse community, it is vital for the Council to consider the protected characteristics in all that we do.

1.4. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected
- characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

1.5. In addition to these 'general' duties, there is also a 'specific' duty. This includes a requirement for public sector bodies to prepare and publish one or more equality objectives at least every four years.

1.6. As an employer and deliverer of services, Cherwell Council is committed to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promoting equal opportunities and fostering good relations between people from all communities.

[1] Before, during and after transition. This wording is the terminology used in the Equality Act; transgender (or Trans) is now the accepted terminology. The Council understands there are many different identities which fall under the Trans umbrella, including identities outside of the gender binary.

Including Everyone

1.7. The Council's Including Everyone framework sets out its commitment for progressing equality. The Strategy and Action Plan outlines its equality objectives, describes how it will fulfil its moral, social and legal obligations and what we will do to make Cherwell a place where people get along with each other and treat each other with dignity and respect.

1.8. The Strategy covers inequality in terms of age, disability, gender reassignment (transgender/trans), marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation and is aimed at those who live, work in and visit the district, as well as elected Councillors and employees of the Council.

Why is Equality Important?

1.9. As a public service provider, we believe that it is important that the Council recognises that our residents and customers come from different backgrounds; this enables the Council to design and deliver services that meet the needs of the communities we serve. By understanding these differences and encouraging others to do the same, we can improve the quality of life for everyone by ensuring people who live, work, or visit our district are treated fairly, with respect and are given the same chances and opportunities by taking into consideration their different needs.

1.10. As an employer, we believe that it is in the Council's interests and in the interests of all who work for the Council that we ensure that every possible step should be taken to ensure that individuals are treated equally and fairly and that decisions in recruitment and selection, training, promotion, and career management are based solely on objective and job-related criteria and that reasonable adjustments are made where feasible.

Public Sector Equality Duty

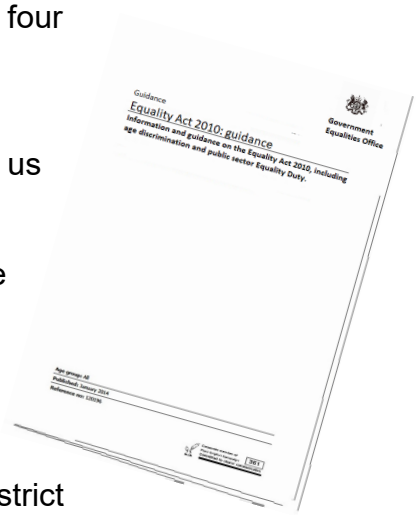
1.11. As part of the Equality Act 2010, public authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. The equality duty replaced the previous race, disability and gender equality duties and was developed to extend across all the protected characteristics.

1.12. It consists of a general equality duty, supported by specific duties and requires public authorities to consider or think about how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act. Private organisations and individuals don't have to comply with the duty.

1.13. The general duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- In addition, public authorities also have specific duties and must do the following:
- Publish equality information at least once a year to show how they've complied with the equality duty
- Prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four years.



1.14. The publication of a new Equality Strategy will support the Council in meeting the general and specific duties placed on us as part of the Equality Act.

1.15. Having reviewed the Council's strategy and performance, we believe that the Council generally meets the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), but its policies tend to be more "non-discriminatory" than proactively anti-discriminatory. We have also suggested that the new strategy could be more clearly aligned to the main statutory requirements of the Equality Act to show how these are delivered by Cherwell District Council.

Equality Act 2010: guidance
Information and guidance on the Equality Act 2010, including age discrimination and public sector Equality Duty.
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance

2 Equality and Service Delivery

2.1. The Scrutiny Working Group reviewed the Council's equalities diversity and inclusion strategy; - the *Including Everyone Framework* throughout the scrutiny inquiry. This strategic framework outlines and directs how the Council delivers its statutory and organisational priorities for Equality Diversity and Inclusion into practice. The framework has not been updated in four years and is due to be updated, which provided an opportunity for the Scrutiny inquiry to feed into the development of the new framework informally, as well as through the formal report and recommendations to the Executive.

2.2. During the scrutiny inquiry the Working Group also reviewed the Council's current Diversity and Inclusion Action plan and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), with presentations and questions and answers from the Assistant Director Human Resources.

2.3. A recent organisational restructure has resulted in internal EDI policies being managed by Human Resources, while external EDI policies are overseen by the Housing and Wellbeing department. Nevertheless, the accessibility of

specific services remains the responsibility of the relevant departmental service providers.

EDI Strategies and Approaches

2.4. During this review, the Scrutiny Working Group has researched and considered examples of other equalities diversity and inclusion strategies of other local authorities, to help consider the direction of Cherwell's new strategy. These have included:



- Equality Framework for Local Government, published by the Local Government Association (LGA).
- Kirklees Council Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.
- South Oxfordshire District Council Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- Vale of White Horse District Council Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- Oxford City Oxford Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy.

2.5. The current *Including Everyone Framework* was established during a shared service partnership with Oxfordshire County Council, reflecting the organisation's priorities at that time. Since separating from Oxfordshire County Council, the strategic direction of the two organisations has diverged significantly.

A New Strategy for Cherwell

2.6. Having carried out this review of Council's EDI strategy, we are recommending that a refreshed Council EDI strategy and framework be developed to bring it up to date and tailored more specifically to Cherwell and with refreshed EDI objectives that they link directly to the Council's EDI strategy framework.

Recommendation 1
That a refreshed Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy and framework be developed and agreed by the Executive for ratification by full Council in 2025, with refreshed EDI objectives Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to ensure that they link directly and cross reference to the Council's EDI strategy framework, with KPIs clearly referenced against the delivery of each EDI strand.

2.7. We have found the current EDI strategy is still generally effective and fit for purpose. Developing a new, tailored EDI strategy specifically for Cherwell should ensure the following:

- The EDI strategy is up to date with legislation
- The strategy is relevant and tailored to the district, with potential for it to be coproduced by service-users

- The strategy is coproduced by Cherwell staff to represent Cherwell District Council needs and values
- A new strategy would build upon a culture of EDI across the Council and in its service delivery, embedding a culture of EDI across the Council and its service delivery.

2.8. We heard in evidence that the Council generally meets the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), but its policies tend to be more “non-discriminatory” than proactively “anti-discriminatory” and that further work was needed to make this developmental step forward.

A Golden Thread

2.9. Having revised other local authority EDI strategies and performance frameworks we have found that many of them are more clearly linked to meeting the specific duties in the Equality Act and the Protected Characteristics, which can make the framework clearer to follow it its delivery of those statutory duties.

2.10. The Council's EDI strategy should also focus and cross reference directly and specifically to the delivery of the key statutory responsibilities from the Equalities Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty. This should include, specifically, how the Council will ensure equality, inclusion and foster good relations between all and each of the protected characteristics groups, for its own staff and for its service uses and in the wider community (community, services workplace).

Recommendation 2
That the Council's Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy focus and cross reference directly and specifically to the delivery of the key statutory responsibilities from the Public Sector Equality Duty.

2.11. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires public authorities to have due regard to how their functions will affect people with different protected characteristics. These functions include their policies, programmes, and services.

2.12. Cross referencing to the specific duties of the Equalities Act Protected Characteristics will make it clearer how the Council is delivering and going beyond the Equalities Act 2010 to identify any gaps, through the way it is setting clear objectives and monitoring progress against these.

EDI Audits

2.13. The revised framework, along with specific diversity and inclusion goals, also needs to be agreed in conjunction with the Council’s new Corporate Plan in 2025. As corporate priorities and services are aligned to the new Corporate Plan and the refreshed EDI strategy, we are also recommending that EDI audits should be undertaken for all services, in line with the refreshed EDI performance framework.

Recommendation 3
That Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) audits of public facing services be undertaken to ensure maximum accessibility and inclusion.

Equality Impacts

2.14. Although there is not a specific legal requirement for the Council to undertake an equality impact assessment, we are legally required to demonstrate that we have given 'due regard' to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. In practice this means that equality considerations still need to be evidenced in our decision-making processes and policies.

2.15. Any potential impact on equality should be considered before any key decisions are made and should be integrated into day-to-day policymaking, business planning and other decision-making arrangements. This is particularly relevant when making difficult financial decisions; if we are proposing to stop, reduce or change a service then we must have relevant equalities evidence to justify this.

2.16. Reports presented to Council committees and the Corporate Leadership Team include a section on 'Equality Implications.' However, these sections lack explicit Public Sector Equality Duty compliance and do not outline necessary mitigating actions.

Equality Impact Assessments

2.17. The Scrutiny Working Group considered the Council's Equalities Impact Assessments Process. The Council carries out Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to assess the effects of all new policies and proposals. The Scrutiny Working Group found that whilst the EIA template mostly aligns with the Public Sector Equality Duty, it does not do so explicitly.

2.18. We have found that the current application of EIAs is sufficient in understanding the equalities impact for major changes, as this has been undertaken for the previous five years. There are, however, policies plans and services more than five year old that have not been EIA assessed. We are therefore recommending that the Executive agree that all policies plans and projects to make sure that they have up to date EIA assessments in place.

Recommendation 4
That the Council review all policies plans and projects to make sure that they have up to date EIA assessments in place.

2.19. Reviewing the current EIA template should also ensure it remains fit for purpose.

EDI Events

2.20. Council events could also be more effectively used in support of its EDI engagement, and we believe that the Council should also commit to supporting and delegating the creation and design of events to relevant officers with an EIA process.

2.21. ***We believe that the Council should commit to supporting and delegating the creation and design of events to relevant officers with an EIA process.***

Procurement and Commissioning

2.22. During the scrutiny inquiry we considered how equality diversity and inclusion is delivered through the Council's procurement and commissioning arrangements. The Council provides a wide range of services to residents and businesses in the district. In some cases, these are provided directly by the Council, in other cases, by our partners and contractors.

2.23. When a supplier provides goods, services or works on behalf of the Council, the ultimate legal responsibility for meeting the requirements of the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty remain with the Council. We believe that it is therefore important to ensure that the Council's equality obligations are part of the terms of a contract so that we know they will monitor the impact on service users and those they employ.

2.24. Specifically, we believe that the Council should:

- Communicate its equality diversity and inclusion principles and strategies to all potential contractors and service providers,
- Ensure contractors and service providers have policies, procedures and practices that do not discriminate and deliver goods, facilities and services that are appropriate and accessible,
- Provide opportunities for all to be able to bid and be awarded Council contracts from an equal basis; and
- Monitor the contracts and service arrangements to ensure they are meeting their equality commitments.

EDI Accreditation

2.25. We believe that the Council should explore opportunities to achieve accreditation and better publicise the accreditation that it already has. This could include, for example, neuro-diversity, to ensure that we are meeting high standards of inclusion for people with neurodiverse conditions and making use of their talents.

Recommendation 5
That the Council further explore opportunities to achieve further accreditation and better publicise the accreditation that the Council already has.

2.26. Achieving accreditation will help the Council's image as an inclusive, and thus attractive, employer.

2.27. In achieving accreditation, a stronger EDI culture can be fostered as current staff will feel more supported and bought-in to the EDI mission and prospective staff and candidates will not feel excluded.

3 Equality in Employment

3.1. The Council's *Including Everyone* framework pulls together the Council's commitment to equality within the workplace. As part of supporting the delivery of this strategy there are additional guidance documents, focusing on specific elements of equality. These can be added to, as required, through the life of this strategy.

3.2. We believe that the Council's HR policies should be clear and pro-active in promoting and supporting equality in the workforce. This includes eliminating bullying and harassment, addressing discrimination, ensuring equality in pay and creating a flexible work-life balance.

Equal Opportunities

3.3. The Cherwell Council's Equal Opportunities policies meets its Public Sector Equality Duty requirements by ensuring fair treatment in hiring and promotions. Key points it should include are:

- Commitment to fair recruitment based solely on merit.
- Proactive outreach to diverse applicant pools at job fairs.
- Flexible working arrangements to support candidates with additional needs.
- Reasonable adjustments for disabled employees, including alternative application formats and workplace accommodations.
- Accessibility measures in the new Property Strategy to ensure all buildings are accessible.
- Ongoing training and monitoring of employment practices to prevent discrimination.

A Diverse Workforce

3.4. In evidence to the scrutiny inquiry we heard that the Council is continuing to work towards achieving a diverse workforce and offering equality of opportunity in employment, recruitment selection, training, and development. The Council aims to ensure that the workplace is free from discrimination, victimisation, or harassment of any kind where staff are treated with respect.

3.5. We have heard in evidence that the Council already reviews the proportion of staff for each category of Protected Characteristics, and this is reported to Personnel Committee on a quarterly basis. The Council consults staff on key

aspects of accessibility and inclusion and the Council has an Inclusion Champion network.

3.6. During the scrutiny inquiry we have considered the range of policies in place for its staff and prospective employees, but also, specifically the Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy in place to support Public Sector Equality Duty compliance, the Members Code of Conduct, which also outlines expectations regarding anti-bullying, discrimination, and harassment for all Councillors and also Workforce Profile Statistics in reports to demonstrate adherence to Public Sector Equality Duty data requirements.

3.7. These policies should support its staff and provide clear guidance to all employees about what is expected of them and what they can expect from the Council as an employer. To achieve this, we are recommending that the Council's recruitment process be reviewed to make it more inclusive and remove irrelevant barriers to recruitment.

Recommendation 6
That the Council's recruitment process be reviewed to make it more inclusive and remove irrelevant barriers to recruitment.

3.8. Reviewing and streamlining the applications and interview process to better respond to applicants' needs, reduce barriers to recruitment and widen the candidate pool.

Equality Training

3.9. Equality training is provided for staff to ensure they are made aware of their rights and responsibilities. In particular, all managers should be trained on a regular basis in equalities matters concerning employment. Similarly, there is an expectation that all Members will attend Equality training. Equality issues are an integral part of the Council's training and development programmes, regardless of whether the Council uses internal or external trainers. In addition to the generic equality training, tailored equality training to reflect the needs of specific services will be encouraged, particularly for services engaging with external customers and / or where there is a significant engagement with protected group(s).

3.10. We believe that it is important that the Council makes a strong commitment to training and development for all staff. All staff should have equal access to training and development and take positive action where appropriate for those who are underrepresented in our workforce.

3.11. The Councils EDI training programme includes Equalities Diversity and Inclusion training for managers and Equalities diversity and inclusion training for all staff and for councillors.

3.12. One particular area we have identified that may be of particular focus for incorporation into the Council's training programme is training on neuro-

diversity and this was a full council motion on 21 October 2024. The full motion agreed by Council can be found here:

Motion on Neurodiversity Meeting of Council, Monday 21 October 2024 (Item 37.) **https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=27375**

3.13. ***We believe that the Council should introduce training for staff and members on neurodiversity.***

3.14. Ideally the Council's EDI training suite should also be complemented with face-to-face training and investigation of EDI topics determined by managers concerns, to include statutory responsibilities and the Council's EDI strategies and policies and objectives.

3.15. In addition, we believe that the Council should actively facilitate the creation of staff diversity networks. In our research we have found that staff networks are a key part of the EDI culture at other councils. They facilitate and improve coproduction and keep councils ahead of the curve relating to EDI due to the EDI culture they foster.

Recommendation 7
That the Council should actively facilitate the creation of staff diversity networks and embed this approach.

3.16. The Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy satisfies the Public Sector Equality Duty but could do more to support equity in applying to jobs at the organisation. In reviewing the organisation's approach to employment and recruitment, the organisation could attract a more diverse pool of applicants, and successful applicants. Attracting diversity means that all vacancies can be filled by applicants best suited to the role.

An Anti-discriminatory Strategy

3.17. Cherwell Council is moving from "non-discriminatory" to an "anti-discriminatory" strategy and we support this ambition. At the moment, however, we have found that the Council does very little to show an anti-discriminatory stance. In the future, the Council should for example, consider creating a diversity and inclusion calendar. A diversity and inclusion calendar is a tool that lists various cultural, religious, and social events, holidays, and awareness days from different groups. Whilst this may seem like a 'token gesture' to begin with, it could spark momentum for more EDI involvement from staff and service-users.

4 Equalities Communications and Engagement

4.1. In evidence the scrutiny inquiry has heard that the Council wants to ensure that anyone who accesses Council services either as a resident, visitor, customer, or employee feels well informed about local issues; can get involved, influence local decision making and gets the opportunity to tell the Council what they think about its policies, procedures, service delivery and work with partner organisations.

4.2. The Scrutiny Working Group considered the accessibility of Council communications across different services. In the longer term, or as new policies and services are introduced and refreshed, it may be good to review and develop the systems for accessible communications used to engage with residents with reference to the Council's EDI and EIA objectives, as necessary.

4.3. It may also be useful for services to reflect upon the way they engage with local residents and service users against these Equality objectives and take opportunities where they arise to think about different sections of our community. Diversity days, workshops or socials are a suitable way of fostering EDI culture by allowing those from protected characteristics to speak with others with shared characteristics.

4.4. ***We believe that the Council should commit to supporting and delegating the creation and design of events to relevant officers with an EIA process.***

<u>Engaging with Young People</u>

4.5. One particular group that the Council wishes to engage with more is young people. One of the Council's Equalities KPIs is to "Collaborate with partner organisations to involve young people in volunteering activities and engage with them to undertake active participation in their local communities (KPI EDI1.05.01).

4.6. At Quarter 2 we heard that this was behind schedule and that initial discussions with some partners had highlighted the costs and challenges associated with young people undertaking volunteer activity.



David Cruchley - Senior Youth Partnerships Manager, Oxfordshire Youth, providing evidence to the Scrutiny Working Group.

4.7. In evidence we heard from David Cruchley - Senior Youth Partnerships Manager, Oxfordshire Youth, who provided an overview of the ongoing work carried out by staff and volunteers, as well as the complex growing needs of young people today.

4.8. In evidence from Mr Cruchley the Working Group explored three key themes:

- Youth Leadership
- Youth Voice / Participation
- Young People Supported Accommodation Service.

4.9. He also introduced us to the Lundy Model of Child Participation, a nationally recognised and adopted model of operation through four key concepts:

- Space
- Voice
- Audience
- Influence.

4.10. Members posed a range of questions surrounding youth work and organisations within the district and how the Council can help in improving and enriching youth work within Cherwell. It was suggested and agreed that officers look to incorporate the principles of the Lundy model as well as other wellbeing frameworks within the Councils emerging updated Including Everyone Framework.

Principles of Engagement

4.11. In consideration of the evidence, we have considered overall, we believe that the following principles should inform how the Council will make sure that its engagement activities are flexible, focused, and appropriate for the diverse needs of the communities:

- Plan and co-ordinate consultation and engagement on policy making activities and decision making, the use of resources and, where possible, work collaboratively.

- Actively encourage involvement from all communities, including those from traditionally under-represented groups/areas.

- Be open and creative to the most appropriate methods to consult and engage making the experience interesting, relevant, and worthwhile for participants.

- Be transparent and build trust by communicating results and ensure that the outcomes are used to inform the Council's policies and decision-making processes.

- Use the information from its engagement activities, alongside other evidence, to inform the design and delivery of effective and efficient services, within our current financial constraints.

- Build relationships with communities so sustained engagement can be established.

4.12. We believe that it is important to highlight and communicate the Council's equalities diversity and inclusion strategies and initiatives to the public and our staff and celebrate achievements. The Council should communicate about progress through:

- An Annual Equality Report
- Our information and advice services
- The Council website
- Media (including social media) for advertising and press releases
- Through our community network.

The Community Engagement Strategy

4.13. To ensure consistency, the Council has a separate Community Engagement Strategy, that outlines the principles for consultation and engagement for the Council and provides the Council with a consistent, corporate and agreed approach to how we consult and use the results to inform our policies, strategies and service delivery.

4.14. As part of the evidence hearings, we spoke with Shona Ware – Assistant Director of Customer Focus and Celia Prado-Teeling -Performance Team Leader (Customer Focus) on the Council's Cherwell District Council Consultation and Engagement Strategy and its interrelationship with equality diversity and inclusion.

4.15. In consideration of engaging with our communities and service users and the way in which this overlaps with delivery of the Council's EDI strategies and engaging with all sections of the population, the Scrutiny Working Group considered the refresh of the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy.

4.16. We believe that Cherwell District Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2025 – 29 should include strategies and actions for monitoring response rates among individuals from each protected characteristic. This will involve incorporating diversity monitoring questions in all consultation and engagement surveys, providing essential evidence for decision-making across all areas of council policy and service delivery.

Recommendation 8
That the Cherwell District Council Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2025 – 2029 include strategies and actions for monitoring response rates among individuals from each of the Protected Characteristics. This should involve incorporating diversity monitoring questions in all consultation and engagement surveys, providing essential evidence for decision-making across all areas of Council policy and service delivery.

Web Accessibility

4.17. During the scrutiny inquiry we also considered the Council's website and web accessibility. In modern times the internet has become one of the main ways in which service users and people in general interact and communicate with public services and with each other.

4.18. The Council's website, Customer Services, Housing and Revenue and Benefits (among others) already provide different ways for service-users to interact, e.g. documents in large print, interpreters/translations. However, this is only done on a case-by-case basis and is not built into the system. Being proactive, rather than reactive, will make the Council more accessible and more 'anti-discriminatory'.

4.19. We heard in evidence that the Council's website meets 88.4% of the Level AA Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and 92.5% of Level A criteria. Plans for the 2024/25 EDI Action Plan include conducting an EIA on the website's accessibility and updating its accessibility section.

4.20. The Council website sits below the national local council median for accessibility according to the WCAG AA Success Criteria (around the 43rd percentile). According to the legislation, the Council website is not compliant as it is not fully Level AA.

4.21. There is currently no automated system in place to assess staff intranet accessibility against WCAG standards[2].

4.22. We are therefore recommending that a full EDI audit of the Council website and communications be undertaken to ensure that the Council web communications effectively engage with all sections of the community.

Recommendation 9
That a full Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) audit of the Council website and communications be undertaken to ensure that the Council web communications effectively engage with all sections of the community.

[2] Understanding WCAG 2.2 https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/helping-people-to-use-your-service/understanding-wcag

4.23. In the future, the Communications department could consider whether dedicated training is needed for staff who publish web content. In developing a system where staff who publish web content attend mandatory training relating to web content accessibility, the content of the website will, in future, remain ahead of the curve according to guidelines.

5 Measuring Progress

5.1. The Council measures its progress in delivering its equalities diversity and inclusion strategies and priorities through its *Including Everyone* key performance indicators. The goals and commitments of Cherwell District Council's *Including Everyone Framework* are set every four years.

EDI Action Plans

5.2. Sitting beneath this Framework are three annual action plans that reflect the different ways in which Cherwell Council is working to make its organisation services and communities more inclusive. The action plans have indicators to help measure progress against the goals.

5.3. Implementation is overseen by the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Member Working Group and reporting should align with quarterly business plan monitoring.

5.4. During the Scrutiny Inquiry the Scrutiny Working Group has scrutinised the performance the EDI performance indicators, by reviewing quarterly performance reports with questions to the Portfolio Holder and officers. The Scrutiny Working Group has also reviewed the framework itself and considered to what extent the current performance KPIs and outturn information are effectively measuring the implementation of the Council's Including Everyone Framework EDI priorities.

5.5. Cherwell Council has three inter-connected strands that help organise its Equalities Diversity and Inclusion work and has set goals and commitments against each of these strands. These goals are tracked and measured in a set of annual action plans, which sit underneath this framework.

5.6. Cherwell Council's quarterly performance reports detail progress made to date against the following objectives and measures for each strand:

- Inclusive communities
- Inclusive services
- Inclusive workplace.

Equality Monitoring

5.7. The Council has a requirement to publish equality information at least once a year to show how we have complied with the equality duty. This also makes good business sense as it can help local people assess the Council's performance on equality, the impact our policies and practices have had, tell us who is and isn't using our services; understand why our services may not meet their needs and help us to improve the delivery of our services by identify any data gaps and address any issues. Any monitoring undertaken must be proportionate and relevant and of a benefit to our communities.

5.8. The Council monitors its Public Sector Equality Duty compliance through metrics on workforce composition by gender, race, disability, age, and grade, comparing these statistics with local demographics.

5.9. The Scrutiny Working Group heard in evidence that the Council is currently reviewing its process for gathering equality data to ensure an accurate understanding of underrepresented communities and identify gaps.

5.10. The Scrutiny Working Group has reviewed the Council's Equalities Diversity and Inclusion Performance each quarter, with detailed questions to the Performance Team Leader, Assistant Director of Wellbeing and Housing Services and Assistant Director of HR and maintained an overview of progress, and scrutiny of key indicators that were behind schedule.

5.11. During our review it was noted the KPI EDI1.03.01 "Work with partners to promote an ethnically diverse representation at our voluntary sector forum" was listed as "slightly behind schedule". It was also noted the KPI EDI1.05.01 "Collaborate with partner organisations to involve young people in volunteering activities and engage with them to undertake active participation in their local communities" was highlighted "red" and "Behind schedule" in the report.

5.12. The report commented that the forum was held on the 4 September and despite increasing the circulation list and invitations, there was little take up from the expanded group and said that more work needed to be done to improve diversity of attendance at next year's forum.

5.13. It was suggested that other youth organisations could be involved in seeking out and engaging with young people who may be interested in volunteering. It was noted that Oxfordshire Youth may be invited as an expert witness on this.

5.14. The KPI EDI1.05.02 "Raise awareness of the role of a councillor from an EDI perspective within political leaders" was considered and it was asked what the role of a councillor from an EDI perspective was. Members also discussed the implementation of Inclusion Champions and noted that their involvement with the red and amber indicators within the performance report would be beneficial to the progression of EDI goals within the Council.

Review of the EDI Performance Framework

5.15. In reviewing the Council's EDI Performance Framework itself, the Scrutiny Working Group considered if the metrics and indicators used in the performance report were the right ones to measure the implementation and impact of the Council's EDI strategies.

5.16. It was noted that the KPIs had no timeframe or delivery target date / review date. One progress description was "Delivering to plan" and it was queried what this meant, and it was felt this wasn't clear enough. It was noted that indicators were listed as 'green' despite not being completed. Officers explained in evidence that the green indicators marked the progress of the actions against where the Council was expected to be operating against the agreed timeframe, rather than fully implemented, but recognised that this may be misleading, especially as there was no implementation timetable. It was agreed that the presentation of information within the performance report as well as the content and targets within the report could be reviewed.

5.17. It was also noted that KPIs should be "SMART" (Specific Measurable Achievable and Realistic) and measurable and that the inclusion of milestones with implementation dates and outputs would be useful to help measure and evaluate implementation progress. KPIs that also measure outcomes for the organization or residents may also be more useful to measure impact.

Meaningful Outcomes

5.18. We have recommended that the Council's EDI objectives (KPIs) be refreshed to ensure that they link directly and cross reference to the Council's EDI strategy framework, with KPIs clearly referenced against the delivery of each EDI strand. We are also recommending that the Council's EDI objectives / KPIs reflect meaningful *outcomes* to be delivered for each key strand, as well as measurable outputs and outcomes (metrics) with milestones and implementation dates.

Recommendation 10
That the Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) objectives / KPIs reflect meaningful outcomes to be delivered for each key strand, as well as measurable outputs and outcomes (metrics) with milestones and implementation dates.

5.19. ***We believe that the Council should revise the current data that is captured and consider more effective metrics.***

5.20. As it stands, the Council captures a lot of first-order data, e.g. diversity workforce statistics. However, understanding how policies make an impact would be useful in understanding where 'true deficiencies' lie. We suggest that it may be useful if the Executive were to commit to reviewing how data is gathered and what the barriers to gathering effective EDI data are. We believe that the Council should also review how EDI is monitored and what EDI data is captured to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

Oversight of EDI

5.21. We believe that the Council should design and implement an EDI oversight structure (such as EDI Champions), who are able to influence and scrutinise policies, projects and initiatives and support the organisation on its EDI journey at service level.

5.22. As with staff networks, having an EDI oversight structure is integral to the EDI culture of many other councils. They keep EDI at the heart of policy decisions and maintain a strong EDI culture within the workforce.

5.23. As part of the Scrutiny Working Group's review of community engagement it was agreed officers would reach out to councillors for suggestions of community groups that may be unknown to the Council to enable officers to engage better. It was also suggested that officers could liaise with members to investigate if it may be possible and appropriate to widen representation at the Community Safety Partnership.

5.24. In addition to these overall monitoring arrangements, we believe that the Council should aim to produce an annual report to outline progress and seek feedback on how others see and experience progress.

5.25. ***It is also requested that each of the scrutiny recommendations agreed by the Executive constitute an objective within the refreshed EDI Action Plan.***

6 Conclusion

6.1. The Scrutiny Woking Group has completed its review of the Council's EDI strategies, which was the culmination of work carried out previously, but with the inquiry focusing in 2024-2025 not just on oversight of performance but contributing to the review of the EDI strategy for the future.

6.2. This review has engaged with some of the key Council officers involved in coordinating the EDI policy framework and performance, as well as the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, but has also considered perspective outside of the Council, with evidence from one of the Council's delivery partners engaging with young people, and a review of other Council's EDI strategies and national guidance.

6.3. We recognise also though that we were not able to speak to all Council leaders and staff and to all relevant community stakeholders, this being a limited review of a substantial topic. Work will go on to develop the strategies and carry out further engagement further to our scrutiny inquiry. We recognise that EDI is a concern across the Council and across our community and it is for all Council leaders to adopt and implement the strategy to make it work effectively.

6.4. Having reviewed the Council's current Equality and Diversity Framework and performance, it has agreed ten recommendations to the Executive. It is hoped that this report and the recommendations will be found to be a useful and constructive contribution to building a refreshed strategy and enhanced EDI framework for the Council, not only as employer but as a community leader.

6.5. Many of these recommendations may compliment or go beyond the minimum necessary to fulfil legal duties of local councils relating to EDI. It is envisaged that these recommendations will help shift the Council from 'non-discriminatory' to 'anti-discriminatory' and would help foster an EDI culture that would allow easier implementation of more robust EDI initiatives.

6.6. In addition to the main scrutiny recommendations, the report also makes some suggestions, which may be a useful point of reference for taking EDI forward.

6.7. The scrutiny recommendations are summarised throughout the report under the main chapter headers and themes addressed in the report:

- Equality and Service Delivery
- Equality in Employment
- Equalities Communications and Engagement
- Measuring Progress.

<u>The Scrutiny Process and Next Steps</u>

6.8. The EDI Scrutiny Working Group was established to carry out this inquiry and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which it is hoped will adopt the report and recommendations. Once the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have agreed the Scrutiny Report and Recommendations, these will be referred to the Executive for consideration and an Executive Response.

6.9. There is a two month period within which the Executive should agree its response to the scrutiny report and recommendations. The Executive may agree, reject or amend the scrutiny recommendations made.

6.10. The agreed scrutiny recommendations (Executive decisions) made can then be implemented by the Resources and Transformation department and other Council departments as necessary.

6.11. After a suitable period of time, the Overview and Scrutiny should request an update on the progress of implementing the Executive Response and decisions made. This is likely to be around one year from when the scrutiny report was agreed, (or whenever might be an appropriate time to review if sooner).

6.12. We hope that through this inquiry we will be able to have played a part in helping the Council carry forward its EDI priorities and make a constructive

impact recognising and respecting the differences that make us strong both throughout the Council and throughout our community.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the councillors, members and external stakeholders who have taken the time and effort to attend our meetings and present evidence.

In particular we would like to thank Mr David Cruchley - Senior Youth Partnerships Manager, Oxfordshire Youth, who provided valuable insights into community engagement methodologies, which we have learnt from, and which have also contributed to Council learning.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is appointed by Cherwell District Council to carry out the local authority scrutiny functions.

Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Barry Wood

Formal Minutes

Minutes of proceedings are available to view or download from the Council website at https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=116

Committee Staff

The current staff of the committee are:
Michael Carr - Interim Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet - Democratic and Elections Officer.

Contacts

Email: democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Cherwell District Council

March 2025

www.cherwell.gov.uk

This report is public	
Bicester Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) Implementation Report	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	7 October 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities, Councillor Rob Parkinson
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	6 August 2025
Report of	Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety, Tim Hughes

Purpose of report

A consultation was recently undertaken on a proposal to renewal the current Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for Bicester town centre. This report provides the Executive with the background to the proposal, a summary of the consultation undertaken and the feedback from stakeholders and the details of the potential scope of the Order. The report asks the Executive to decide whether to renew the current PSPO in Bicester town centre.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To renew the Public Spaces Protection Order for Bicester town centre taking into consideration the outcomes of the public consultation and the feedback received from stakeholders.

1.2 The basis of the order will be items (a)-(e) as set out in the consultation in section 4.14 and the order will apply to the area set within the red border in appendix 1.

1.3 To agree the order can remain in place for up to 3 years.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The Council's Community Safety Team have been working extensively with Thames Valley Police on problems of anti-social behaviour in and around Bicester town centre for several years. The current PSPO was put in place on 21 June 2022 and has had a positive impact on the centre of Bicester and proven a useful tool for both CDC and TVP to use to tackle ASB.

2.2 A consultation has been completed on a proposal to renew the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for Bicester town centre. This report provides the

Executive with the background to the proposal, a summary of the consultation undertaken and the feedback from stakeholders and the details of the potential scope of the Order. The report asks the Executive to decide whether to introduce a PSPO in Bicester town centre.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	The renewal of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to Bicester town Centre will be met by existing budget. Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 06 August 2025
Legal	The report sets out in detail the statutory framework for a PSPO in section 4, including the statutory tests/conditions for whether a PSPO can be put into effect (see 4.10 of the report). A PSPO will be in place for a period of no more than 3 years in accordance with the legislation. Careful consideration should be given to whether these tests have been met before approving the PSPO. S72 of the 2014 Act referred to in the report sets out the required consultation process to follow before making the order, and the report indicates that the required consultation requirements have been followed. S59.5 of the 2014 Act, set out in full in paragraph 4.10 of this report notes that the restrictions within the PSPO should be reasonable in order to prevent the detrimental effect identified from continuing, occurring or recurring, or to reduce that detrimental effect or to reduce the risk of its continuance, occurrence or recurrence. The committee should be satisfied that the restrictions are reasonable in order to achieve the desired objectives before continuing. Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal, 2 September 2025
Risk Management	There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. Any related risks arising in the future will be managed through the service operational risk and escalated to the Leadership Risk Register as and when deemed necessary. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 02 September 2025

Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary

Equality Impact		x		There are no equalities nor inclusion implications arising from this report. All proposals and projects developed by the council are done in line with our Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework, an Equalities Impact Assessment related to this proposal has been completed to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 02 September 2025
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
Climate & Environmental Impact		x		N/A
ICT & Digital Impact		x		N/A
Data Impact		x		N/A
Procurement & subsidy		x		N/A
Council Priorities	The recommendations within the report will support the council priority 2 - Community leadership – to strengthen community collaboration and resilience and to promote health and wellbeing with a focus on inequality.			
Human Resources	N/A Anna Thornicroft, Trainee HR Business Partner, 03 September 2025			
Property	N/A Mona Walsh, Assistant Director Property, 26 August 2025			
Consultation & Engagement	A public consultation has been carried out. No further consultation required.			

Supporting Information

3. Background

3.1 Anti-social behaviour can directly affect the day to day lives of communities and create an environment in which more serious crime can take hold. These outcomes are at odds with priorities within the Council Plan and the drive to support the health and well-being of our communities. In looking to address issues including, anti-social behaviour, the Council has an emphasis on early intervention, collaboration, and leadership. Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) can support this way of working. In line with the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 PSPOs can be implemented by Local Authorities and used to prohibit specified activities within a defined public area. Breach of a PSPO without a reasonable excuse, is an offence.

3.2 A PSPO restricts what people can do in an area and how they behave. As such it is important to ensure that any such restrictions are focussed on problem behaviours, are proportionate to the detrimental impact that the behaviour is having or could cause and are considered necessary to prevent it continuing, occurring or reoccurring. The restrictions and requirements included in a PSPO may be comprehensive or targeted on specific behaviours by particular groups and/or at specified times.

3.3 A PSPO can be in force for any period up to a maximum of three years and can be extended for a further period of up to 3 years at any time before expiry. Before introducing a PSPO the council is required to conduct consultation with relevant parties on the scope of the PSPO

4. Details

Anti-Social Behaviour in Bicester Town Centre

4.1. The table below shows the figures for the total number of reported offences which is then broken down into ASB and public order around the town centre in Bicester recorded since 01/06/2022

Occurrence Type	Count of Occurrences	% of Grand Total
ASB – Community	113	14%
ASB – Environmental	11	1%
ASB – Personal	10	1%
Assault with injury	154	19%
Assault without injury	233	29%
Public order	285	35%

Since 01/06/2022 there have been 806 reports of ASB, Assault or Public Order in Bicester Town Centre.

4.2 Further data provided by TVP comparing years is as follows. There was a 71% increase in ASB between 2022-2024, a 44% increase in assault between 2022-2024, a 30 % increase in public order between 2022-2024. In contrast to these increases occurrences been reported have declined by 17% between 2023-2024.

4.3 In an attempt to tackle ASB in the town centre and surrounding areas, Thames Valley Police and the Council's community safety team have in recent years undertaken a number of specific operations. This has included increasing our presence in the town centre, listening to and acting upon social media reports of ASB by groups and liaised with businesses to address their concerns. These have had some effect on the behaviour of certain individuals, the continuation of the PSPO should maintain the ability for incidences of ASB to be effectively addressed.

Benefits of Public Spaces Protection Order

4.4 A significant proportion of the ASB reported or witnessed in the town centre relates to groups. Activity to address this has mainly relied on the Police working with the individual and (where necessary) their parents/ guardian to reduce the harmful behaviour. Acceptable Behaviour Contracts can only be issued on a voluntary basis and community protection notices cannot be issued to anyone under 16 years of age. Therefore, non-criminal options for tackling the problematic behaviour of young people are limited.

4.5 Continuing with the PSPO would provide the council and the Police with further legal options to tackle the behaviour of individuals which is causing concern in Bicester town centre. In particular it would permit the service of fixed penalty notices for behaviours which would not meet the thresholds or legal requirements for other formal action. In addition, it would provide opportunity for us to promote the restrictions through warning signs providing a deterrence and raising public awareness of the actions that we are taking to improve the town centre.

4.6 If the PSPO is renewed the Community Safety Team would continue with the existing approach to engage and advise first but the PSPO would provide an option for an immediate and non-criminal escalation should this be necessary.

The Legal Framework for a PSPO

4.7 Local authorities have the power to create PSPOs under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 ('the Act'). In deciding to make a PSPO, the Act requires that the local authority must have regard to the rights of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly set out in the Human Rights Act 1998.

4.8 The two issues which must be addressed for every proposed restriction in the PSPO are whether the statutory criteria are met and whether the restrictions proposed are proportionate having regard to the legitimate aim of preserving the quality of life for everyone who lives or works in, or who visits, the town centre.

4.9 A local authority can make a PSPO in respect of any public space within its administrative boundary. The definition of public space is wide and includes any

place to which the public or any section of the public has access, on payment or otherwise, as of right or by virtue of express or implied permission.

4.10 Section 59 of the Act sets out the basis on which local authorities may make a PSPO. It provides as follows:

(1) A local authority may make a public spaces protection order if satisfied on reasonable grounds that two conditions are met.

(2) The first condition is that:
(a) activities carried on in a public place within the authority's area have had a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality, or
(b) it is likely that activities will be carried on in a public place within that area and that they will have such an effect.

(3) The second condition is that the effect, or likely effect, of the activities:
(a) is, or is likely to be, of a persistent or continuing nature,
(b) is, or is likely to be, such as to make the activities unreasonable, and
(c) justifies the restrictions imposed by the notice.

(4) A PSPO is an order that identifies the public place referred to in subsection (2) ("the restricted area") and
(a) prohibits specified things being done in the restricted area,
(b) requires specified things to be done by persons carrying on specified activities in that area, or
(c) does both of those things.

(5) The only prohibitions or requirements that may be imposed are ones that are reasonable to impose in order:
(a) to prevent the detrimental effect referred to in subsection (2) from continuing, occurring or recurring, or
(b) to reduce that detrimental effect or to reduce the risk of its continuance, occurrence or recurrence.

4.11 In establishing a PSPO, appropriate signage must be displayed in accordance with the requirements of the Act and details of the PSPO must be published.

4.12 A breach of the PSPO can be dealt with through the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice of up to £100, a level 3 fine of up to £1000 on conviction, or £500 upon conviction for consuming alcohol in breach of the Order.

Consultation

4.13 Before introducing, extending, varying or discharging a PSPO local authorities are obliged to consult with the local chief officer of police; the Police and Crime Commissioner; owners or occupiers of land within the affected area where reasonably practicable, and appropriate community representatives.

4.14 A 2-week public consultation on the renewal of the PSPO for Bicester town centre was undertaken between 18 May and 2 June 2025.

4.15 The scope of the PSPO consulted on include:

a) No person shall loiter in the restricted area either as an individual or in a group if they are causing or likely to cause anti-social behaviour. If asked to disperse by a Police Constable, PCSO, or an authorised officer of the Council that person must not return to the restricted area for a period of 24 hours.

b) No person shall beg (using either active or passive methods of obtaining alms) or ask members of the public for money in the restricted area.

c) No person shall consume alcohol in the restricted area (other than premises specified in Section 62(1) of the Act) in a manner which causes nuisance or annoyance to other persons in the locality.

d) No person shall continue to consume alcohol when directed by an officer to stop in the restricted area.

e) No person shall fail to surrender alcohol or a container for alcohol when requested to do so by an officer in the restricted area.

4.16 The proposed area that the PSPO will cover is included as Appendix 1. The map formed part of the consultation to identify where the proposed prohibitions would be introduced by the order.

4.17 This consultation included an online survey promoted by a press release and on the council's social media platforms, face-to-face engagement with visitors to the town centre, visits to the main town centre businesses and direct communication with key stakeholders.

4.15 A summary report of the consultation is attached (Appendix 2). The summary analysis identifies that there were 344 responses to this consultation. In response to the key questions the answers were as follows:

Question	Response – 'Yes'	Response – 'No'	Response – 'Don't know'
"Should Cherwell District Council continue to prohibit anti-social behaviour (that causes alarm, distress or concern) in Bicester town centre through the renewal of Public Spaces Protection Order?"	310 (92.81%)	6 (5.39%)	18 (5.39%)
"Should Cherwell District Council seek to prohibit aggressive begging in) in Bicester town centre through the renewal of Public Spaces Protection Order?"	297 (62.87%)	7 (2.10%)	117 (35.03%)
"Should Cherwell District Council seek to prohibit Antisocial behaviour associated to drinking in	302 (90.42%)	12 (3.59%)	20 (5.99%)

Bicester town centre through the renewal of Public Spaces Protection Order?"			

Thames Valley Police formally responded to the consultation in support of the renewal of the PSPO.

4.16 If the PSPO is renewed it will remain in force for 3 years. During the third year it will be evaluated through reviewing the use of the powers introduced through the Order and by reference to the data relating to ASB in the area over the years preceding the introduction of the PSPO and during the time it is in force. The impacts of the PSPO on other areas outside the geographic scope of the Order will be monitored during this period to ensure that we identify if the Order has simply moved the problem to other areas. A further consultation will be required if it is intended to renew the Order.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

Option 1: Not renew the PSPO.
This option is not recommended. The information gathered to support the renewal of the PSPO for Bicester town centre demonstrates that there is a persistent problem with ASB occurring in and around Bicester town centre. The consultation outcomes show very strong support for the renewal of the PSPO to continue to tackle this problem and stakeholders, including Thames Valley Police, support the proposal.

Option 2: Introduce a PSPO with a more limited scope.
This option is not recommended. The consultation outcomes show support for all aspects of the proposed PSPO, and the information collected provides evidence that the prohibitions to be included are proportionate to the issues that the PSPO will look to address.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 The results of the consultation show overwhelming support for the introduction of a PSPO in Bicester Town Centre from the public and stakeholder organisations. The responses support including all three prohibitions that were included in the consultation.

6.2 Crime and incident data from the Police evidence supports the conclusion that prevalent and persistent problem of anti-social behaviour in and around Bicester town centre and that the legal requirements for the introduction of a PSPO are met. Therefore, the Executive is recommended to approve the renewal of the PSPO for Bicester town centre.

Decision Information

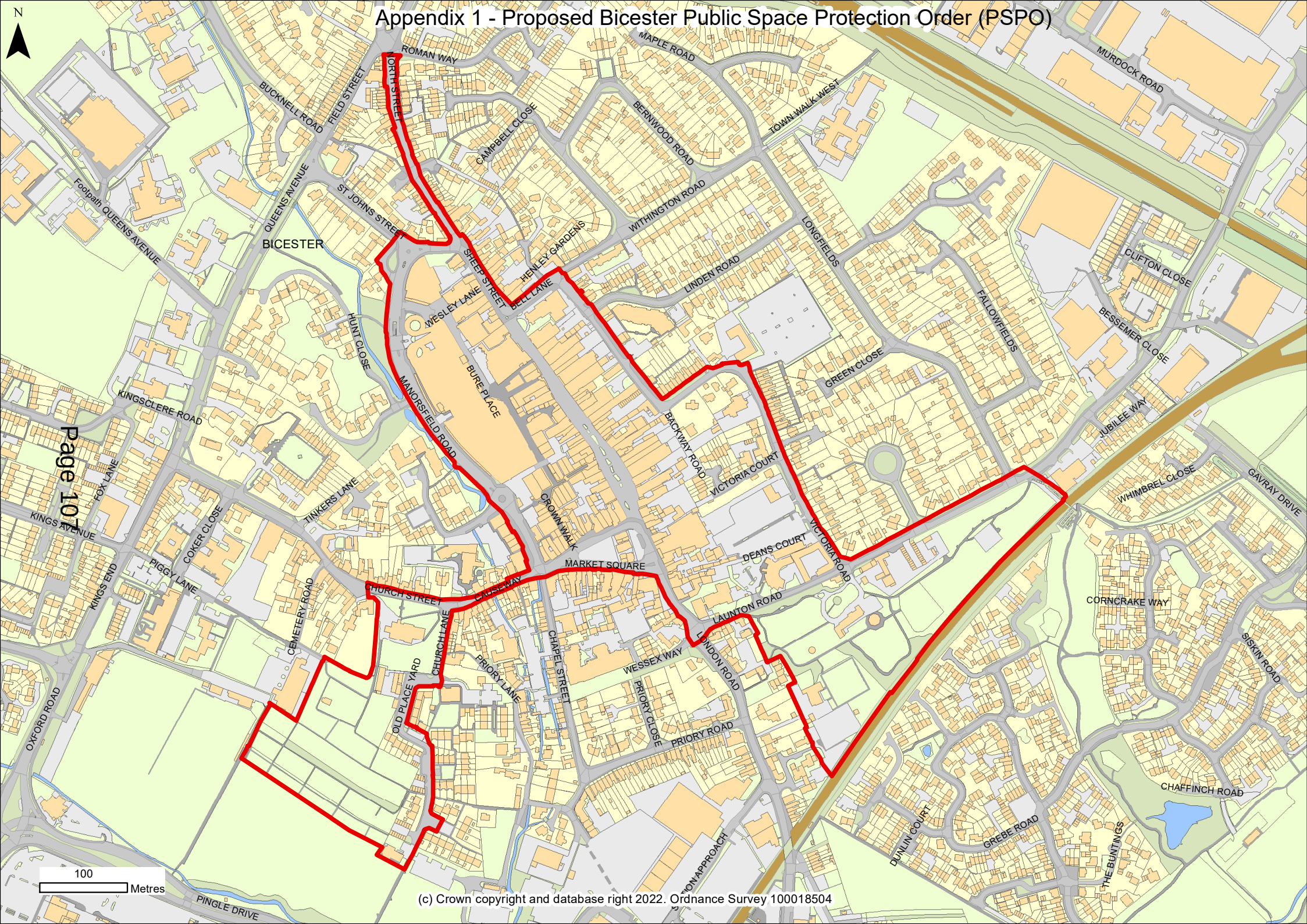
Key Decision	Yes
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	Bicester South and Ambrosden, Bicester East

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Map of area covered by Bicester PSPO
Appendix 2	PSPO Consultation Summary Report for Bicester 2025
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Tim Hughes, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety
Report Author contact details	tim.hughes@cherwell-dc.gov.uk 01295 221686
Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	Ian Boll Corporate Director for Communities, 03/09/2025

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Appendix 1 - Proposed Bicester Public Space Protection Order (PSPO)



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Public Space's Protection Order in Bicester (PSPO) Survey 2025

https://cherwell.citizenspace.com/communications-strategy-and-insight/copy-of-pspo-survey

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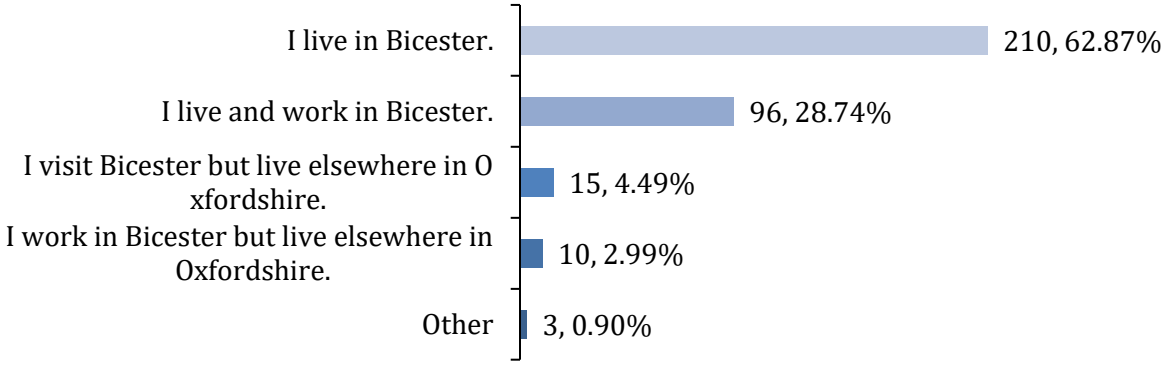
This activity was completed at the time of this report. Data, for the purpose of this summary, was divided into each of the questions, and will accurately reflect the correct distribution of responses vs analysis in this summary report.

Taking that the number of responses to this survey was: **334** (according to our survey system), also valid responses, please, see them explained below. The following analysis is based on the data received and the aspect of the question vs value or potential value, and alignment or not, if the case, with compliance of consultation principals, laws and regulations.

Please, take time to consider comments and suggestions integrated to this report, for better understanding.

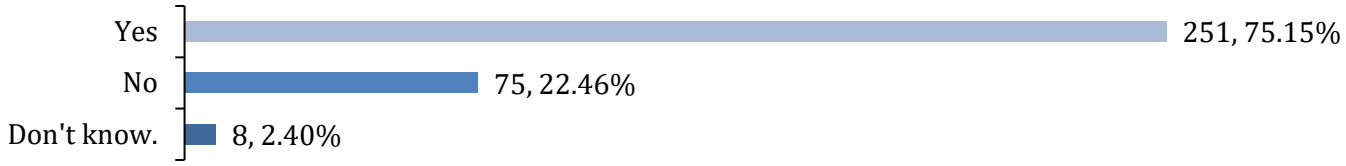
1: Please tell us where you live?

With 334 responses, the majority of respondents, circa 63%, confirmed that they live in Bicester.



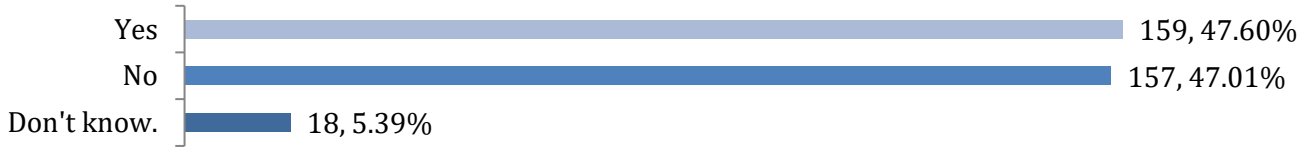
2: In this area have you seen people behaving in a way that caused alarm or distress or concern for safety in the last 12 months?

Just over two thirds respondents confirmed that they have seen alarming or distressing behaviours, within Bicester.



3: Have you been negatively affected by the issue in the last 12 months?

And nearly half of those, who witnessed such events, disclosed that they occurred within the last 12 months.



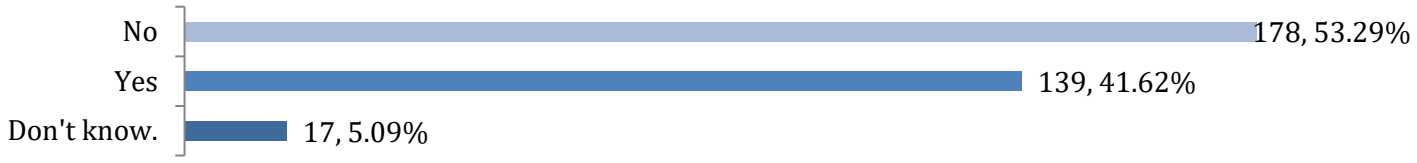
4: Should CDC seek continue to prohibit this activity through the existing town centre Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO)?

Nevertheless, nearly all respondents (93%) agree that the PSPO should continue to be applied, in Bicester.



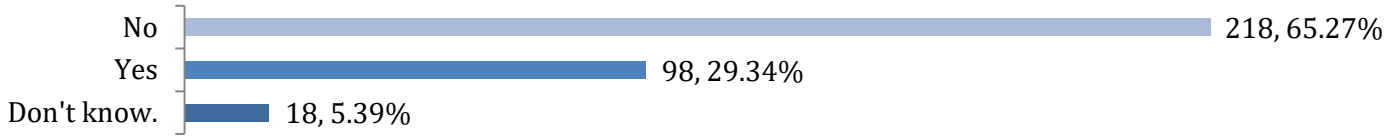
5: Have you seen people begging aggressively in Bicester town centre in the last 12 months?

Regarding sights of aggressive begging, of those who confirmed such event, accounted for more than half of respondents.



6: Have you been negatively affected by the issue in the last 12 months?

With over two thirds confirming the occurrence has affected them negatively.



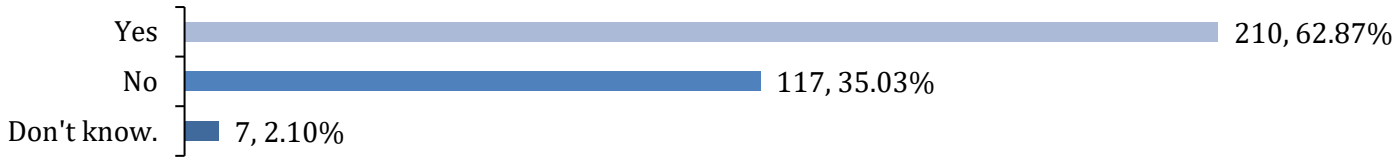
7:

And over four fifths of respondents agreed that we should continue to prohibit this activity within the defined areas where PSPO applies.



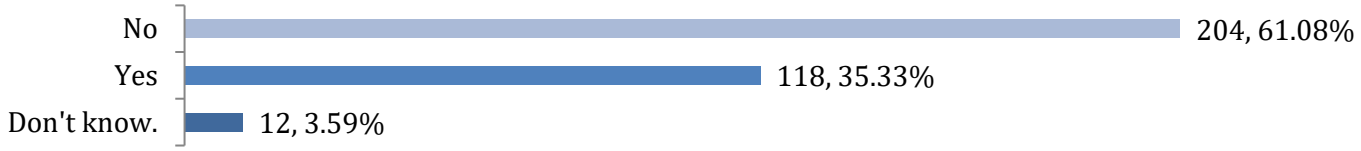
8: Have you seen anti-social behaviour associated with street drinking in the last 12 months?

Regarding sights of anti-social behaviour caused by drinking, of those who confirmed such event, accounted for more than two thirds of respondents.



9: Have you been negatively affected by the issue in the last 12 months?

Over two thirds also confirmed the occurrence has affected them negatively.



10: Should CDC seek continue to prohibit this activity through the existing town centre Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO)?

And most respondents agreed that we should continue to prohibit this activity within the defined areas where PSPO applies.



11: Do you have any further comments regarding the possible Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO)?

We have collected 247 valid entries out of the 334 participations, accounting for nearly 74% of respondents, and comments, in full, can be seen at Appendix 1 of this document.

In summary:

Residents expressed the need for Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) to be enforced more rigorously, as they witnessed a lack of action, despite reporting incidents, with key issues including:

Current neglect from PSPO provisions leads on offenders and further criminal behaviors, such as violent actions, public drug use (especially marijuana), loud disruptive behavior, littering, and vandalism.

Issues with inappropriate cycling behavior, particularly in pedestrian areas, at times dangerous and intimidating, with residents asking for stricter enforcement and suggestions to include restrictions on electric scooters and skateboards.

The feeling of being unsafe due to groups drinking alcohol, using drugs, and exhibiting aggressive behavior, added to aggressive begging, intimidating language directed at passersby, and large gatherings of youths behaving unrulily.

Suggestions were made to dedicated resources to more youth activities to reduce boredom and prevent disruptive behavior, which seems to be a source of disappointment at the current state of public areas, including litter and graffiti. The suggestion of more community engagement, also is directed to rebuild trust and cooperation with local services and authorities, in participants' view.

Many locals voiced feelings of insecurity at night, reflected in reduced foot traffic and family engagement in the town center, coupled with the lack of visible police presence and the need for reliable patrols to deter ASB, which reflects on requests for increased patrols, better signage, and the renewal of PSPOs to ensure community safety.

Overall, there is the need for collaborative efforts involving law enforcement, local government, and community members to restore Bicester's sense of safety, community, and well-being.

In conclusion,

Residents are calling for significant changes to address the unwelcomed anti-social behavior impacting their community. Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) enforcement is paramount, to deal with current perceived

Council neglect, allowing offenders to persist and engage in behaviors detrimental to the safety and well-being of the community. Most notably related to public drug use, aggressive behavior from groups, and unsafe cycling practices.

Residents feel mostly unsafe, at night, leading to reduced community engagement and foot, exacerbated by the lack of visible police presence and inefficient response to reported incidents, in turn, compelling residents to express a strong desire for increased patrols, better signage, and renewed PSPOs to instill a sense of safety. Furthermore, solutions have been suggested to address the root causes of some behaviors, such as dedicating resources to youth activities linked to boredom and lack of engagement.

As a result, a multi-lateral approach is necessary, including collaboration from law enforcement, local government, and community members, in the hope to restore the safe, vibrant community where all residents feel secure and engaged, in Bicester.

Appendix 1 (247 valid entries, nearly 74% of respondents who participated)

PSPOs are a great idea, but they need to be enforced. I witnessed a PSPO given out and within an hour the perpetrators had returned- despite police being made aware, nothing was done. One of the individuals proceeded to then carry out further criminal behaviours.
Please also cover inappropriate cycling behaviour and abuse by calling out and shouting often using foul language towards people unknown to them
The fly tipping is horrendous in so many areas. Graffiti too, hoping this can be looked at too.
Openly selling and using of drugs, especially smoking of marijuana.
Can electric illegal electric scooters, electric skateboards and electric bikes be included. It is a minefield walking down sheep street
The town centre is not a welcoming place when a family are attending the cinema or look to dine out in the evening. People drinking doing drugs anf being anti social in the multi storey carpark / stairwell. The area out side Sainsbury's itself is also a black spot for anti social behaviour. My children are nervous about going into town due to this. We do look at going elsewhere now, it's a shame as it's turning the town into a ghost town and no go area.
I assume I have not see any aggressive begging due to the PSPO being in place.
Enforce restrictions and monitor the behavior.
Need to something with the kids using the multi storey to shout and throw things off.
The amount of shoplifters in the Bicester area is a joke. More needs doing and with regards to drinking, I feel like the penny black and white hart shouldn't be allowing seats out the front onto sheep street.
Invest more money in local leisure facilities
Town ctr DOES need "policing" in some way shape or form. I live opposite Sainsbury and although I don't often go out at night I do hear the effects of those who do. It's very apparent that antisocial behaviour exists.
Personally think that Sainsbury's area outside of Crown walk needs to be tidied up and a drinking ban placed on there I know it's mostly the youths doing this but I have seen grown men with a case of beer standing there drinking it doesn't give a good insight to the town. I have also noticed lately that the playing fields are being used for under age drinking
With the recent proposition to reduce street lighting, I believe anti-social behaviour and risks to the public through acts of the few will only increase. Currently I live behind Sheep Street with the only access to my home being through a non-lit alleyway besides a busy pub, or down Victoria Road, which is poorly lit at best. Under these proposals, the routes for me to safely get home at night are diminished so any support the PSPOs can provide in dissuading these behaviours will help to make the community at large feel safer and build a better town for us all.
I regularly see street drinkers sitting outside the Vue Cinema and Sainsbury's on the benches. They always have open vessels of alcohol and are often acting drunk slurring speech and shouting at one another, they also have a dog with them that is very large and sometimes not on a lead which can be intimidating as if they are drunk how can they have proper control of the dog. They are mostly shouting and swearing and often approach people for cigarettes etc , I haven't been impacted directly but I know this is a priority for the Neighbourbood Team
I've not experienced any problems. I don't go into town much at night which may explain this. Aware of beggars but not aggressive as some can be.
I don't feel safe walking through bicester on my own any longer.
There seem to be an increase in youngsters involved in anti social behaviour especially Infront of the b&m and Sainsbury's area.
Bicester has been let down by cherwell it is not given any priority we need a better place for families tobe safe
I am not aware there is an anti social behaviour problem I'm Bicester, but maybe the Police have data to say there is.

If removal of the PSPO prevents Police from taking action to stop anti social behavior, then the PSPO should be retained.
It's only a temporary solution. It just pushes the asb back into the fringes of the estates.
Whilst I haven't been directly affected, these issues do of course happen within the town, as with any other town. I feel the need for prohibiting still exists.
Outside Domino's Pizza Buckingham Crescent, Bicester, grey haired man acting suspicious with his mobile filming kids drinking beer between 8am - 9am every school day
Ou public spaces should be kept as safe as possible, a lot of older people shop in the town centre and need to be protected from unacceptable behaviour.
No one is scared of anything in the town so all respect for anything has disappeared
I have a high regard for authority and this absolutely includes our valuable PCSO's. However, I have read unpleasant and derogatory statements on FB when it comes to the subject of PCSO's. Maybe try to raise the profile somehow? Perhaps have a stand on the market for a few weeks? Give people a better understanding of the parameters and good work that they do? As far as the PSPO goes, everything possible should be done to tackle anti-social behaviour in the town. This unwanted and unwarranted behaviour is especially prevalent around Sainsbury's in the evenings.
I think it needs to be kept to keep the town safe
Stop the weed smoking would be appreciated. It's illegal, but openly smoked by may in the town
Kids cycling very fast through sheep street and almost knocking people diwn
Should parents be involved with this to let them know of their children's behaviour
More CCTV cameras,police in town centre
Although it hasn't affected me yet, I believe we need the protection order to help stop any anti social acts happening. People should feel safe walking about the town, no matter what time of day or night. I work in the town and walk up through North Street daily.
It's been reassuring to see more officers on the beat as this is by far the biggest deterrent.
Drunk people are always in town centre. I don't even want to go there anymore.
the fact that I have not been impacted suggests that the order is working, and should therefore be extended. However, the order should also consider the behaviour of youths in the area of the cinema, where there are regular reports of issues (including theft of cycles)
Please keep order in place
Many of the offences are being carried out by 10-17 year olds which may need to be managed in a different way.
Have felt uncomfortable when visiting town centre on a few occasions. By witnessing drunk and disorderly behaviours / group of teenagers causing a problem and overall the atmosphere has declined in the 27yrs i have lived here.
Please keep up the good work
There is always vandalisme affecting the two lifts from the car Park in PioneerSquare. Thé lifts are dirty with graffiti and frequently out of action. If there is no public protection order this will only get worse.
Should also be a mention of anti social car parking
During the evening, Sheep Street and the areas around Sainsbury's supermarket can feel an insecure place to walk. You often see groups of young people drinking and using bad language in the street. There are also some men hanging around that make you feel uncomfortable. It would feel a safer town to visit if there was a visible police/security presence constantly patrolling on foot in these areas.
Please will it in place For our safety
It is essential to stay on top of the issue. Frequently beggars frequent the ATM areas in town.
Seems to be working. Keep it up.

PSPO seems effective and provide police with the necessary powers to quickly stop any anit social behaviour
It would be nice to walk up the street with dodging bicycles
I think it has made an impact by giving police the tool of the PSPO and would like to see it renewed
There are several shops in Sheep St that need to be investigated by Police. There are at least 2 barber shops that appear to be fronts for money laundering.
Cycling in sheep street and electric scooters being driven on the road. I see this several times a week
Bicester used to be a really safe place to live and to socialise. However I don't feel safe going into town in the evenings now. There are groups of young people with some adults mixed in who still hang around Sainsbury/ Cinema area. In the passageway between Sainsbury and the Cinema there are numerous cars parked and moving around in that supposed pedestrian area. Someone said they were food delivery drivers!!!! There is also a major issue with cars parking on double yellow lines outside Shakills at the top end of Bicester. Which is dangerous for drivers and pedestrians alike. Why are large numbers of cars allowed to park here.???
There are still a core of teenagers causing trouble around Sainsbury's which needs to continue to be monitored especially with regarding to cycling with no regard for pedestrians
Seeing people drinking ,smoking weed & bad behaviour & leaving litter about outside my business is not good for my clientele or good for the business . I will not approach due to abuse and to protect my business and others around me .
It is sad that a few people causing a nuisance spoil it for everyone else.
Some teenage kids are so unruly they pass my house before & after school they are so ride & abusive and try to be scary swearing etc
As a woman aged 63 yrs I do not feel safe walking in the town at night . Even during the day you have youngsters/ teenagers with antisocial behaviour out side Sainsbury's . I have even seen teenagers being rude and aggressive in shops . I have been asked to get alcohol or cigarettes on more than one occasion , when I have refused they use offensive language and jeered me and called me names that I won't repeat when I came out of shop . Bicester used to be a lovely place 20 years ago , not anymore . Young people (not all) appear not to have respect for others or the community they live . Due to recent events with 3 people sadly loosing their lives have I seen the spirit of Bicester that once was . …….
I'd like to see a larger police presence in town 24/7. This would deter potential problems in town. I would also like to see this in surrounding areas of the town. One more point..secure the parks, playing fields, and green spaces to deter the travelling communities.
Please keep the protection orders in place. We should feel safe in our home town.
enlarge the area covered
Rodong bikes and electric scooters should be banned from sheep st. Sign by the lamb Inn says pedestrian zone and so it should be. Adults, old folk and young children walk this area and should be SAFE.
Rowdy teens and drinkers from the cheap pubs are a co ringing problem!!
I think they're important even though I've not witnessed any probably because I'm not out and about as much.
other than the occasional attendance of PCSO's would be good to see Police officers actively patrol the town on foot/bike and speak to people.
Aggressive dogs not under control. Should be a requirement that dogs are on a short leash in public never off the leash.
No cycling / scooters in the pedestrian areas should be rigorously enforced
I have seen the occasional beggar. No-one has ever been aggressive. Most are completely silent. Because I am nearly 82, I am usually only in town between the hours of 10:30am - 4pm, so I am not around when people are drinking. Perhaps I am just fortunate, but in the 16 years I have lived here, I have always felt very safe in Bicester.
I've seen people begging - not many and not aggressively. I do not think it enhances the atmosphere of the town if people are drinking and noisy on the streets. Sadly I think the fact that there is an order in place helps to prevent unruly behaviour.

I think there should be more police patrols on the road and in the streets because we see a lot of road pirates and young people who do not respect people or things
Clamp down on graffiti. Don't let the town centre become a ghost town Don't allow the closure of London Road by Network Rail
I would like to see more police presence in the town.
You need to renew it and improve there is still a lot of anti social behaviour in this area on a daily basis
I actively avoid the town centre mostly due to the lack of cleanliness on public stairways. I would not visit outside of working hours. I have seen non aggressive begging which makes me feel uncomfortable.
Its important that a police presence is visible to deter anti social behaviour
Bicester town has gone down hill especially outside Sainsbury's
Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) can be effective for addressing specific local issues, but they must be balanced to avoid disproportionately restricting individual freedoms. Clear communication, community engagement, and regular reviews are essential to ensure fairness and effectiveness.
Since this went into place, it's become less issues in the area, even when they are all heading home from the town centre
It can be really uncomfortable being in town alone re the behaviours of people especially groups who have absolutely no respect for anybody causes many people fearful
Keep up the good work!
Teenagers gathered at the green bridge near Garth park in the evening and mid night, littering and distributed pedestrians.
Could probably increase the area to be covered. Cycling e scooters should still be banned from the paved area of Sheep Street.
Begging and drinking observed but nothing 'aggressive'. But I am probably not in town at times when such behaviour is more likely. Good if it stays that way. Thank you.
Continue with this scheme to avoid anti social behaviour
Above Sainsbury's supermarket people have been known to throw things over which is dangerous to the public below.
I believe that begging should be banned completely, whether aggressive or not. some beggars are obviously dumped in the street by some organization which should be banned. Cycling in Sheep street is currently not legal but Police turn a blind Eye, similarly scooters are not legal. I have nearly been taken out on several occasions by bikes and scooters. Mobility scooters drive too fast and are dangerous, they should be limited to slow walking pace.
It's all good and well doing this in the town centre but it just pushes it to the surrounding areas. Especially green spaces and play park
More patrol in determining areas
Should include shoplifting in the antisocial behaviour ,as definitely increased the past year .
I think its in the interest of everyones safety PSPO been actioned
Stop the youngsters behaving like idots thinking they run the town
PSPO is working well in my opinion and think it should continue or things may worsen again
it always seems to be the same group of people hanging around. Drinking and smoking outside b and m, sainsburys. Massive xl bully going for you tops it off
School children riding bikes through town at speed Never any police around Very dangerous particularly to older residents

There were issues several years ago but I believe that the PSPO has been very effective in removing these issues. Bicester town is a pleasant, peaceful and orderly town centre nowadays - long may this continue. Keep up the good work.
Regardless of my own experience, I think it would be expedient to have this protection, you never know what is around the corner.
Keep doing what you're doing- seems to be working well
I live outside the designated area.
Stop cycling and scooters in the pedestrian areas. THAT is anti-social.
The PSPO should be more rigorously enforced. Lifting the order will allow antisocial behaviour to flourish again.
If the PSPO is lifted I will probably avoid the town centre particularly once schools are out as I did not feel safe before when there was a lot of teenagers hanging about causing a nuisance.
There is over spill from the area highlighted on the map, particularly after hours, post 11pm.
The longer the order is in place, will hopefully encourage people to be civil knowing they can be asked to leave.
It should be extended to Bure Park and surroundings
Just that it should continue I have young children and I want them to feel safe walking around the town
Groups of youths gathering on the benches outside Sainsbury's late afternoon/early evening is very intimidating
Cut down on e-bike/scooters and anti-social cycling on roads, paths and pedestrian crossing
Vulnerable people need protection There are fewer and fewer coming in to town centre as it is.
Feel much safer, when you have anti social measures in town. As I have gotten older its frightening to see groups of youth's congregating in the town, especially when they are throwing things and using vile language as you go past
I would like the included area to be increased as the car park behind Manorsfield road has become a gathering area for drinking and drug taking and leaving their mess behind. Also the top of Chapel Street where the brook becomes the dumping ground for empty cans, bottles and food containers. It does generally seem quieter in many places although there is still some drinking taking place outside the shop next to coop funeralcare where people gather - much less frequently now though than before. We also still have quite a number of E scooters on the roads and it bugs me when they go the wrong way up roads (like the causeway) and give no thought to anyone.
Town is grim, broken, dirty Please don't waste money on.marlet Square without the back up of continue funds to maintain
Bicester needs more policing in every aspect
Is there scope for this to be extended to other areas of Bicester, eg Kingsmere? There has been a rise in anti-social behavior over the last few years in Kingsmere. There was a stabbing recently outside/near Puregym. I personally have had to report anti-social behavior to the police on several occasions (children being disruptive, causing damage to property, being aggressive when challenge donnsuch behavior, climbing building work scaffolding). I've also seen instances of shoplifting in the Boots and Nike stores. Could there also be an increased police presence in the area (e.g. regular patrols) to help the community feel safer and to dissuade anti-social behavior?
No more travellers
Higher visibility required
I think more attention needs to be paid to Glory Farm, especially near Tesco. The block of flats nearby is becoming a hotspot for drug use.
Could all parks have one from 10pm-7pm??
This should cover teenagers in the multi story carpark. The delivery drivers driving up snd down the pedestrian areas outside sainsburys who shout and peep at pedestrians. The people hanging around outside sainsburys.
Although I have personally not been negatively affected I believe PSPO need to exist for those who are more vulnerable in our society and for the safety of teenagers who may be independent in the area.

What we could could do with is well trained police constables , not pcsos or private security, but well police constables. Build up relationships with the pubs and other shops on the high street. Having so many empty shops on the high street gradually look more and more to dilapidated is not helping matters either
Mainly sainsbury car park felt threat
It apparently to be working so leave in place
Please make Sheep Street / Pioneer Square, Crown Walk a pedestrian only zone. Sadly, but inevitably there will be a very serious accident involving an e-bike, cycle, skateboard Get some consistent and visible police presence day and night please These areas are threatening and unsafe
good to continue to sustain a safe environment for all people at town centre
The pspo is working, so please may it continue.
More frequent patrol
Stop the cyclists cycling at speed down Sheep Street and enforce the no cycling rule on Fridays.
Anti social behaviour, specially by youths around Sainsbury's and Sheep Street is very common. There should be more police in regular foot patrols in city centre.
I think the order is good as it helps keep the town safe
It is intimidating and does not feel. Safe at times to walk through Bicester Town centre, Garth Park, and Pioneer Square area.
I literally work in the town 40 hours a week, your staff just walk by the people doing it and don't enforce the order. Absolute waste of time.
Antisocial behaviour causes families to stay away from Bicester…. We need secure surroundings that they feel safe in and not scared
I can only presume that I haven't witnessed any antisocial behaviour in Bicester due to the success of the current PSPO, so I'm very happy to support an extension
Given the size of Bicester anything that can be put in place that will reduce / deter Anti social behaviour should be in place.
Please continue with the order
I think it is important to ensure Bicester is a safe and enjoyable place therefore I agree with the PSPO
Whist I've not see the issues, being a pensioner I don't go into town in the evening when I'm sure a lot of the issues occur. I think the order should be retained otherwise the issues will no doubt return
This is important to continue, giving officers power to deal with any issues. Helps make us feel a little safer
Drug taking is very open around the town and green spaces. Teenagers also causing violence and antisocial behaviour including intimidation.
I have to frequent the town centre as many Bicester residents do. The antisocial behaviour has escalated year on year in its prevalence in the 28 years I have lived here. Just the other day I was exiting Sainsbury's and someone had set a bin on fire in the seated area. Completely inexcusable behaviour by the culprit(s). People who work in the town centre or simply visit, should not be subject to this behaviour and have to confront this in their place of work. I have previously been on the front lines walking the landings of HMPPS and I would not tolerate that behaviour there, so why should we be confronted with this within our home communities. Smashing bottles, revving cars with tyres screeching and now blatant arson all within 500 yards as the crowd flies of one another, on a weekly basis, is completely unacceptable from any standpoint. If that behaviour on a persistent basis makes someone my age not want to have to visit the town centre, then how can I expect the people of older generations or disabilities to take a trip there.
Verbally abusive cyclists. I have had two incidents where a cyclist brushed past me while cycling at speed through Sheep street.
Like a lot of people, I'm against bikes being allowed to be ridden Sheep Street. It terrifies me. I am 77 and not as mobile as I was following a knee replacement. It bad enough having to be extra careful when walking from one side to the

other to go to different shops but it's now 100 times worse. I don't come into town much one as I'm terrified of being knocked over!!
I wish it went through sheep street as that's where most of the anti social behaviour is
Bicester is growing and antisocial behaviour is on rise. We need more protection in town centre.
Youth in balaclavas on bikes in sheep street is distressing.
I've stopped going into town after 1800 really do not feel comfortable walking round with sone of the characters that seem to be loitering around!
It has definitely felt safer since the order came into place. No large groups being intimidating and no reported threats to shopkeepers etc. I want to feel my daughters are safe and feel safe and this order does this.
It's clearly working so please keep in place
Bicester town centre is not safe with anti social behaviour, drinking and theft from stores. Needs police visibility and deterent . In addition, the council needs to invest to improve the centre and reduce council tax on stores to bring in shops and increase footfall.
The groups of Somali or Philippine people should not be allowed to gather on sheep street. They are intimidating to females as you walk past them and it's very uncomfortable. They should be split up. Sheep street is looking disgraceful. I've lived here all my life and it's embarrassing!
Putting the order in place is a good idea but this should involve increased police patrols too
Doesn't feel safe. The seats outside sainsburys are a huge hot-spot for anti social behaviour.
Keep the restrictions in place. Certain areas of parks are seen as pockets of anti social behaviour
We will not allow our 'well behaved' 12 year old daughter into town with her friends due to the anti social behaviours from others. To be honest when she is with me and there have been gangs of ferel kids hanging around, smoking, drinking, being loud, being intimidating and swearing, she gets very frightened. So you can imagine she will not visit town on her own, which in turn restricts her development and social interaction with her peers. I moved here in 1995, and although towns grow...Bicester has become unruly and unmanageable. Any intervention to prevent the anti social aspect would be welcomed and applauded. However, I feel the town has lost it's appeal. The police hands are tied with limitations. Ultimately, we would just love our town back!!!!
I think it should remain in place as sometimes it can feel very intimidating walking through large crowds of teenagers in the centre by sainsburys and also at the subway in manorsfield rd.all over bicester antisocial behavior seems rampant. We have a right to feel safe in our town and home.
I feel that patrols should be extended to other parks, there are a lot of drinking, drug dealing / taking and boisterous behaviours in Spider Park, Manston Park and Bure Park.
I have not experienced anything personally but have friends that have been affected.
Without continuing protection the town centre will become somewhere where members of the public will not feel safe and continue the demise of the centre.
It seems to have calmed the incidents in the town centre, so would be good to continue
Most of the problems are caused by young teens. There must be something that can be done - it's getting out of hands!
Lots of drunks, lots of fights late at night shop lifting worst it's been in 50 years
I haven't experienced negativity but I know it is there. I don't regularly go out in town in the evening.
People don't feel safe anymore
escooters - a nightmare scenerio. Several times I have almost been knocked over. At least TVP should have one of their members in Sheep Street at times.
Population of Bicester doubled within last few years. There's plenty of antisocial behaviours. And it's messy. People vomiting in the streets. Nothing ever gets washed.

Cyclist should not be allowed to cycle up the main street at sheep Street and where all the restaurants are in sheep Street there are double yellow lines why are council and police not enforcing it by moving them vehicles on and issuing tickets as families walk up across that road
Total waste of time, the law should apply equally in ALL areas.
A more obvious presence of crime-prevention needs to be in place. Either uniforms on the street or advanced CCTV systems that would help deter anti social behaviour.
I don't feel safe being in Bicester town after night fall any more and when schools are out there is definitely an increase in anti social behavour
As a business owner I'm always disappointed by the fact that the top end of Sheep Street approaching North Street gets forgotten with regard to anything, as if it isn't part of the same town. I would like all protections to be active throughout the town actively. Not just on focused areas despite the map suggesting differently.
Keep things as they are
Cycling down Sheep Street needs to go back to being banned and actually enforced. It is dangerous. Far too many cyclists and e-scooter users don't pay any attention to who is around them or have any respect, they will just go where they want and everyone else has to get out of the way. There are many elderly and disabled in Bicester who could be severely injured if they are knocked over by careless cyclists/e-scooter users. Their use is anti-social and causes alarm and distress as well as being dangerous.
It needs to keep going to make us Bicester residents feel safe
The PSPO is required here end of
I have become very aware of different ethnic minorities hanging around in town in groups and singly which as a women makes me very uncomfortable at night staring at you this never used to be the case in my opinion
Be nice to see the illegal migrants banned from the town centre as they beg on the streets and intimidate people
Space outside Sainsbury's atill has multi group of people causing general disruption
May want to stop people riding bikes and scooters up sheep street before some OAP or child gets hurts. Plus stop people parking in and around the vuv and sainsburys front door. Again some body is going to get hurt
Yes sort out the dickheads! The behaviour should nit be allowed in the first instance by policing ... ha ha just doesn't happen does it!
These powers should already exist within policing legislation, and while the PSPO may make it easier to report, act and enforce, this should be combined with better/continued signposting to appropriate local services (eg for homelessness/support). Criminalising without first offering support is not how a community should work.
It feels safer with police presence in the town and the area.
More action should be taken by Police re illegal use of e-scooters, by confiscating them. Also I have seen people brazenly shoplifting knowing no action will be taken against them.
Please keep the PSPO Order or renew it as we do not need begging or drinking in Bicester... Especially not when Market Sq is redeveloped.
- We need a youth club: many youths hang around Sainsbury's etc littering - Drunks and druggies hang around on benches, few there's people that beg people. Littering aswell Too many people cycle around town speeding.
Should include drug taking and smoking cannabis
There are a lot of aggressive, disruptive youth, acting disorderly and targeting the public. There are a lot of heavy drinkers and drug users being openly abusive.
As a woman I feel intimidated by groups of young men hanging around in Bicester especially in the darker months.

Stop the bikes and electric scooter thingsbin sheep street and stop the electric scooters bombing around tge roads in the area. One on a regular basis on the Rodney house roundabout just darting in between cars very quickly. Stop the layabouts hanging around outside Sainsbury's.
It may be most prudent to prohibit groups of youths from congregating near town centres, convenience stores, park or cash machines after 7pm, so as to preserve a sense of public order and reassurance.
Also seen occasional aggressive attempts to sell (possibly illicit) products (phones, etc), and apparent close observation of people going into \ out of banks, and using cash machines. Also seen a few empty alcohol bottles (and some of these new alcohol things that look like hospital blood transfusion bags), a number of pub glasses, loads of small gas containers and the occasional seringe laying around in and around town centre.
If places were restored (like the Tollgate Seats) and didn't look such a mess, then I don't think people would be inclined to linger and litter these areas.
Nobody seems to be doing anything
Let's keep up the good work
It is intimidating and can be frightening when walking from the bus stops at night and then along Sheep Street.
Town feels very unsafe to be in day and night time.
Drinking and shouting in sheep street. Feel unsafe walking to car parks in the area at night because of this, hence I don't go out for an evening in Bicester anymore. Pick pocketing has also increased - a number of friends have had purse or phones stolen from bags or pockets in sheep street / market square.
I think it is important, I was approached by a drunk man whilst waiting at the bus stop and I felt intimidated and unsafe. I am female and petite, this man kept trying to engage me in conversation when I clearly did not want his attention.
Area outside of sainsburys / b&m always has drinking and groups of intimidating people hanging out, it puts me off going into town all together. With Sainsburys car park being most convenient its the first thing you see and it pretty much blocks me from going further as dont feel comfortable going past them
Multiple occasions people I know have been verbally and physically attacked on nights out in Bicester.
The area around Sainsbury's is intimidating.
I'm not sure what the PSPO entails, but the town is dirty, unpleasant and full of drunks.
With regards to young people hanging around, there are very few places in Bicester for them to hang out. The town needs more youth clubs, activities and spaces to be teenagers. With nine if this, ganging out and getting in to mischief in the town centre is inevitable. The area outside Sainsburys is esoecually atteactive fir begging, drunks and hanging out.
Stop the cyclists, those I have seen are arrogant thinking they have right of way over pedestrians.
I've seen occasional begging, but I wouldn't call it aggressive. The same for drinking in the street. I am rarely in the town centre after nightfall. The existing PSPO seems to be working so it looks like there is a good case for it to be extended.
I had an incident where someone brought a pitbull for a walk there and I, having a kid with me, tried to avoid the dog. The lady noticed and shouted "there is nothing wrong with the dog, geez" the dog didnt have muzzle on. Then a group of guys saw the incident and started barking at me. This happened in the alley in front of sainsbury on the way to costa. Im asian
there are men drinking alcohol on the bench outside Pheonix Vapers LTD almost every day
People stealing from shops almost on a weekly basis, people sitting outside phoenix and the butchers drinking alcohol and being aggressive. Kids bunching up trying to buy vapes and asking members of the public to buy it for them when stores refuse.
Council need to do more and listen to the people

We need to keep this in place although still happening throughout the day. Especially aggressive begging makes you feel vulnerable as an elderly person .
Town often feels unsafe and areas around town
Money would be better spent on more community safety officers and pcso's
I am a woman and scared to go out in Bicester alone. There are a lot of teens who act in a threatening way - last summer my husband and I were walking home from town around midday and a group of teens started swearing at us and threatened to beat us up. Garth park is just a place for teens to smoke weed - I would not take my children there. There are lots of people who just hang around the town drinking - I would never go there at night.
We need to keep the streets as safe as possible, We still get a number of teenagers who feel it's ok to try and look intimidating, drinking and hanging around , the car park at Sainsbury's seems to be a hanging outplacement for young people with cars
In terms of other forms of ASB, I would like CDC and TVP to continue to purse illegal use of e-scooters ridden across the town.
Groups of men of differing nationalities hanging around streets, riding bikes in pedestrian areas, all very intimidating during day or evening
The more powers to tackle ASB the better.
Where can people without a place to stay be during the day, PSPO only works if the right support is given across all agencies.
This is an essential requirement to ensure families and residents of Bicester continue to use the town centre. There has been a significant rise in antisocial behaviour over the past few years and this should not become the norm for what is a beautiful old market town. Zero tolerance results in the a safe and successful community.
This needs to be renewed and also the police should enforce this more
We need to see a police presence on the Southwold estate, to address the number of people who are regularly dealing and smoking dubious substances in the more heavily wooded areas close to the main park.
From what I can gather. These beggars are not homeless but organised gangs
Whilst I have witness very little personally this is because I avoid Bicester town centre after 5pm because of the known issues and therefore fear for my safety. Businesses must be losing trade because of this.
The excess of graffiti and damage to public spaces brings the character of our town into disrepute. More pressure needs to be applied to Sainsburys and the car park owners to tackle the vile state of the stairwells. More police visibility in to challenge the intimidating behaviour by a significant minority of teens in these spaces.
I have felt intimidated at times walking around town. With gangs of youths hanging around shop entrances and the seats outside sainsbury's and crown walk. They are drinking and taking drugs. Abusive to passers-by. Throwing things of sainsbury's car park roof just avoiding hitting the general public. I witnessed a bottle just missing a push chair. I helped a young woman walk out of sainsbury's as she felt intimidated by a gang.
Issues with ASB, linked to young people hanging arround the town centre. Largely unmanaged and at times their behaviour can be threatening.
Just keep them in place
Garth park needs be seriously addressed. I live VERY close to Garth to the point the smell of weed can be smelt in my garden. The drinking and late night anti social behaviour in the summer is out of hand and needs dealing with. The last thing is the music, users at the skate parks with speakers so powerful bass is heard in our home. All of the above need some serious intervention from the local authorities.

I think bicester needs its town centre patrolling in the evening. Cyclists need to observe the no cycling sign in sheep street on a Friday. Bins need putting in Hudson street open field.
Aggressive drivers in 'pop-bang' cars showing-off in Market Square needs to be tamed.
I live just outside Bicester so use Bicester. I want to feel safe when visiting for shopping, banking etc. Bicester is a great little town we need to keep it that way.
I think that the order should stay in place to protect the people working early mornings in the town centre
Should be extended
Life in Bicester became a nightmare.
Business such as tree cutting or roof replacements have been quite constantly harassing some including myself on our street and have been rude when they were told no
There seems to be lots of teenagers grouping in the town centre. However I feel there is nothing for them to do. The courtyard used to be open in the evenings.
I feel they should be renewed
Not sure if it falls under this regulation, but littering and cycling through sheep be needs to be monitored.
CDC needs to look at the local business (barbers, cake shop) as may youth hang about I there displaying suspicious behaviour. In and out via back or side entrances, meeting cars, sitting around without purchasing or using their services. Drug dealing
I do not feel safe walking through the town centre even in daytime. I certainly wouldn't do so at night. It has become a very uncomfortable place to be with too many undesirable people hanging around.
The PSPO should be kept in place so that it continues to make Bicester feel a safe place to live and visit
Bicester is rapidly growing. So on this basis alone our town especially the centre needs protecting. My husband and his friend were seriously assaulted just over a month ago by teenagers. Sadly Bicester town centre does have a problem with unruly youngsters and drugs too. We as residents should be able to walk through our town with feeling unsafe.
From time to time young people hangout on the steps of Sainsbury car park drinking alcohol and harassing individuals.
Disperse youths gathering. I've been involved in asbo behaviour on a legal level up in Manchester. Sadly I fear the teens are ruling the police
More visible police presence would be good. Seems to be more youngsters looking for trouble sadly. Perhaps more cctv coverage and signs would be a detterant? Thanks to all police officers in our town.
Do not feel safe shopping in town due to behaviour of youths the disgraceful language from them roudy vandalism risk of items being chucked at you them drinking alcohol near Sainsbury's or subway where they have either stolen it from b&m or been served it in the convenience store near subway and newest bank they are always selling teenagers alcohol cigarettes vapes and also been seen selling them narcotics Drunks from the penny black and white heart also make you uncomfortable the begging con group is also a problem feel very vulnerable and unsafe
It could be extended to include bridge from Manorsfield Road to Hunt Close and the green behind houses in Hunt Close to possibly deter tents in the future.
Drinking and smoking weed is a big problem in the town centre
We need it

This report is public	
Local Nature Recovery Strategy	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	7 October 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities, Councillor Tom Beckett Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management, Councillor Jean Conway
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	24 September 2025
Report of	Corporate Director Communities, Ian Boll

Purpose of report

To endorse the publication of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To endorse the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy and approves its publication by Oxfordshire County Council.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 This report presents the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for consideration (Appendix 2). It outlines the purpose, scope and content of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

2.2 The Environment Act 2021 establishes the requirement on Local Authorities to publish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Oxfordshire County Council is the Responsible Authority for Oxfordshire and has the duty to prepare the LNRS. Each of the District Councils, the City Council and Natural England are Supporting Authorities who play a key role in shaping the LNRS throughout its preparation.

2.3 LNRS's are a new system of spatial strategies for nature recovery. The main purpose of the LNRS is to identify locations where the creation and/or enhancement of certain habitats would provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment, including reconnecting habitats as part of an ecological network. Landowners and managers will not be required to implement any of these measures. However, the LNRS encourages the delivery of targeted actions for nature recovery as opportunities for funding and investment arise. The LNRS itself is not a constraint in Planning and does not preclude or prevent any other type of land use or development.

2.4 The LNRS comprises four key documents/components:

1. Description of the Strategy Area;
2. Statement of Biodiversity Priorities;
3. Species Priority List; Local Habitat Map; and
4. An online public and interactive map tool.

2.5 The draft LNRS was subject to public consultation from October to December 2024 and, in response to feedback and comments, the Strategy was adjusted accordingly.

2.6 The final LNRS documents and map have now been shared with this Council as a so that they can be taken through the formal democratic process for the endorsement of the publication of the LNRS.

2.7 The Supporting Authorities are required under The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (procedure) 2023 to confirm that they "raise no objection" to the Responsible authority publishing the LNRS. However, Oxfordshire County Council is asking supporting authorities to go further in their intention and 'endorse' the LNRS for publication.

2.8 Once published, the LNRS is intended to be used across a wide audience within Oxfordshire including the public, community groups, charities, NGOs and Councils.

2.9 The Environment Act places a duty on Local Authorities to have regard to the LNRS in exercising their functions and Supporting Authorities will be key users of the Strategy. It is intended that Local Plans will refer to the LNRS as a guiding document and for it to be used to inform decisions within Planning and direct any Council efforts for nature recovery. This will help the Council deliver other organisational objectives and duties more effectively such as biodiversity net gain and the Biodiversity Duty but will not otherwise have direct implications for the Council's processes and operations.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	The costs of producing the LNRS are being met from 'new burdens' funding from DEFRA which is paid to Oxfordshire County Council as the Responsible Authority. Officers have been closely involved in supporting the development and production of the LNRS but other than this 'in-kind' commitment of staff time there are no costs to the council as a result of the production and consultation on the Oxfordshire LNRS. Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 28 August 2025
Legal	The production of an Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy is a requirement of the Environment Act 2021. The role of this Council as a supporting authority is set out in Section 11(2)(b) of

	Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023. Denzil Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 3 September 2025			
Risk Management	There are no risks arising from the proposed publication of the LNRS. Any risks arising in the future in relation with this proposal will be managed through the service risk register and escalated to the Leadership risk register as and when deemed necessary. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 17 September 2025			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact	X			Delivering the priorities set out within the Oxfordshire LNRS is intended to help mitigate and improve Oxfordshire's resilience to climate change, boost public health, and secure an improved, healthy and functioning environment. This will be of benefit to future generations within the whole community including people who share and do not share protected characteristics as set out by the Equality Act 2010.
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			Positive impact as above.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			Positive impact as above
Climate & Environmental Impact	X			The production and implementation of the actions in the Oxfordshire LNRS are integral to efforts to address both the climate and biodiversity crises. The restoration and creation of new habitats will act as a direct carbon sink as well as restoring important ecological processes, reducing climate vulnerability, and restoring nature.
ICT & Digital Impact		X		
Data Impact		X		

Procurement & subsidy		X		
Council Priorities	This report and the endorsement of the LNRS publication links to the Council's '…Vision for Lasting Change 2025-2030' Priority 3 – Environmental Stewardship, specifically according with 'to Safeguard the environment and promote biodiversity'.			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	A countywide steering group set up as a subgroup of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) has been formed and has been meeting monthly. Consultation has also occurred via workshops throughout Oxfordshire during March/April 2024 and an online survey to all residents of Oxfordshire. Public consultation of the draft LNRS was carried out for six weeks (18 Oct- 1 Dec), including over 50 engagement events.			

Supporting Information

3. Background

3.1 The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is a requirement of the Environment Act, which came into force in November 2022. At the end of March 2023 DEFRA published the local nature recovery strategy guidance document and the local nature recovery strategy Regulations.

3.2 Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a system of spatial strategies for nature and environment improvement and each strategy must:

- Agree priorities for nature's recovery
- Map the most valuable existing areas for nature
- Map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.

3.3 DEFRA appointed Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) as the responsible authority to lead the production of the LNRS for Oxfordshire. Cherwell District Council is one of the Supporting Authorities.

3.4 Supporting Authorities have an integral role in shaping the LNRS. There are two key statutory stages in the process of preparing the Oxfordshire LNRS where the supporting authorities must be consulted and approval sought. The first stage is prior to the draft LNRS going out to public consultation. The second stage is prior to the publication of the final draft.

3.5 The strategy sets out where and how people and organisations in Oxfordshire could best work together to create a more resilient ecological network within identified

priorities. The strategy also offers recommended actions to be taken in the wider countryside to improve the natural environment across the County.

4. Details

4.1 The Local Nature Recovery Strategy comprises four main documents / components, which are summarised below:

1. The **Description of Strategy Area** summarises Oxfordshire's biodiversity, habitats and areas of particular importance, as well as the river catchments and underlying geology. It also outlines the opportunities, pressures and a summary of what needs to be done for biodiversity.

2. The **Statement of Biodiversity Priorities** has a list of the most important outcomes (priorities) to achieve the recovery of nature in Oxfordshire and a list of actions (potential measures) to achieve these. There are 40 priorities and 85 potential measures, 40 of which have been mapped on the local habitat map.

3. The **Species Priorities List** is a list of species that require specific additional actions that goes beyond the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities. This includes 61 species-specific measures which targets 105 species. A number of species current and historical distribution maps across Oxfordshire are also displayed in this document and some distribution maps have been added onto the local habitat map. Over 800 threatened and near threatened species that are expected to benefit through large-scale habitat improvements listed in the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities.

4. The **Local Habitat Map** an interactive mapping tool which displays existing areas in Oxfordshire that are important for biodiversity as well as areas that could become particularly important for biodiversity. The biodiversity priorities are mapped and these show locations for specific habitat and species actions. The map promotes connectivity across the county and linking areas of particular importance for biodiversity.

4.2 The LNRS strategy has been in preparation since August 2023 and a series of early engagement events were held in 2024 for nature conservation groups, the general public, local authority officers and local councillors, to begin the prioritisation process.

4.3 The Council's Senior Ecologist has had input into the preparation of the LNRS via the Supporting Authorities working group, technical subgroups, an open invitation to the LNRS Steering group meetings and the public consultation response.

4.4 The purpose of the LNRS steering group, a subgroup of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership, is to manage the process of producing the LNRS and to ensure that all stakeholders, including Local Authorities, NGO's, local environmental groups and the public are fully engaged in helping to produce the LNRS.

4.5 The public consultation garnered more than 3500 responses with more than 50 engagement events held. This Council also submitted comments to the public consultation at Officer level.

4.6 Comments received within the consultation period have now been acted on where appropriate and responses to all comments can be found on the Oxfordshire County Council LNRS website. Responses to this Council's comments are provided at Appendix 1.

4.7 There will be presentational changes to the LNRS documents before publication. Separate guidance documents for using the LNRS are to be produced for different user groups, including Planning Officers for the delivery phase of the LNRS.

4.8 Oxfordshire County Council intends to publish the final LNRS on its website in the second week of November 2025. National guidance states that the Secretary of State will tell Responsible Authorities when they must review and republish their LNRS. This will be every 3-10 years.

4.9 The LNRS will assist the Council with the implementation of the statutory biodiversity duty placed on public bodies (Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 which was strengthened in the Environment Act 2021) by directing nature recovery actions.

4.10 The priorities and measures set out in the LNRS will be considered in plan-making and will support the National Planning Policy Framework requirement for plans to enhance the local and natural environment. The LNRS supersedes the draft Nature Recovery Network in this regard and proposed modifications to the Local Plan to reflect this are being drafted for consideration at its Examination.

4.11 Once published the LNRS will define 'Strategic Significance' in the Biodiversity metric for statutory Biodiversity Net Gain – encouraging net gain in the most appropriate places for the greatest biodiversity benefit. This will form part of the usual assessment process of net gain for planning applications.

4.12 The LNRS will be used as a focus for investment and funding into nature conservation projects in the County and will help meet the Councils strategic environmental sustainability objective.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

5.1 The following alternative option has been identified.

Option 1: Object to the publication of the LNRS and submit a PAN (publication advisory notice). Regulation 15 of the LNRS regulations provides that a Supporting Authority may submit a publication advisory notice to the Responsible Authority. It may do this if it considers that, either parts of a final local nature recovery strategy cannot be justified based on the results of the consultation undertaken or that the strategy is materially defective.

This option has been rejected because CDC Officers have been closely involved in all stages of the development, review and preparation of the LNRS and support the publication and endorsement of the LNRS.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 The Environment Act 2021 establishes the requirement on Local Authorities to publish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

6.2 Supporting Authorities are required to confirm in writing that they are content for the LNRS to be published within 28 days of the Responsible Authority providing them with the final draft of the LNRS. The council received the final draft of the LNRS on 22 July 2025 and the deadline for raising an objection or endorsing the LNRS is the 15 October 2025.

6.3 The Council's Senior Ecologist has been closely involved in the preparation and drafting of the LNRS, and there has been a series of public and stakeholder engagement events and a full public consultation. Consultation comments have now been acted on and the final draft LNRS documents have now been prepared based on the feedback from the public consultation and input from a wide variety of biodiversity experts as well as the Supporting Authorities. Officers are satisfied that the document is fit for publication and should be endorsed.

Decision Information

Key Decision	Yes - Community Impact. Decision is significant in its impacts on all wards in the area of the Council for a number of years and on communities in terms of environmental well-being.
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	CDC comments on the draft LNRS consultation and LNRS response
Appendix 2	Appendix 2a: Description of Strategy Area Appendix 2b: Statement of Biodiversity Priorities Appendix 2c: Species Priority List Appendix 2d: Local Habitat map- LNRS Final App

	Appendix 2e: Letter to Supporting Authorities
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	Local Nature Recovery Strategy Statutory Guidance, DEFRA March 2023 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1146160/Local_nature_recovery_strategy_statutory_guidance.pdf The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2023/341/made The Environment Act 2021 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents Oxfordshire County Councils LNRS pages including responses to public consultation Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) | Oxfordshire County Council
Report Author	Dr Charlotte Watkins Senior Ecologist
Report Author contact details	Charlotte.Watkins@cherwell-dc.gov.uk 01295 227912
Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	Corporate Director – Communities, Ian Boll 22 September 2025

Appendix 1: CDC comments on the draft LNRS consultation and LNRS response

Species Priorities List

This is a very comprehensive list of species which has been appropriately prioritised.
It could be helpful if the species list and actions clearly referenced the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, unless there are plans for the documents to be integrated in the future. The proposed actions for species on this list could be referenced within the proposed measures of the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities. Alternatively, the species lists actions could have the relevant codes for habitat actions referenced. In this way complementary species-specific actions could be nested within the broader proposed measures for habitats which would help stakeholders see what further actions they can take for species within their habitat proposals.

LNRS response: *Many thanks, nesting was discussed but found to be too challenging as some species require a range of particular habitats including multiple habitat types. However, we have improved the references to the various LNRS documents to enable people to see that the Species list is one of the LNRS documents and that there are others which require consideration.*

Statement of Biodiversity Priorities

We have no suggested additions or omissions from this list of Priorities.
The Biodiversity Priorities and the Potential measures swop between the use of tenses. Some are written as a vision e.g. 'there are more areas of scrub', and some as an action 'create or restore areas of lowland heath' which appears confused. Wording them all consistently as an action or goal to be achieved would make it clearer for the wide variety of groups who may refer to the Strategy.
Potential measures which are not mapped on the habitat map might benefit from inclusion of an additional column stating more generally the type of areas/habitats where these actions could be carried out and what land management systems it is compatible with. This is particularly relevant for creation of new habitat types.
Website links from the proposed measures column currently lead to a variety of information sources and organisations. We would seek assurance of the stability and verification of these links or whether the LNRS will look to reference its own sources of guidance in the future.

LNRS response: *Many thanks, the tenses and language in the priorities and measures was improved to enhance the consistency in this document. The non-mapped 'countywide' measures each fall under their appropriate habitat type in a table. At this point it was not felt to be appropriate to note down all the habitat types that could be converted through creation measures because the possible lists become very long and could further lengthen the documents. However this could be investigated in the deliver phase of the LNRS. Also during the delivery stage, the LNRS would undertake regular checking and updating of the links provided within the strategy.*

Description of strategy area

This is a very comprehensive and readable description of the Strategy Area.
This is however a lengthy document and its usability for those organisations who will refer to

the strategy could be aided by an opening set of overarching principles or aims within the executive summary or early in the document layout.
It would be helpful to have inclusion of information on how the LNRS will interact with Oxfordshire's current Conservation Target Areas. CTAs have a similar premise to the LNRS – areas where proposed measures can be taken for a specified goal – and it is important to make it clear to landowners, charities, Local Authorities and other organisations why these areas differ and how they relate to each other. In addition, mention could be made of the draft Nature Recovery Network mapping previously carried out within Oxfordshire and how this will be referred to once the LNRS is published.
An illustrative map of the strategy area within this document would help understanding of the LNRS's purpose.

LNRS response: *Many thanks, the length of the document was reduced by half with the more detailed sections about National Character Areas and the Rivers and their Catchments being separated into appendices for those who have particular interest in those sections. Additionally, overarching principles and a vision have been added. A page on the Conservation Target Areas and the draft Nature Recovery Network were also added, showing how the LNRS represents an evolution, building on these previous pieces of work. A page was added stating how this LNRS differs from previous strategies (the CTAs and the draft NRN). How they will interact with the LNRS is a question that we are asking of the CTA leads and friends and this is being actively discussed in local meetings. An illustration of the mapped strategy areas was added to the document to help visualise this.*

Anything else?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Firstly, we welcome this draft of the LNRS and commend the work and level of engagement that has gone into the production of both the draft documents and draft habitat map. Cherwell DC is a supporting authority for this project and has fully engaged with the development of the draft strategy particularly through the officer working group.

Our comments, which we hope you will find helpful, have been prepared at officer level in consultation with our relevant Portfolio holder. We look forward to the opportunity to address these points together as the LNRS is finalised. The draft map, with the ability to comment on and add specific action points during the consultation period is considered fit for this purpose. However, in its final form the areas mapped as hexagonal points without meaningful boundaries, could complicate reference to the LNRS for Planning Policy and Development Management. This is particularly regarding its role in biodiversity net gain assessments for 'strategic significance', encouraging biodiversity gain sites within the Strategy area and setting specific net gain requirements. The final map would benefit from having ecologically coherent and robust boundaries. For example, mapped areas to the boundary of fields or following landscape features - whilst making it clear that actions can be taken outside these areas. The Habitat map does not currently embrace the Conservation Target Area boundaries in their entirety. We would hope to see these included to support the nature recovery work within these areas to date and ongoing. Alternatively clear guidance should be included within the strategy about how these areas should be considered in tandem with the LNRS. In addition, whilst the majority of District Wildlife Sites (DWS) are covered within the mapped Strategy area, we consider the Oxfordshire Wildlife Site Project to include both LWS and DWS and would therefore support inclusion of all DWSs as areas of potential value for biodiversity, which recognise access and involvement of the community.

LNRS response: *Many thanks for the support and dedication to the LNRS shown by officers at Cherwell District Council. We truly appreciate the support and engagement you have shown throughout the preparation of this strategy, and we look forward to working closely with you during the delivery phase to create tangible evidence of nature recovery in Oxfordshire.*

The LNRSs were extended out so that the mapped 'areas that could become important for biodiversity' included as much of the CTA aeras that were suitable for mapping habitat actions (i.e. all the land but not all the private gardens in towns within the CTA areas).

Not all of the district wildlife sites have been mapped. This is due to the nature of prioritisation that the LNRS has been tasked to do. Not all of the areas requested by all authorities, local partners, or local people could be added otherwise the mapped locations would not represent a prioritised network of nature in Oxfordshire. However this should not be interpreted as ignorance of those areas, they are important space in Oxfordshire, as are many of the other places that were requested for addition by other parties. The LNRS does not intend to prevent work happening in those locations. Instead it is by nature of the prioritisation process that not all sites have been possible to include. However, please note that the LNRS will be required, in future to map out where actions have been taken to recover nature in Oxfordshire and these locations and places are expected to influence future mapping when the LNRS is reviewed and republished in 3-10 years time.

We understand that there are concerns that LNRSs do not typically map to field boundaries. However, the LNRSs are designed to map opportunities for nature recovery work and this includes working across boundaries. A number of LNRSs across England have used different types of fuzzy boundaries and ours has used hexagons. The purpose of this is to encourage neighbouring landowners to work together where possible and to encourage opportunities for landowners who are close to the network.

The ***main purpose*** *of the LNRS map is to represent spatially the locations where the creation and/or enhancement of certain habitats would provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment, including reconnecting habitats as part of the network. However, this does not mean that landowners and managers will be required to implement any of these measures. Instead, the Government is encouraging the delivery of targeted actions for nature recovery as opportunities for funding and investment arise. The LNRS itself does not preclude or prevent development or any other type of land use.*

The map offers high-level recommendations based on a range of the best and latest data available including soil data. However, to ensure the right habitat is created in the right place, all locations still ***need to be sense-checked in-person****, on the ground with the relevant professionals to ensure that your actions are suitable for the current conditions on the site i.e. soil tests, surveys of existing habitats or species, topography, hydrology, and any sites that have special designations or features that may require special consideration (e.g. heritage features). Land manager preference is also a factor, some sites may be best for one measure over another based on the current land-use or site assessments and some sites may be suitable for multiple, complementary measures that could be delivered within the same location.*

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Statement of Biodiversity Priorities

Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Draft version 06 September 2024



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Statement of Biodiversity Priorities.

Oxfordshire. Final version, October 2025.

Introduction

'Biodiversity' is a term that refers to the variety of all life forms or 'species' including plants, animals, fungi, and micro-organisms. A stable and healthy variety of species provides a wide range of benefits that enable people to survive, from fresh water, clean air, and climate regulation to food, medicines, mental and physical wellbeing and more. These benefits do not typically come from individual species but from a rich variety of species working together and interacting with each other in their natural habitats (ecosystems).

What is the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities?

In 2023, authorities across England were asked by Government to start developing Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) to publish in 2025. This was a requirement from the Environment Act 2021. The Act also explained that the written statement of biodiversity priorities must include:

- a description of the strategy area and its biodiversity (which can be found as one of our key LNRS documents called the 'Description of Strategy Area')
- a description of the opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity in the strategy area
- the priorities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity (found within this document, taking into account the contribution that this can also make to other environmental benefits)
- proposals for potential measures relating to those priorities (found within this document. The potential measures which are specific to particular species can be found on the LNRS 'Species Priorities List').

This Statement of Biodiversity Priorities sets out priorities for biodiversity that are of great importance to achieve locally and indicates which wider benefits could be achieved (See Appendix A). The 'priorities' are the outcomes that collectively, would result in the recovery of nature across Oxfordshire. Each priority, listed below, has a set of 'potential measures' with them which are the actions that need to be taken to achieve the priority outcome.

The types of actions which could be included as LNRS 'potential measures' are:

- Actions to create, improve, or restore habitats (expanding and/or enhancing habitat or changing management practices to better support biodiversity)
- Actions needed to benefit specific local species*

Actions to connect up habitat areas to improve the resilience of nature and enable species to move through the landscape

* Local species in this document means those that are already present in (or near) an area, and those that could become local or present in or near that area (considering those species that may migrate or move, and species that may be translocated or introduced to suitable habitats).

Is every potential measure mapped onto the Local Habitat Map?

Not all the measures have a specific location mapped for their delivery. The table below indicates whether a 'potential measure' (an action) could be undertaken "countywide" or whether the measure is "mapped" to specific locations. If a measure is labelled "mapped", then this means that specific areas have been identified on the LNRS Local Habitat Map as priority locations to deliver the measure. These locations are prioritised because they are expected to provide the greatest benefits for biodiversity and help to focus delivery in a way that would create a more resilient, connected network of nature in Oxfordshire. Typically, the mapping helps to expand existing areas that are important for biodiversity, buffer areas, and join up existing areas of importance to biodiversity. Whilst some measures are mapped to such locations, the measures could also be delivered in other suitable locations within the county. The measures do not have to be restricted to the mapped locations since actions outside of the mapped areas would still support the recovery of nature, just perhaps not to the same extent as the mapped network. Although care has been taken to map actions which are expected to be suitable for the soil type and location, all sites must still be assessed on-the-ground to ensure that the site is suitable for the proposed actions, including compliance with regulations such as those related to heritage.

At present, it has been feasible to map prioritised locations for about half of the listed measures. Some are not mapped and this is usually because they could be delivered, to great benefit, in many different locations across the county, or because we do not currently have sufficient data to map them. This does not mean they are of less importance than mapped measures. These unmapped, countywide measures should also be supported and delivered in suitable locations.

How to navigate this document?

On the next page, you will see the table which contains 40 biodiversity 'priorities' and 85 'potential measures'. The measures are actions that could be taken to achieve their relevant priorities. The priorities are grouped into sections, mostly by habitat type e.g. 'Grasslands (including scrub) and road verges'. Each priority and each potential measure also has an identification code which increases in numerical order (e.g. 'PM01', 'PM02' and so on) so that you can more easily look up codes for measures shown on the Local Habitat Map to find further information. Links are included throughout this document to help readers find useful guidance on how to create or improve habitats but you can search for alternative guides, for example here and we recommend you seek expert advice before planning a nature recovery project.

A note on climate change

At the time of writing, the below actions were expected to be the most suitable ways to support the recovery of these habitats. However, there are expected changes to climate patterns with warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers predicted, as well as increasing extremes in weather events and storms, although the exact nature of the changing patterns may be unpredictable. The LNRS recommends that the actions

listed below should be adapted, if necessary, based on the latest understanding of climate change in order to best support the recovery of these habitats in Oxfordshire.

How was this list made?

This ‘Statement of Biodiversity Priorities’ was produced by first collecting the actions and priorities from local people and organisations, grouping them into themes e.g. ‘create meadows’, ‘improve river condition’, and filtering out those which didn’t relate to habitat creation or enhancement. These were then refined into the priorities and measures by local experts from a range of organisations. For more information on the process, Appendix D, and the Oxfordshire County Council’s LNRS website.

The next pages list the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities and the potential measures in a table.

Statement of Biodiversity Priorities

#	**Priority** **In bold you will find the priority. A priority is a key outcome to achieve for Oxfordshire.** Underneath the priority, you will see some wider benefits which could be delivered by achieving each priority.	# **The code of each measure (and whether they are mapped)**	**Potential Measure (PM)** **In bold you will find the potential measure (action) that, if taken, would be expected to contribute towards achieving the priority (left).** Underneath the potential measure you will find further information.
Existing areas of particular importance for biodiversity (APIBs) You can see these areas identified on the LNRS Local Habitat Map [LINK].			
1	**Enhance the ecological condition of Oxfordshire's existing designated sites and irreplaceable habitats. Aim to achieve good ecological condition.** Wider benefits: Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Water supply, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Carbon storage, Air quality regulation, Cooling and shading, Noise reduction, Pollination, Pest control.	PM01 (mapped)	**Enhance and maintain existing areas that are particularly important for biodiversity in Oxfordshire.** Enhance (and maintain in good condition) the sites in Oxfordshire that are designated for biodiversity or considered to be irreplaceable. Also look for ways to enhance/maintain the land that buffers these sites. For Oxfordshire, this includes designated sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), National Nature Reserves (NNR), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), and Oxfordshire's irreplaceable habitats including ancient and veteran trees, ancient woodland, and lowland fens. The 'sites' are mapped for their importance to biodiversity either as designated, locally important, or irreplaceable habitats. Within the sites themselves, aim to enhance the area to either achieve, or maintain a good ecological condition and benefit local species. It is important for SACs and SSSIs that advice is sought from Natural England regarding appropriate management. For Local Wildlife Sites, advice may be available from the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust. Contact the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre for more detail about the importance of a particular site within the APIBs, including citations for designated sites which identify the habitats and species for which the site is important.

			On the land around/adjacent to the existing sites, it would be important and beneficial to provide a suitable buffer area of appropriate, complementary habitat to benefit the site and the wildlife around it. Actions in the buffer area could aim to enhance any existing habitats, create new complementary habitat areas, or reduce disturbance or pollution in that area including reduced run off or chemical inputs. Ultimately, these actions should aim to benefit the ecological health of the neighbouring irreplaceable or designated site. Different sites will need different types/sizes of buffer habitat to offer the greatest benefits to wildlife in the area. Typically, it will be of benefit to create areas of low intervention land use in the land that buffers existing areas of importance for biodiversity, or to create mosaic habitat areas at these buffer edges that complement the adjacent site.
	Connectivity and boundaries		
P2	**Improve the connectivity of habitats and reduce fragmentation. Create and enhance habitats to create more areas of nature that are bigger, better, and more joined up.** Wider benefits: Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Erosion protection, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Carbon storage, Air quality regulation, Cooling and shading, Noise reduction Pollination, Pest control.	PM02 (countywide)	**Prioritise connectivity when creating and maintaining habitats to join up areas of nature and habitats more effectively** Strengthen and maintain ecological corridors, prioritise the creation of new habitats that can enable wildlife to move, feed, reproduce, and disperse across the landscape. This is particularly important between existing wildlife-rich areas. The creation of new habitats should be prioritised in locations where they could make existing areas of habitat bigger and more joined up across Oxfordshire. This would contribute towards creating a large, functioning ecological network of diverse habitats that are fit for purpose, and which allow wildlife to move though landscapes, expand their range, and respond and adapt to climate change. Connectivity requirements should be factored into long term site management objectives. Large, connected spaces could be achieved through ambitious projects with a long-term vision (likely to involve multiple partners) and could create nationally important large nature areas, perhaps thousands of hectares in size, if possible, in one or more areas of Oxfordshire.

			Connectivity can be achieved or enhanced in different ways, including (1) by creating new habitat to join existing habitats, or maintaining and enhancing existing wildlife-friendly corridors such as watercourses, canals, railway embankments, road verges, cycle ways, hedgerows, and other linear features, (2) by creating and maintaining 'stepping stones', distinct wildlife rich areas between existing, larger sites to allow species to move and disperse across the landscape, and (3) by creating, enhancing, or maintaining habitats near to existing wildlife-rich habitats to produce larger blocks of habitat. To achieve the best outcomes, newly created habitats should look to complement the local wildlife-rich habitats and species that already exist. Habitat creation should seek to connect "like with like" and consider how species move through the landscape. New habitats could include (but are not limited to), grassland, woodlands, wetlands, open and mosaic habitats, orchards, parkland, and wood pasture. If existing sites are made bigger and better with more links like corridors and stepping stones to enable species to move across the county, Oxfordshire will be able to pass on to future generations a network of healthier more functional ecosystems. This would benefit wildlife as the climate changes and will improve opportunities for people to enjoy wildlife. Improving connectivity and reducing fragmentation is likely to be best achieved through co-ordination with neighbouring land managers. Some areas of the County have farmer clusters, Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) and catchment partnerships which help facilitate this approach. Whilst this measure isn't directly mapped, the Local Habitat Map has been created with this priority built in and most of the mapped areas offer strategic places to create habitats to contribute towards this priority. Read more about the importance of connecting England's wildlife sites, managing them, and creating more, bigger, better, joined up ecological network here.

		PM03 (mapped)	**Create, maintain, or enhance wildlife passages to reduce habitat fragmentation by roads, rail, and other infrastructure.** Wildlife passages include 'green bridges' as well as other creative solutions that are designed to enable wildlife to move between areas of habitats such as tunnels, viaducts, underpasses, overpasses, stream and river crossings and culverts. Create crossings through new or existing infrastructure that can join up habitats, help wildlife to move across the landscape, stop species from becoming isolated, and also reducing the number of traffic accidents. This handbook describes a range of options like canopy bridges, bat crossings, viaducts and wildlife underpasses, as well as overpasses, adapted culverts, and more. Specific examples of wildlife passages include the Scotney Castle Land Bridge, adder tunnel, and a range of 33 multi-species crossing points including otter ledges in Cornwall. Priority locations for these wildlife passages may change over time as wildlife moves and infrastructure changes. Whilst this version of the LNRS has mapped some key locations of the strategic road network where National Highways could take this action in Oxfordshire, the creation of passages would also be suitable for other road, rail, and infrastructure networks across the county to reduce the fragmentation of habitats and should be supported accordingly.
P3	**Enhance and create wildlife-friendly boundaries that act as habitats to support species to spread through the county.** Wider benefits: Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Interaction with nature.	PM04 (countywide)	**Create or improve boundaries using natural products that support biodiversity.** Where possible, improve the biodiversity value of boundaries. Where appropriate, consider replacing or enhancing existing boundaries like post and wire or rail fences with hedges, untreated wood fencing, and/or dry-stone walls. Where possible use local businesses and sustainably sourced local materials. This may not be suitable in cases where the boundaries are historic features e.g. park railings or in protected landscapes where openness is a special quality and where species such as ground-nesting birds require open conditions. Target habitats: UK Hab Species-rich native hedgerow h2a5, or habitats with additional secondary code 114 (dry stone wall), 117 (laid hedgerow)

Grassland (including scrub) and road verges			
P4	**Create new areas of species-rich grassland (including scrub and mosaic habitats) in Oxfordshire that are managed to support biodiversity and to achieve a good ecological condition.** Wider benefits: Food production, Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Carbon storage, Pollination, Pest control.	PM05 (mapped)	**Create areas of calcareous species-rich grasslands in suitable locations, particularly slopes.** Semi-improved or modified grasslands can be diversified by preparing low nutrient ground and over seeding. Where appropriate, arable areas can be reverted to wildflower grassland through seeding, following site preparation. Plants grown as plugs can be used for species that do not spread well as seed. Use seed or plug sources of local provenance and similar soil conditions as far as possible. Green hay from similar wildflower grasslands can be spread as an alternative to seed. See creation and management guidance to create new areas of calcareous grassland. They include further details about ground preparation and suitable soils. Some locations were regularly mentioned by people and organisations for this action to occur, however this is not an exhaustive list: White Horse Hill and Hackpen Hill, steep calcareous banks and slopes, Berkshire Downs border. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland calcareous grassland (g2a including g2a5 and g2a6) National Vegetation Classification (NVC) CG1-CG7
		PM06 (mapped)	**Create areas of neutral species-rich grasslands in suitable locations** Existing semi-improved or modified grasslands can be diversified by over seeding following site preparation. Where appropriate, arable areas can also be reverted to wildflower grassland through seeding, following site preparation. Plants grown as plugs can be used for species that do not spread well as seed. Use seed or plug sources of local provenance and similar soil conditions. Green hay from similar wildflower meadows can be spread as an alternative to seed. See management guidance and handbooks for further details. Follow management guidance and handbooks to create new areas of neutral grassland habitat including ground preparation on suitable soils. Test soils to determine if conditions would be suitable for lowland meadow creation, otherwise aim for species-rich neutral grasslands.

			Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland meadows (g3a including g3a5 and g3a6) and other neutral grassland (g3c, only where it qualifies as species-rich grassland – secondary code 18) National Vegetation Classification (NVC) MG4, MG8, and MG5 and species-rich examples of MG1,MG6, MG9 and MG10.
		PM07 (mapped)	**Create areas of species-rich acid grasslands in suitable locations** Acid grasslands can be created on suitably sandy and acidic soils. These grasslands are characterised by short fine grasses and patches of bare soil which support a particular range of insects, spiders, and reptiles. Acid grassland is also strongly associated with heathland and these two habitat types are rare in Oxfordshire. See management guidance and handbooks for further details. Some examples of acid grassland in Oxfordshire can be found in areas including Boars Hill, Frilford Heath, and Shotover. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland dry acid grassland (g1a6) National Vegetation Classification (NVC) U1-U4
		PM08 (mapped)	**Create varied physical ground structure when creating new grassland habitats.** Whilst creating new grasslands, consider using techniques to create a varied physical ground structure similar to the lumps and bumps of historic delves. Seek opportunities to keep areas of thin skeletal soils as well as areas of rocky, bare, and disturbed ground with a variety of aspects and gradients. Aim to support varieties of sward heights suitable to the location and local species. These actions can be taken whilst creating new grassland habitat (including quarry restoration). This guide gives some examples of the varied features that may be found in grassland habitats.
		PM09 (mapped)	**Create new areas of lowland meadow by creating and restoring meadows in suitable locations (particularly on floodplains).** This action is suitable for both floodplain areas and areas of lowland meadow on drier soils. Within floodplains, appropriate actions should be taken to allow water to

			easily come both onto, and off lowland meadow to help reconnect floodplain meadows with rivers. This can include embanking or deepening of the watercourse to ensure adequate discharge of water after flood events. In suitable locations, meadows could be restored through a range of techniques including by spreading green or dry hay, or brush harvested seed, into the floodplain soils. This can be done by sourcing hay or seed from existing floodplain meadows (as long as this doesn't compromise the condition of those meadows). See the Floodplain Meadows Partnership for advice on meadow creation and funding for farmers. This is a particularly important action for suitable arable fields and in other locations where existing hydrological conditions are appropriate. Floodplain meadows are amongst the UK's rarest and most biodiverse habitats whilst drier meadows are less rare. In the UK, only 1,200 hectares of MG4 floodplain meadow remains. More than 25% of this area is within Oxfordshire meaning that Oxfordshire has a strategically important role in supporting the recovery and expansion of MG4 floodplain lowland hay meadows. In addition, these floodplain habitats have particularly good capacity to store carbon and can improve the soil's ability to hold and capture water to help manage the flow of water and improve water quality. A technical handbook on floodplain meadows can be found here. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland meadows (**g3a5 and g3a6)**, National Vegetation Classification (NVC) MG4, MG8, and MG5
P5	**Enhance and manage existing grasslands to achieve and maintain species-rich grasslands that are in good ecological condition (long-term).** Wider benefits: Food production, Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Carbon storage, Pollination, Pest control	PM10 (mapped)	**Enhance (or maintain a good condition of) existing calcareous grassland.** Use land management techniques to improve or support grassland biodiversity, especially in ancient and unimproved grassland. Plan to maintain low nutrient levels by undertake cutting, collecting, and/or grazing of vegetation according to the broad habitat requirements whilst working to meet the specialist needs of species in the area. Where appropriate, continue hay-making practices and manage grazing of sites flexibly in response to seasonal variations in vegetation growth. See guidance on management or a detailed handbook here. Ensure that a thick thatch of grassy matter doesn't develop to increase nutrients, suppress wildflowers, or create a fire risk.

			Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland calcareous grassland (g2a, including g2a5 and g2a6) National Vegetation Classification (NVC) CG1-CG7
		PM11 (mapped)	**Enhance (or maintain a good condition of) existing neutral species-rich grasslands** Use land management techniques to improve or support grassland biodiversity, especially in ancient and unimproved grasslands. Plan to maintain low nutrient levels by undertaking cutting, collecting, and/or grazing of vegetation according to the broad habitat requirements whilst working to meet the specialist needs of species in the area. Ensure that grazing or cutting includes the removal of the cuttings (arisings). Where appropriate, continue hay-making practices and manage the grazing of sites flexibly in response to seasonal variations in vegetation growth. Ensure that a thick thatch of grassy matter doesn't develop to increase nutrients, suppress wildflowers, or create a fire risk. Further information about meadows can be found from Plantlife. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland meadows g3a (including g3a5 and g3a6) and other neutral grassland g3c only where it qualifies as species-rich grassland – secondary code 18) National Vegetation Classification (NVC) MG4, MG8, and MG5 and species-rich examples of MG1,MG6, MG9 and MG10.
		PM12 (mapped)	**Enhance (or maintain a good condition of) existing acid grasslands** Use suitable techniques like grazing, or cutting if grazing cannot be arranged, to enhance the condition and diversity of acid grassland. On acid grassland, aim to create and manage a variety of sward heights including areas of short sward with bare ground and soil disturbance. See more detailed management guides to better understand what might be suitable on a given site. Ensure that grazing or cutting includes the removal of the cuttings to prevent nutrient levels from building up. Ensure that a thick thatch of grassy matter doesn't develop to increase nutrients, suppress wildflowers, or create a fire risk. There are some examples of these types of habitats found across Boars Hill, Frilford Heath, Shotover and other areas in Oxfordshire.

			Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland dry acid grassland (g1a6) National Vegetation Classification (NVC) U1-U4

		PM13 (countywide)	**Maintain or introduce grazing or cutting techniques that enhance the structural diversity of grasslands and support local species.** On grasslands, including ancient and species-rich grasslands, introduce or maintain management techniques and grazing regimes that are site-appropriate using breeds that achieve a variety of sward heights and structures to benefit local species. Consider utilising traditional and rare breeds which are hardy and well suited to conservation grazing. Aim, where possible, to create patches of bare ground via periodic disturbance of the soil and turf which encourages the dispersal of many flowering plant species. Where species require short turf, cut & graze, some areas of grassland vegetation across calcareous, acid, and sandy sites to maintain a short sward and a low nutrient grassland. A similar result can be achieved by the presence of rabbits and on some sites it may be appropriate to encourage them by providing suitable cover, see more details here. Grazing is often a good way to maintain grassland sward and to disturb the soil, typically in spring, autumn, and winter but grazing and cutting times may change based on seasonal weather patterns or particular species that you may be working to conserve. Sometimes summer grazing may be appropriate on sites that require extensive grazing.
		PM14 (mapped)	**Enhance existing lowland meadows through grazing, cutting, or a combination to increase and support species diversity (particularly for floodplain and MG4 habitats).** This action is suitable for both floodplain lowland meadow, and for lowland meadow on drier soils. Manage these lowland meadows by introducing or maintaining appropriate management techniques like hay-cutting, grazing, and/or mowing regimes which are most appropriate to the site conditions, grassland type, species present, and any hay-making activities. Ensure that arisings are removed. For grazing regimes, manage stocking densities and the timing of any grazing flexibly, aiming to respond to seasonal conditions and variation as well as preventing either under-grazing or over-grazing. Consider using traditional and/or rare breeds that are hardy and well suited to conservation grazing. See further advice and guidance on managing floodplain meadows from the Floodplain Meadows Partnership.

Page 152			For hay cuts, the timing of the hay-cut is critical to the long-term sustainability of species-rich meadows. There will be a need for increased flexibility in both the date and extent of management options in response to long-term seasonal variability in growing conditions and climates. Lowland meadow will need an adequate supply, temporal variation, and quality of water to adapt to changes in climate. Floodplain meadows are amongst the UK's rarest and most species-rich (biodiverse) habitats whilst drier meadows are less rare. In the UK, only 1,200 hectares of MG4 floodplain meadow remains. More than 25% of this area is within Oxfordshire meaning that Oxfordshire has a strategically important role in supporting the recovery and expansion of MG4 floodplain lowland meadows. This is particularly true around Pixey, Yarton, and Osney Meads where work has been underway to connect 210 hectares of rare floodplain in a connected network with opportunity to expand this further in future. It should be noted that these floodplain habitats have particularly good capacity to store carbon, hold and capture water, manage the flow of water, and improve water quality. See the technical handbook for floodplain meadows here. See further Natural England handbooks, guidance, and advice for detailed management. Additionally, organisations like Plantlife, and Buglife have resources and information that may be of interest. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland meadows (g3a5 and g3a6), National Vegetation Classification (NVC) MG4, MG8, and MG5
		PM15 (countywide)	**Implement conservation grazing techniques that minimise or reduce the need for permanent physical fencing** Within pasture and grasslands or other appropriate habitats, consider approaches like regularly moving livestock through grazed areas by creating 'cells' within field parcels that you move regularly using, for example, electric wire fencing. Collar-based virtual fencing and other technology is also rapidly developing and could enable grazing animals to be focussed on particular locations and moved as needed to achieve the best conservation outcomes. A particular location within Oxfordshire where you can see this being practiced is FAI farm in Wytham.

P6	**Create and retain more area of scrub and pockets of 'messier, less tidy' habitat for their importance to biodiversity.** Wider benefits: Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Carbon storage, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Air quality regulation, Cooling and shading, Pollination, Pest control.	PM16 (countywide)	**Create and maintain pockets of diverse scrub on grasslands as appropriate**. Continue management that prevents excessive amounts of scrub from taking over species-rich wildflower grasslands but, where appropriate, integrate scrub creation into the site to increase structural variety to benefit biodiversity. This can be achieved through allowing occasional areas of scrub to grow as habitats within or around grasslands, to provide shade for animals, livestock, people, and to offer food, nectar, and shelter to invertebrates, birds, and wider species. Scrub habitats on floodplains can provide a refuge for invertebrates and reptiles during prolonged flooding. Aim to allow different pockets of scrub to grow up at different points in time to create a variety of ages including the development of old scrub which supports particular invertebrate communities. Also aim for diversity of tree and shrub species, various shapes, and sizes of scrub pockets. This could be achieved through low intervention techniques (e.g. fencing an area off from browsing and/or allowing natural regeneration). Accept changes to community composition (the types and amounts of different species within your scrub growth) when driven by climate change. It is not expected to integrate the development of scrub into ancient meadows including floodplain meadows where hay has to be taken. A large number of locations were mentioned by people and organisations for this action to occur and this should be applied to all appropriate grasslands including parish nature reserves and local projects where suitable land has been acquired to allow nature to recover itself. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): Dense scrub (h3 - except for h3c and h3g), grassland (g) with secondary code – 10 (scattered scrub). National Vegetation Classification W21, W22
		PM17 (mapped)	**Manage existing areas of scrub to create a varied age and physical structure including glades and scalloped edges**. Unless the scrub has encroached excessively, avoid damaging or removing existing scrub habitat for fear of untidiness. Scrub habitat is dynamic (changes quickly) and is a complex mix of grassland and woody habitats that offer great value to biodiversity.

			Manage the area to allow different pockets of scrub to grow up at different points in time to create a variety of ages and encourage and aim to keep any older or old scrub which supports particular invertebrate communities. See Natural England's guide on scrub management. or see here for some examples of managing scrub on chalk grassland. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): Dense scrub (h3 - except for h3c and h3g), grassland (g) with secondary code – 10 (scattered scrub). National Vegetation Classification W21, W22

P7 Page 154	**Create and enhance more road verges that are managed to allow wildflowers to grow in safe locations across Oxfordshire**. Wider benefits: Aesthetic value, Sense of place, Erosion protection, Carbon storage, Pollination, Pest control.	PM18 (mapped)	**Enhance (or maintain a good condition of) existing grassland around roads and infrastructure including road verge nature reserves (RVNR) to increase biodiversity.** This measure can apply to embankments, road verges, roundabouts and other suitable areas of grassland in both urban and rural settings. Manage the cutting regime flexibly for these grassland areas based on the species that are present or that could become present to allow them to grow, flower, and set seed. Over time, this management helps to make the verge less grass-dominant, and will create a lower growing, more diverse verge/habitat which should require fewer cuts. Reducing cutting patterns can help to support a greater range of wildlife including insects. Where road verges and other areas are already being managed in this way, continue to do so in safe and suitable locations where vegetation and any cuttings do not reduce the safety of road or path users (i.e. they do not block paths, roads, or lines of sight). After cutting, the best practice is to collect any arisings and remove them to reduce nutrient levels and promote floristic diversity. Ensure that enough management is undertaken to avoid any unintended scrub encroachment. You can access further urban grassland and road verge guidance here. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland meadows (g3a6) and other neutral grassland (g3c) only where it qualifies as species-rich grassland – secondary code 18. National Vegetation Classification (NVC) MG5, and lowland calcareous grassland (g2a) and other calcareous grassland (g2c) only where it qualifies as species-rich grassland – secondary code 18 National Vegetation Classification (NVC) CG1-CG7, and Lowland dry acid grassland (g1a6) National Vegetation Classification (NVC) U1-U4

Page 155		PM19 (countywide)	**Create new road verge nature reserves (RVNR) to allow wildflowers to grow, flower, and set seed by changing their management**. Creating new RVNRs should be completed in safe and suitable locations where vegetation and cuttings would not block paths, roads, or lines of sight. Avoid using topsoil to create new verges, consider laying out cuttings from existing local road verge nature reserves to spread local seeds and increase biodiversity. Plan for long-term changes to the cutting pattern to reduce the number of cuts, this allows existing seeds from those places to flower and set seeds again. Ensure that enough management is undertaken to avoid any unintended scrub encroachment. You can access urban grassland and verge guidance here, find information about building community support here, and if you have an area that could become a road verge nature reserve you can propose that it becomes one here. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland meadows (g3a6) and other neutral grassland (g3c) only where it qualifies as species-rich grassland – secondary code 18. National Vegetation Classification (NVC) MG5. Lowland calcareous grassland (g2a) and other calcareous grassland (g2c) only where it qualifies as species-rich grassland – secondary code 18 National Vegetation Classification (NVC) CG1-CG7. Lowland dry acid grassland (g1a6) National Vegetation Classification (NVC) U1-U4
		PM20 (countywide)	**Where new roads are created assess the opportunity for new road verge nature reserves**. Create and manage road verges, roundabouts, and other suitable spaces to promote biodiversity. The use of subsoil can create opportunities for new wildflower grasslands along new roads, while using species such as yellow rattle can potentially reduce frequency of cutting (and collecting). New grasslands need to be managed through well-timed cutting and collection of arisings. You can access urban grassland and verge guidance here.

P8	**Improve the abundance and range of grassland and scrub species that need specific additional potential measures**	N/a	See the 'Species Priorities List' [LINK] to see the potential measures that could be taken to support species that use and benefit from habitats within this type of environment. Some of these measures are mapped.

	Wider benefits: Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Pollination, Pest control.		
Heathland			
P9	**Enhance the condition of Oxfordshire's existing pockets of lowland heathland** Wider benefits: Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Erosion protection, Pollination, Pest control.	PM21 (mapped)	**Enhance (or maintain a good condition of) existing heathland.** Manage heathland areas to enhance their condition and structural diversity in Oxfordshire. Aim to retain or create a mosaic of vegetation types and prevent rapid colonisation of the heathland by excessive amounts of scrub, bracken, or woodland (through creating or retaining some pockets of scrub can be beneficial to structural diversity). There is more detail on how to achieve this kind of balance in a manner that is suitable to your site here. Grazing is the preferred management tool for maintaining a heathland mosaic but other techniques may be required. Incorporate actions to support any specialist species that are, or could become, present in the area. Preventing nutrient enrichment is important in this habitat type and it can be important to prevent some activities that present particular challenges to heathland success (trampling and disturbance). An overview of heathland management techniques can be found here by Buglife. Detailed heathland management guides from Natural England can be found here. The government outline how to manage lowland heathland for those using Countryside Stewardship. There are some examples of these types of habitats including Boars Hill, Frilford Heath, and Shotover. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland heathland (h1a) National Vegetation Classification (NVC) H1 and H2 including any m16 wet heath if present.

P10	**Create (or restore) areas of lowland heathland in Oxfordshire**. Wider benefits: Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Erosion protection, Carbon storage, Pollination, Pest control.	PM22 (mapped)	**Create new areas of heathland on suitable soil types**. Create new areas of heathland with a commitment to long term management. The opportunities in Oxfordshire are very limited for this habitat creation because the type of soil and site requirements are very specific. Aim to create a diversity of vegetation structure with a variety of habitat niches including patches of bare soil. This guide includes information from Natural England about heathland creation for wildlife. Check government websites for payments for farmers e.g. to create heathland here. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland heathland (h1a) National Vegetation Classification (NVC) H1 and H2
P11	**Improve the abundance and range of species that need specific additional potential measures within heathland habitats.** Wider benefits: Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Pollination, Pest control.	N/a	See the 'Species Priorities List' to see actions that could be taken to support specific species in Oxfordshire that are threatened or near-threatened with extinction. Some of these species actions are mapped to particular locations.

Mixed habitats including wood pasture, parkland, orchards, and open mosaic habitats			
P12	**Enhance and manage existing habitats to support biodiversity and to enhance their ecological condition. This includes wood pasture, parkland, orchards, open mosaic habitats, and mosaic habitats, which have a mixture of habitat types within a given area.** Wider benefits: Food production, Wood production, Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Interaction with nature, Education and knowledge, Sense of place, Carbon storage, Air quality regulation, Cooling and shading, Pollination, Pest control.	PM23 (mapped)	**Enhance (or maintain a good condition of) existing wood pasture and parkland to support local species and future climates.** Within wood pasture and parkland, manage the habitats and trees to maximise the longevity of site-appropriate species and retain mature and large trees (including dead, dying, and decaying trees and wood in a manner that is considerate of public safety). Where trees are coming to maturity or end of life, ensure the emergence (or planting) of new, site-suitable trees within the existing habitat. This practice is designed to diversify the ages of trees present in the habitat and to ensure the possibility of future generations of veteran and ancient trees. Preferably, start allowing the growth of (or planting of) new generations before the existing mature trees are lost. Trees should be suited to the conditions of the particular location and, if planted, should prioritise diversity and resilience to future climates. Maintain the grassland within wood pasture and parkland areas using suitable, extensive grazing or cutting regimes. Where appropriate the grassland component of this habitat can be floristically improved by overseeding and/or plug planting. In appropriate locations consider the creation of cover to encourage habitat variety through rabbit grazing and disturbance. Within these habitats, scrub can play an important role as part of an overall mosaic and supports certain stages of lifecycles for different species. Look for opportunities to create and manage scrub if appropriate to the site conditions. Many locations were regularly mentioned by people and organisations for this action to occur however this is not an exhaustive list of existing parks and estates: Ashdown Park, Ditchley Park, Blenheim Park, Broughton Castle, Glympton Park, Kiddington Park, Heythrop Park, Middle Barton and Sandford St. Martin Park, Watlington Park, Kirtlington Park, Bletchingdon Park, Tusmore and Shelswell Parks, Coleshill Park and Buscot Park, Faringdon, Barcote and Pusey, Cornbury Park, Eynsham Hall, Shotover House. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): grassland, woodland, heath or wetland with secondary code 26

		PM24 (countywide)	**Enhance (or maintain a good condition of) existing ancient and veteran trees and the species that they support**. Veteran and ancient trees (including those that are dying or dead) should be managed to achieve a good ecological condition, respective to their age. These trees should be managed to support important varieties of species based on the age, species, and local context of the trees. Prioritise actions that can increase the longevity of existing mature and veteran trees implementing whole life-cycle management to ensure a provision of dead and decaying wood where safe and possible, and either use natural regeneration techniques or plant new trees (of suitable species) close to existing veteran and ancient trees to provide an ecological continuity of veteran trees. Oxfordshire is home to some exemplar ancient and veteran trees and groups of trees including at Blenheim (which is believed to have the largest collection of ancient oaks in Europe) and Ashdown Park. Many ancient trees like oaks can also be seen within hedgerows across the county and the action applies for all ancient or veteran trees.
		PM25 (countywide)	**Selectively create more veteran features in mature non-veteran trees where appropriate.** Veteranisation techniques create veteran features in suitable, non-veteran trees. Identify locations and trees that may be suitable for veteranisation. Apply these techniques selectively to trees in locations where species are particularly expected to benefit from more veteran features. See more information about veteranisation here. Using these veteranisation techniques, aim to create habitat niches in established trees that mimic the features that would normally be found in ancient and veteran trees. This can include the creation of crevices and cavities in trees, or creating canopy deadwood by selective ringbarking to mimic and produce valuable habitats that are typically found on older trees and which support a range of rare and declining species. The use of these techniques should not be seen as a replacement for veteran trees. You can download guidance manuals about veteran trees and future veteran trees here.

Page 160		PM26 (mapped)	**Improve (or maintain a good condition of) existing orchards for biodiversity.** Manage orchard trees to maintain health and longevity of the trees. Allow dead, decaying, dying wood, and fungi to be present in the orchard in a manner that doesn't significantly compromise the health of the trees. For example, retain cushion bracket fungus on Prunus fruit trees and try to avoid removing or burning deadwood unless necessary (e.g. taking into account public safety if the site is open access). Retain and encourage mature and over-mature standing trees, and keep some standing deadwood and deadwood on living orchard trees. Plant successionally to maintain a strong overlap of younger, mature, and veteran fruit trees, and gap up where trees have died. Ideally, the age structure should allow for an overlap of 50 years which is how long it takes for a fruit tree to develop veteran features. When restocking existing orchards, consider including rootstocks, varieties, or species of tree with a view to future-proofing the orchards from changing weather patterns. Control scrub within orchards (allowing for small pockets to develop or remain where possible) and manage invasive species which cause significant damage to orchards. Target habitats: UK Habs codes grassland or woodland with secondary code 27
		PM27 (countywide)	**Enhance, create, or maintain a good condition of existing 'open mosaic habitat on previously developed land' (OMHPDL) to conserve and enhance biodiversity on these open, dynamic areas.** Conserve and enhance land where open habitats of mixed scrub, grassland, and wetlands with areas of bare ground have developed on brownfield sites. Manage these sites to support species that may be present and maintain an open, dynamic nature to these areas including patches of bare ground where suitable to support invertebrates (including beetles, bees, and wasps). The creation of bare substrate as a result of minerals extraction can present an opportunity to create the mosaic of early successional communities that are characteristic of this habitat as part of the restoration of quarries. Further management guidance from Natural England can be found here.

			Target habitats (Uk Habs codes): grassland, woodland, wetland, heathland, urban, sparsely vegetated land or rivers and lakes with secondary code 80
		PM28 (countywide)	**Improve habitat condition and biodiversity by introducing or maintaining flexible grazing regimes where appropriate (and/or cutting and collecting).** Where grazing or cutting is suitable and possible, maintain flexible options to be able to respond to increased variation in weather patterns, floods, and drought. Consider using traditional and rare breeds which are hardy and well suited to conservation grazing. Where necessary, protect trees from possible long-term damage that can be caused by grazing animals.
P13	**Create more areas of mixed habitat in Oxfordshire including wood pasture, parkland, orchard, and open mosaic habitats to support biodiversity**. Wider benefits: Food production, Wood production, Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Sense of place, Carbon storage, Air quality regulation, Flood regulation, Erosion regulation, Water quality regulation, Cooling and shading, Pollination, Pest control.	PM29 (mapped)	**Create (and manage) areas of new parkland and wood pasture, planning to produce future ancient and veteran trees.** Plant (or facilitate the growth of) new trees to create new wood pasture and parkland, using appropriate tree species that are adapted for the location and future climates and/or could support local wildlife. It should be noted that oaks are particularly important within such habitat settings. New trees could be established by fencing off suitable areas and allowing trees to grow up naturally, by planting seeds, or by planting and managing suitable young trees. Expanding existing areas of mature parkland and wood pasture can be particularly beneficial. Local seed sourcing should be supported as one option for expanding parkland and wood pasture. If planting trees or seeds, consider using local species where possible and consider sourcing some trees or seed from a provenance that can tolerate various climate conditions where necessary. Diverse tree selection may better enable newly planted trees to be able to survive and become ancient and veterans in a warmer future climate although these decisions should be based on the latest climate prediction and the specific planting site. The Forestry Commission has an Ecological Site Classification tool that can help determine which species could be suitable. Where appropriate, the species richness of the grassland components within wood pasture/parkland can be created or enhanced using species-rich grassland creation

			techniques such as overseeding, spreading green hay, and/or planting plug plants. Plan for suitable, future grazing or cutting regimes and where appropriate. In appropriate locations, consider the creation of scrub cover to encourage habitat variety through opportunities for e.g. rabbit grazing and disturbance. Within these habitats, scrub can also play an important role as part of an overall mosaic and supports certain stages of lifecycles for different species. Look for opportunities to create and manage scrub if appropriate to the site conditions and local species. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): grassland, woodland, heathland or wetland with secondary code 26
		PM30 (mapped)	**Create new areas of habitat that contain a matrix of habitat types including small woodland patches, scattered trees, scrub, and grassland.** Create new areas of habitat that include (but are not limited to) a mix of trees, scrub, and grassland. This could be achieved through tree planting, natural regeneration techniques, or other options that achieve the end result. This action is often suitable near woodland edges to create a transition habitat between woodland and grassland. Creating these areas can support both woodland and grassland species. New large areas of this kind of mosaic habitat can also be created by practicing light grazing across a large area and allowing natural processes to take place. The species richness of the grassland components can be increased using species-rich grassland creation techniques such as overseeding, spreading green hay, and/or plug planting. Create and manage scrub in a manner that complements the site and local species. Where appropriate, allow varied pockets of scrub to grow up at different points in time to create a variety of ages, retaining any older or old scrub which supports particular invertebrate communities. See this guide on scrub management.
		PM31 (countywide)	**Create new orchards or restore orchards in areas where there used to be traditional orchards, using a diverse range of trees.** Create orchards by planting and growing fruiting trees and plan for their management. This can be done in both urban and rural areas. Choose tree types that are well suited to the site's conditions including local or heritage varieties if possible and consider

			varieties that could tolerate future climates. Orchard trees can vary by rootstock, fruit type, and variety. Where possible, aim to create a diverse orchard habitat with varieties that differ from, but complement, neighbouring orchards. Orchards should have a management plan for the long-term care of the trees as well as any species like birds or insects that are found in or near to the orchard. Additionally, outline the purpose of fruit that is produced, whether for people, biodiversity, or both. There are examples of projects that support people to create community orchards and this page contains further details. The species richness of the grassland components can also be created or enhanced using species-rich grassland creation techniques such as overseeding, spreading green hay, and/or plug planting. See a guide from Natural England about orchard creation here. Target habitats: UK Habs codes grassland or woodland with secondary code 27

P14 Page 163	**Create more, large, connected, functioning areas of ecosystems that contain a matrix of diverse habitat types within them to create rich, biodiverse natural spaces**. Wider benefits: Food production (wild), Wood production, Water supply, Recreation and leisure, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Flood protection, Water quality regulation, Carbon storage, Air quality regulation, Cooling and shading, Noise reduction, Pollination, Pest control.	PM32 (countywide)	**Create new areas that contain a mix of habitats suitable to the site to benefit wildlife.** In suitable spaces, use natural processes of succession and techniques that mimic this to produce complex mosaic habitat types. These, ideally large, areas are encouraged to include a variety of suitable habitat types for the area, possibly including but not limited to: grazed grassland, scrub, trees, open water, wetland, rivers, and/or woodland. Consider allowing natural processes like natural colonisation of trees to create a complex mosaic of new habitats that are encouraged to be wild, diverse, and connected. Consider reducing intensive human management of habitats in these spaces and consider utilising traditional breeds and species which are hardy and well suited to conservation grazing or creating dynamic habitats that support biodiversity. The species richness of the grassland components can be increased using species-rich grassland creation techniques such as overseeding, spreading green hay, and/or plug planting. This action could be delivered at a range of scales across a range of locations, not all locations can fit on this list. Some examples were regularly mentioned by people and organisations including: Gibbets Close Hill, Witney and the Bernwood Otmoor Ray area where proposals are underway to create a strategic landscape-scale project to

			connect the Otmoor, Bernwood, and Ray Nature Recovery Area across county borders.

P15	**Improve the abundance and range of species that need specific additional potential measures within mixed habitats including wood pasture, parkland, orchards, and open mosaic habitats.** Wider benefits: Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Pollination, Pest control.	N/a	See the 'Species Priorities List' to see the potential measures that could be taken to support species that use and benefit from these habitat types. Some of these measures are mapped.
Woodlands			
P16	**Enhance and manage existing woodlands to achieve structural diversity and good ecological condition enabling woodlands to act as a rich source of biodiversity for wildlife to disperse across the landscape.** Wider benefits: Food production (wild), Wood production, Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Carbon storage, Air quality regulation,	PM33 (mapped)	**Enhance existing woodlands to achieve a diverse structure and good ecological condition, suitable for the woodland type, age, and nearby species**. Create and implement a management plan for existing woodlands that include strategies to enhance biodiversity and ecological condition. Include plans for managing older trees, planning for succession by younger trees, enhancing genetic diversity within trees and shrubs to combat pests and disease, specific actions to support local wildlife, and actions to manage unsustainable populations of invasive species. Enhancement work should aim to achieve healthy woodlands that have a diversity of tree ages, woodland structure, woodland edges, rides, glades, and ground flora. Aim to have shrub and scrub species planted or growing around the edges of the

	Cooling and shading, Noise reduction, Pollination, Pest control.		woodland perimeter and in open areas within the woodland (if appropriate to the site's flora and fauna). Create and manage rides and glades within woodlands to increase light penetration to the ground in suitable locations and achieve wide, open areas with zones that achieve a variety of shade and ground cover. Avoid overshading the ground flora and allow periodic disturbance along rides to support ground flora to set seeds (can be achieved through time-limited, controlled grazing by cattle/horses). Position rides and glades to encourage greater continuity and connectivity of grassland and grassland edge habitats. Avoid compacting or waterlogging the soil to retain important fungal networks. Along woodland edges, create buffer areas of grassland margins with scrub transition areas where suitable for the area. Consider using areas affected by significant diseases to create glades and open spaces within woodlands. Create, retain, and mange ponds and areas of water within woodlands aiming to achieve greater continuity and connectivity of water corridors across habitats. Consider rewetting woodlands, where appropriate by blocking drainage which can support invertebrate populations and provide more food for insectivorous birds. See woodland management toolkits, advice, and the UK Forestry Standard to better understand specific requirements that may apply to your woodland. This action is suitable for all woodlands. Diverse woodlands can be found across Oxfordshire with particular examples in Wychwood Forest, Waterperry, Shabbington Woods, Shotover, and Brasenose Wood but there are many more. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland beech and yew woodland (w1c), wet woodland (w1d), lowland mixed deciduous woodland (w1f), other broad-leaved woodland (w1g). National Vegetation Classification W1, W5, W6, W7,W8, W10, W12, W13, W14, W15, W16
		PM34 (countywide)	**Manage populations of species that reach unsustainable levels so that existing woodlands can achieve good ecological condition to support a diverse range of species**. This includes managing grey squirrels, deer populations, rhododendron and any invasive species or species that reach unsustainable numbers. Where possible, collaborate across land ownership boundaries to undertake effective management

			techniques that could control such species at a scale that could help to support the natural regrowth of woodlands and regeneration of new young trees. Consider the use of fencing, tree protection, sustainable population control, and emerging new techniques using relevant professionals or organisations.
		PM35 (mapped)	**Enhance existing ancient woodland to improve structural diversity, woodland condition, and benefit local species**. Create management plans specific to the particular ancient woodland. Aim to enhance structural diversity where appropriate by creating or maintaining rides, glades, and edges in suitable locations (use the UK Forestry Standard to best understand what's appropriate for your site). Periodically thin 'high forest' type woodlands where/when necessary. These are woodlands with mostly tall trees and little to no understory (a lower growing set of trees, shrubs and plants). Prioritise techniques that minimise soil compaction to help safeguard the ancient soil communities, structures, and floristic diversity that are unique to ancient woodlands. In addition, undertake best practice woodland management techniques that support local species. Apply this measure sensitively, aiming for an outcome that reflects the local context and which complements the history and character of the particular woodland (as well as historical features or structures). Whilst some are mapped for particular focus, this was also felt to be an important, beneficial action for all existing ancient woodlands which currently cover 3.4% of Oxfordshire. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): woodland habitats with secondary code 28

		PM36 (mapped)	**Enhance the biodiversity value of existing ancient woodlands that are 'plantations on ancient woodland sites' (PAWS).** Create a management plan specific for the site to steadily remove plantation trees from 'plantations on ancient woodland sites' (PAWS) and restore the woodland ecosystem back towards native woodland trees where possible. A sudden removal of all plantation trees could damage relict ancient woodland features like any remaining

			veteran trees and/or ground flora. Selective felling of plantation trees around any such remaining, relict features can support the survival of veteran trees, encourage natural regeneration and floristic diversity, and/or prevent overshading within the woodlands depending on the species present. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): woodland habitats with secondary codes 28
		PM37 (countywide)	**Enhance and/or create areas of active, worked coppice in Oxfordshire**. Various tree species can be coppiced on a rotation. Coppices offer important nesting and foraging sites within woodlands and can support unique and rare species. Manage existing coppices to retain flowering trees and shrubs within worked coppice compartments to benefit woodland species. Reintroduce coppicing particularly to suitable areas of historic, derelict sites where coppicing was previously practiced. Create new areas of coppice by planting (or enabling the growth of) a variety of new trees with a plan to manage these on a specified coppice rotation e.g. long, short, or a specific cycle (usually defined by a number of years). This can take into account the need of particular species as/when they emerge. For new and existing coppices, plan the management around any local species to best accommodate a range of species. For example, some wildlife particularly depend upon young, dense, coppices of willow, aspen, and poplar with areas that are allowed to build up deadwood and become less 'tidy' to support those species. Other coppice species include but are not limited to; lime, ash, oak, sweet chestnut, hazel and many more. Plant or retain flowering trees and dense shrub layers within worked coppice compartments to support invertebrates. All remaining derelict coppice or existing coppice areas could be important locations to deliver this action and there are a few exemplar coppice habitats in Oxfordshire including on MOD sites near Bicester. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): woodlands with secondary code 210 or 211

P17	**Create new, diverse woodlands in Oxfordshire that mature into good ecological condition and are managed to support biodiversity.** Wider benefits: Food production (wild), Wood production, Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Carbon storage, Air quality regulation, Cooling and shading, Noise reduction, Pollination, Pest control	PM38 (mapped)	**Create new woodland by planting trees (or enabling their natural regeneration) using species that are suited to the soil type and site conditions**. Create and manage new woodland that complements the landscape across a range of habitats and contains a variety of tree species. Produce a long-term plan to manage the habitat with the aim to achieve a good ecological condition, this should include any relevant management in the early years as the woodland establishes. To establish new woodland, trees may be planted but particularly near existing and ancient woodlands, consider using natural regeneration/colonisation or directly drilling locally sourced seeds to establish young trees. All techniques will still require suitable forms of protection (guards or fencing) as appropriate to the site. Protection should aim to allow the new woodland to successfully establish whilst minimising damage from grazing and disturbance. If the new woodland is isolated from other woodlands, consider introducing locally sourced field-layer flora appropriate to the site conditions (this must be legally obtained and appropriate to the woodland). Prior to creation, design new woodland planting plans to achieve structural diversity in the future woodland. Plan to create a variety of possible components including rides, glades, open areas, dense shrubs, scrub components, and irregular edges. Aim for shrubs and scrub to grow within, and at the edges of woodland. Create a management plan to maintain a variety of these components as habitat niches within the woodland, including a plan for succession by younger trees over time to create a variety of tree ages within the woodland. Trees could be planted or allowed to grow naturally using protection from browsing animals over a number of years. If planting trees, consider tree species that suit the soil type for that area and which are likely to survive in a changing climate, with decision being made using the latest climatic predictions. The creation of new woodland is particularly beneficial in areas that adjoin existing woodland and especially adjoining ancient woodland to make existing woodlands larger, or to join up existing areas of woodland. See this woodland creation guide from the Woodland Trust. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland beech and yew woodland (w1c), wet woodland (w1d), lowland mixed deciduous woodland (w1f), other broad-leaved woodland (w1g). National Vegetation Classification W1, W5, W6, W7,W8, W10, W12, W13, W14, W15, W16

		PM39 (countywide)	**Use low intervention woodland creation techniques including natural regeneration where appropriate, especially near existing ancient woodland**. Consider, and where appropriate opt for natural regeneration techniques as a method for the creation of new woodland habitats or mosaic habitats that include trees and wooded areas. If the site is isolated from existing woodlands and seed sources, then direct seeding could be an alternative option to establish new trees instead of planting young trees. Whilst waiting for the seeds/young trees to grow and establish, ensure they have sufficient levels of protection from grazing and disturbance to allow the woodland area to establish. If tree guards are necessary, consider effective degradable or reusable tree protection options over non-biodegradable, single-use options.
		PM40 (mapped)	**Create new areas of wet woodland along rivers, river corridors, and riparian land as appropriate.** In suitable wet areas such as river corridors, spring lines, and riparian land, plant (or allow the growth of) a variety of wet woodland trees along river corridors or as areas of wet woodland. Plan to create and manage open areas within the woodland and consider planting willow and alder species. If water flows have previously been diverted away from the woodland, or if water levels were artificially lowered, seek advice about opportunities to restore water flows or groundwater levels to rewet suitable woodlands and/or allow wet woodland to develop. Wet woodland creation can offer benefits to help 'slow the flow' of water during high rainfall flood events (helping to mitigate flooding) and can regulate and improve water quality across the landscape. If the new woodland is isolated from other woodlands, consider introducing locally sourced field-layer flora appropriate to the site conditions (this must be legally obtained and appropriate to the woodland). Some locations were mentioned by people and organisations thought this is not an exhaustive list. Areas included; around flooded gravel pits, Kirtlington Park, Gallos

			Brook, Priory Mill, Chipping Norton, areas adjoining Radley Pits Local Wildlife Site, Burcot, Little Wittenham, and Shillingford. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): wet woodland w1d (w1d5) National Vegetation Classification W1, W5, W6, W7.

P18	**Improve the abundance and range of woodland species that need specific additional potential measures** Wider benefits: Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Pest control.	N/a	See the 'Species Priorities List' to see the potential measures that could be taken to support species that use and benefit from habitats within this type of environment. Some of these measures are mapped.
Rivers, streams, ponds, standing water, and wetland habitats			
P19	**Improve water quality within freshwater habitats across the county to support biodiversity by making clean, healthy, and plentiful water more available in Oxfordshire (rivers, canals, lakes, ponds, ditches, reedbeds, and more).** Wider benefits: Fish production, Water supply, Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Water quality regulation.	PM41 (countywide)	**Improve water quality through action(s) that help to reduce or stop pollution of freshwater habitats** This includes but is not limited to: 1. Timely and appropriate upgrades to the sewerage network and sewage treatment, 2. Nature based solutions like constructed wetlands, 3. Working in catchment partnerships and with authorities such as Natural England and the Environment Agency to reduce surface water pollution from agricultural runoff. This action is also of great importance in areas where people live (in both urban and rural areas) where water corridors often act as key corridors that connect areas of the environment. Water courses, lakes, and other freshwater habitats are culturally and recreationally significant to people in Oxfordshire.

			To achieve widespread, good water quality, actions need to happen across the whole landscape (across catchments) anywhere where rainwater falls or where water moves on its way into the local rivers. This measure can be delivered by a range of partners and is where local Catchment Partnerships and their projects play a key role in delivering improved water quality across the county. Work with planning authorities, landowners and the water company (Thames Water) to increase the number of waterbodies in good ecological status via improving water quality. This may be through targeted, evidence-based upgrades to sewage treatment works, nature-based solutions like constructed wetlands, or encouraging landowners to adopt water friendly farming practices which minimise run-off.
P20	**Enhance and manage existing freshwater habitats in Oxfordshire to achieve good ecological condition and support biodiversity through clean, healthy, and plentiful water (rivers, canals, lakes, ponds, ditches, and reedbeds).** Improving the condition of rivers and freshwater habitats emerged as the top priority for people across Oxfordshire. Wider benefits: Fish production, Water supply, Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Carbon storage, Cooling and shading.	PM42 (mapped)	**Restore river diversity and manage rivers and their riparian (riverside) habitats to achieve good ecological condition that supports species**. This refers to the restoration of river habitat diversity to support a wide range of species. Undertake restoration work to restore structurally diverse rivers and riverside habitats (including banks and marginal vegetation) which support a wide range of species. Techniques to enhance and restore river physical habitat condition and biodiversity will be site-specific and will depend on the degree of modification and the ecological context, as well as river typology. Expert advice should be sought (e.g. from the Environment Agency and local catchment partnerships), and appropriate permits obtained if required Techniques to enhance river condition and biodiversity vary and will be site-specific. The techniques may include raising channel beds of rivers to reconnect with their floodplain and to form a habitat matrix of wetlands, riparian woodlands and wet meadow wildflower grasslands, all of which can buffer and reduce the impact of pollution into rivers. This may be achieved through a variety of interventions which could range in intensity from the use of machinery and import of gravels, through to establishing ecosystem engineer species, in this case beavers, which if re-established in the county have a unique ability to manipulate riparian habitats. Consider de-culverting, removing artificial banks, and techniques to naturalise modified watercourse channels. Within rivers, improve connectivity especially for fish, by the removal of barriers to fish passage (and thereby improving instream habitat), or where

			this is not possible provide fish bypass channels or other fish pass solutions to allow fish to migrate and utilise upstream habitats. Seek expert advice on the most appropriate fish passage solutions. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): Rivers - priority habitat (r2a)
		PM43 (countywide)	**Restore, create and enhance marginal habitats** Marginal habitats on rivers are vital ecological features which can be important for much of the wildlife associated with them; ensure appropriate management of these habitats so that they are retained (often requiring no management at all), and seek to create/restore them where they are absent due to artificial vertical bank structures and steep-sided profiles, taking expert advice as to what is appropriate on a site-specific basis.
		PM44 (countywide)	**Manage operational canals to enhance (or maintain good condition of) habitats or wildlife corridors through Oxfordshire**. Identify opportunities to support more species to live, forage, or move alongside canals. This could include creating or dedicating areas that are not disturbed and maintaining or restoring marginal vegetation, bank-side scrub, and/or woodland in suitable locations that don't interfere with the navigation. This will support the species that use canals as habitats and as wildlife corridors. Guidance for supporting biodiversity along canals can be found through the Canal & River Trust. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): Canals (r1e)

		PM45 (mapped)	**Enhance the condition (or maintain a good condition) of lakes in Oxfordshire**. Implement good management techniques across lakes in Oxfordshire to support local species. Across lakes in Oxfordshire, take actions to minimise the input of polluted and nutrient-rich water to the lake from surrounding land-uses, establish and protect marginal habitats, establish quiet zones for wildlife on multiple-use lakes, and if

			relevant consider how fish-stocking and angling activities can be undertaken in a way which is compatible with the wildlife interest. This measure would contribute significantly towards the priority if taken in 'mesotrophic lakes' which are lakes with lower levels of nutrients than 'Eutrophic Standing Waters' and can therefore be particularly rich in plant and invertebrate life but the measure is relevant for all lakes. There are only a few examples of mesotrophic lakes in Oxfordshire found mainly amongst the old gravel pits of the Lower Windrush Valley. Typically, lakes are equal to, or larger than 2 hectares, whilst ponds are typically smaller than 2 hectares (Uk Habs). Therefore, this action has been mapped to standing waterbodies that are 2 hectares or more in size. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): eutrophic lakes (r1a), mesotrophic lakes (r1b)
		PM46 (mapped)	**Enhance existing ponds by undertaking sensitive management and restoration of ponds and pond complexes to improve biodiversity and water quality.** Manage ponds through low intervention techniques that cause minimal damage to local species and where possible, incorporate grazing to manage vegetation. Pond management and restoration is very individual to the type, age, and structure of existing ponds. Through management, aim to retain and enhance existing positive features of the particular pond. Further management techniques should aim to create diversity in the pond structure, depths, edges, shape, vegetation growth, and areas of shade, often keeping the south side more open and sunny. Techniques also depend on any local species that rely on the pond. It is helpful to biodiversity to create habitat buffers around suitable existing ponds. The buffer areas can contain varied vegetation to offer cover for species. Additionally, consider incorporating deadwood into and around existing ponds to support biodiversity. Aim to maintain or create a buffer of low-intensity land use around the pond as large as possible/appropriate aiming to balance the buffer size with other land-use in the area. For 'priority ponds', Freshwater Habitats Trust advise a buffer of 50 metres (or more) where possible. See guidance about how to manage existing ponds here.

			Target habitats: (UK Habs codes) Standing open water (r1) with secondary code 40, ponds (priority habitat)

		PM47 (countywide)	**Enhance (or maintain a good quality of) existing reedbeds to create a varied vegetation structure that supports reedbed species**. Well-functioning reedbeds can clean water before it enters rivers and streams and are a rare habitat type that supports reedbed-specialist species. Most reedbeds require cutting, grazing, or management of different parts of the reedbed over a cycle of e.g. 4 – 7 years to create a variety of ages and structures that support the health of the habitat and species. Normally no more than 5% of the area is recommended to be scrub or young trees to avoid losing the reedbed to ecological succession. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): reedbeds (f2e). National Vegetation Classification (NVC) S4
21	**Enhance and manage Oxfordshire's chalk rivers and streams to achieve ecologically healthy examples of this special and globally rare habitat type.** Wider benefits: Fish production, Water supply, Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Water quality regulation, Cooling and shading, Pollination, Pest control.	PM48 (mapped)	**Enhance, restore, or manage chalk rivers and streams to achieve (or maintain a good condition of) physical habitat and water quality.** Undertake appropriate physical habitat restoration of damaged chalk stream habitat seeking expert assessments and advice on the most appropriate techniques, including relevant species actions such as the removal of barriers to fish passage wherever possible. Establish buffer zones of un-intensive land-use and aim to establish diverse wildlife habitat running along the banks of the chalk stream corridors (preferably extending out a minimum of 10 metres either side of the bank) and seek to reduce pressures from agricultural management particularly in chalk stream headwaters. Advice can be sought from the Environment Agency, local catchment partnerships, the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project and from the CaBa chalk stream hub. In Oxfordshire there are a number of chalk streams and action should be taken across them all, some examples of chalk streams include (but are not limited to) Letcombe Brook, Holton Brook, Chalgrove Brook, Lewknor Brook, Cuttle Brook, Hendred Brook, Ginge Brook and Lockinge Brook. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): rivers (priority habitat) (r2a) with secondary code 51. National Vegetation Classification A17.

P22	**Enhance and manage ditches in Oxfordshire more sensitively to create wildlife-rich habitats that support biodiversity**. Wider benefits: Water supply, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Cooling and shading.	PM49 (countywide)	**Create, improve, and manage the variety of ditches across Oxfordshire to benefit biodiversity in appropriate locations**. Ditches vary from dry to wet and creating and maintaining ditches that hold water throughout the year holds greater value for biodiversity. For existing ditch systems, adopt best practice management measures to maximise their ecological diversity. Create new ditch habitats in appropriate locations e.g. in conjunction with the restoration of floodplain grazing marsh, and buffer ditch habitats with low-intensity land use or buffer strips in order to benefit water quality and maximise opportunities for biodiversity. See management guides and advice which recommend restoring ditch profiles (including on farms) and rotationally (not annually) managing ditches with vegetation buffers that are managed sensitively. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): habitats with secondary code 50
P23	**Enhance and manage fen habitats in Oxfordshire through appropriate management techniques to achieve good ecological condition of fens and support a wide range of (often rare) species in this irreplaceable habitat.** Wider benefits: Water supply, Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality	PM50 (mapped)	**Enhance existing fens through appropriate management and restoration to achieve good ecological condition.** Fens are an irreplaceable type of habitat and they are only possible on unique geology types that happen to be found across Oxfordshire making this county a national hotspot for fen habitats. However, many fens have been lost as land use changed, management stopped, and scrub and woodlands took over. Most of the known remaining fens are in poor condition and require focused effort to recover their condition. Oxfordshire's fens support a range of particularly rare species which are at risk of becoming extinct from the UK. Additionally, fens are a type of freshwater peat-forming wetland and the production of new peat is extremely efficient at pulling carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, converting it into living plants and their dead remains into carbon-rich deposits in the soil. Restoring and maintaining habitats, particularly fens is essential if we are to maintain the effectiveness of these carbon sinks (Wildlife and Wetland Trust).

Page 176	regulation, Carbon storage, Cooling and shading.		There are two types of fen habitats and they have different management needs. The two types are (1) surface water-fed fens and (2) groundwater fens (sometimes called spring- or seepage fens). Before starting management, assess the fen type to distinguish which type it is and then plan and deliver management based on this. (1) **Surface water-fed fens** typically benefit from cutting and collecting a third of the vegetation annually and cutting the next third in the following year, and so on. In this way, you manage a third of the site each year on rotation. Graze, cut, and/or rake pond marginal vegetation to ensure light, low nutrient, shallow pools and wet runnels. Additionally, scrub tends to require management to allow some but avoid taking over the fen pools. Scattered bushes and trees such as sallows can provide a valuable resource for invertebrates. This is the more common type of fen often found in floodplains with mixed, tall wetland vegetation, see detailed guidance here. (2) **Groundwater fed (seepage) fens** rely on very low nutrient, high calcium, alkaline water from underground limestone or chalk water (aquifers). This base-rich spring-fen type is extremely rare (see UK map here) and a special habitat in Oxfordshire, found especially in the South, Vale, and Oxford City. These fens benefit from grazing or cutting (and removing the vegetation) every year to maintain a short structure that mimics historic grazing. Expert hydrological advice will benefit the management plan of these fen types, as nearby land use within the ground and surface water catchments has significant impacts on the health and condition of the fen. Groundwater fens have much rarer and at-risk plant and invertebrate species which will simply disappear if not cut every year. A detailed management and restoration guide for these fens can be found here. Freshwater Habitats Trust have an Oxfordshire Fens Project to work with communities and landowners across the county, get in touch for advice and support. See some of Oxfordshire fen locations and read more about fens here. For all fens, aim to allow the production of a continuous supply of deadwood (of various sizes) to benefit a range of species (invertebrates and fungal species).

			Consider which time of year management will be undertaken on fens based on any rare species (invertebrates, plants, and others) that are present to allow them to emerge and reproduce. Whilst the LNRS has mapped this action onto the currently known fen locations, these measures are still a priority to deliver on any fens that are identified in the future if data changes after the publication of the LNRS (including ghost fens which occur where fens have been 'lost' to tree and scrub growth). Oxfordshire has a number of fens that are being worked on by local people and organisations to create exemplar habitats. This includes (but is not limited to) Cothill Fen, Lye Valley Fen, and Hinksey Heights Fen. You can see more about Oxfordshire's Fen Project here. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): lowland fens (f2a). National Vegetation Classification: Swamp: S3,S5,S6,S7,S8,S12,S13,S14,S19,S22,S23,S28,Tall-herb fen: S25 Fen Mire and Fen Meadow M13,M22,M24
		PM51 (mapped)	**Manage fen buffer areas to create and enhance areas of rough vegetation that help to enhance the condition of the fen habitat** Around fens, aim to achieve a 10-metre buffer zone of rough vegetation or low earth bunds to help enhance the health of the fen habitat and/or in this buffer area, aim to achieve low/no applications of nutrients. Many fens may benefit from wider buffer areas if possible and achievable. Whilst the first 5 to 10 metres of the buffer zone has been reported as being the most important for nutrient removal, the optimum width of the buffer depends on the slope of the area, the size of the catchment, the type of soil, and the degree of enrichment. More details can be found here in the fen management handbook.
		PM52 (countywide)	**Where appropriate, retain and/or create 'fen carr', a wet woodland fen habitat that tends to be made up from 'sallow' willow species and alder.** In appropriate locations create, maintain, or enhance fen carr habitats. Within fen carr habitats, maintain or create an open structure by utilising grazing or other suitable techniques to ensure the existence of open areas within wet woodlands. Fen carr

			habitats can be suitable on floodplains which have historically held fen carr and which don't hold strong potential to become biodiverse floodplain meadows. There are situations where the retention/creation of fen carr may not be suitable, for example if the fen carr is, instead, a tree-colonised ghost spring (groundwater) seepage fen that could benefit from restoration. The initial step is to accurately identify the fen type in order to understand whether to retain/create/remove fen carr. For assistance or advice about fen carr, contact Freshwater Habitats Trust who can support with fen identification. Target habitats (UK Habs Codes): Alder woodland on floodplains (w1d5). National Vegetation Classification W1, W5.

		PM53 (countywide)	**Ensure that fens in Oxfordshire retain continued, appropriate flow rates of clean water into fen habitats to support their ecological condition** Fens are some of the most botanically diverse habitats in England and are mainly irrigated by groundwater discharge from springs and seepages, with the water table close to the surface all year round. Without clean and consistent flows of water, fens cannot survive. Prioritise, maintain, and enhance the ecological condition of fens by ensuring a consistent flow of clean water into fen habitats. The groundwater catchment of any fen should not be contaminated with nutrient-rich water. This is particularly important for the rarer spring fens. Catchment sizes can vary for each fen and can spread hundreds of metres out from fens. The best management of the fen groundwater catchment to help clean the water supply to the spring fen by creating, maintaining, or enhancing areas of permanent grasslands like hay meadows or grazed pasture with no-inputs. You can read about fen catchment mapping in Oxfordshire here.
P24	**Create more, new (or restored) high quality freshwater habitats in Oxfordshire including ponds, lakes, reedbeds, and marsh.** Wider benefits: Fish production, Water supply, Recreation and leisure,	PM54 (mapped)	**Create wetland habitats that contain a matrix of various habitat types suitable for the site (e.g. wet grassland, ponds, ditches, hedgerows, trees, or wet woodland)** Restore and enhance degraded or lost floodplain wetland habitats by restoring rivers to improve hydrological connectivity with floodplains, managing water levels where appropriate, and creating new habitats and features such as ponds, ditches, wet

	Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Flood protection, Water quality regulation, Carbon storage, Cooling and shading, Pest control.		woodland, trees, hedges and more habitats suitable as part of a wetland matrix. Connect existing floodplain wetlands by the creation of new wetlands to act as stepping stones for wildlife and increase the overall habitat available for key wetland species. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): Fen, marsh, swamp, grassland, rivers, lakes and wet woodland with floodplain wetland mosaic secondary code 55

Page 179		PM55 (mapped)	**Create new, varied ponds in suitable locations across all habitat types to increase biodiversity and create more clean water habitats**. Creating ponds in areas away from pollution offers one of the quickest ways to bring clean water back into the landscape (FHT). Create ponds that are varied in structure, sun exposure, locations, and shape. Within each pond, create a variety of depths and types of pond edges including a gradual, shallow bank to allow animals into and out of the pond. Allow plants to grow naturally at pond edges with piles of stone, deadwood, and/or areas of longer vegetation near to ponds. When creating multiple ponds, create them at different points in time so that landscapes have older ponds, younger ponds, and ponds that are allowed to dry/die out. Prevent ponds becoming overgrown by tall, dominant reeds and sedges. Maintain these ponds to allow a variety of sun exposure with areas of no shade (especially on the southern side of the pond) and include deadwood within ponds. See further guidance here. FHT recommend creating 10 new 'priority ponds' per every 100 hectares of habitat creation. Across Oxfordshire, ponds offer great value to biodiversity including exemplar habitats at gravel pits sites and sites like Otmoor. Pond and wetland creation can also be designed to aid the management of water through the county offering wider benefits to people and farm businesses (preventing flooding and storing water). Target habitats (UK Habs codes): Standing water (r1) with secondary code 40 ponds (priority habitat), other temporary ponds and scrapes (r1f6)
		PM56 (countywide)	**Create more reedbed habitat at suitable locations to provide habitat for reedbed specialists (often as part of larger wetland mosaics)**

			Create new reedbeds in suitable locations. Reedbeds are wetland areas where common reed is dominant; looking at areas where reeds already grow is a good indicator of a suitable location. Reedbeds can filter potentially polluted water from settlements before it is discharged to rivers. This habitat type is typically found in river floodplains and can exist as reed swamp (flooded all year) or reed fen (flooded periodically). Reeds are often used to supply thatch. Often created within floodplain grazing marsh to complement the overall wetland habitat mosaic. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): reedbeds (f2e). National Vegetation Classification (NVC) S4

		PM57 (countywide)	**Enhance any existing fen, marsh and swamp wetland habitat areas.** Enhance and maintain wetland habitat areas to achieve a variety of appropriate vegetation types and habitat elements that are suitable to both the area and to the source, supply, and flow of freshwater. Aim to achieve a diversity of edges, structures, and include areas of open water where suitable for the site. More information on the management of fen, marsh, and swamp habitats can be found here. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): Fen, marsh, swamp, rivers, lakes with floodplain wetland mosaic secondary code 55

P25	**Create, enhance and manage habitats within Oxfordshire's floodplains including wet grasslands and wetland habitats to achieve biodiverse habitats that support a rich array of species. Link and connect these habitats by creating and managing wildlife corridors along rivers and streams, providing natural flood**	PM58 (mapped)	**Create areas of new good quality grazing marsh and enhance (or maintain a good condition) of existing floodplain grazing marsh.** Floodplain grazing marsh benefits from management that allows it to be periodically covered by shallow standing water. These habitats can often be found within, around, or near to a mix of other wetland habitat types. Found close to water, floodplain grazing marsh habitats have ditches running through them which require sensitive, rotational management to support species. Within the management plan for grazing marsh, aim to achieve a varied vegetational structure with appropriate levels of rush cover to support breeding waders and a diversity of ground cover including patches of bare ground and pockets of scrub to provide a broad range of niches for invertebrates and other species. These sites require light grazing (not overgrazing) to maintain plant

	management services and improved water quality. Wider benefits: Food production, Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Carbon storage, Pollination.		diversity and cattle are typically a particularly good option. Avoid draining these habitats and instead aim to maintain water levels so that they are close to the field level throughout the year with natural and steady variation above and below that level throughout the year. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): grassland, wetland or rivers and lakes with secondary code 19.
P26	**Enhance and manage 'riparian land' (the land running along the sides of our rivers and streams) to achieve good ecological condition to benefit wildlife, enhance freshwater habitats, and create joined-up corridors of connectivity through Oxfordshire.** Wider benefits: Fish production, Recreation and leisure, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Cooling and shading, Pollination, Pest control.	PM59 (countywide)	**Create and manage biodiverse habitat alongside riverbanks to enhance biodiversity, improve water quality, and offer a corridor to enable wildlife to move along rivers, banks, and watercourses.** Enhance habitats and biodiversity along riverbanks by creating vegetative buffers and, where suitable, plant (or allow the growth of) new trees that are well suited to the soils alongside the river (this can include but is not limited to willow, alder, birch, and poplar). Consider and plan for the future management of these trees and vegetation. This action has the ability to create a corridor of connected habitats and can often be appropriate along towpaths and pathways. This action can be undertaken in both urban and rural settings to improve the condition and diversity of land alongside rivers and streams benefitting both people and wildlife.
P27	**Improve the abundance and range of freshwater species that rely on rivers, streams, standing water, and wetland habitats and need specific additional potential measures.** Wider benefits: Fish production, Education and knowledge, Interaction	N/a	See the 'Species Priorities List' to see the potential measures that could be taken to support species that use and benefit from habitats within this type of environment. Some of these measures are mapped.

	with nature, Sense of place, Pest control		

Deadwood			
P28	**Retain more deadwood across all habitat types in Oxfordshire to support a wide range of species.** Wider benefits: Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Carbon storage, Pollination, Pest control.	PM60 (countywide)	**Across all habitat types that have trees, retain dead, decaying, and/or dying wood in the environment where it is safe to do so (including deadwood in water).** Aim to retain and add new deadwood (in a range of sizes and ages) into all habitat types and expose the deadwood to a range of conditions (submerged in water, wet, dry, damp, heavily shaded, partial shade, and sunny open areas). Retain deadwood in a variety of structures; standing deadwood (upright trees, trunks, or stumps that are dead or dying), fallen deadwood (wood on the floor), and deadwood branches on alive trees. Hollows within standing trees support a wide range of species. Avoid using fungicides around these trees to allow and encourage fungal growth on this deadwood. Manage trees and branches using techniques that can enable you to regularly add new deadwood to the environment. Where necessary, reduce dead and dying tree height in stages to make the tree safe & prolong the presence of dead and dying wood in this location. Manage deadwood in accordance with any species priorities for the site. Where safe to do so, leave dead and dying ash trees in situ. Where ash trees have to be removed, look for opportunities to retain standing deadwood and/or stumps. Implement measures to introduce veteran tree characteristics to a range of tree ages and species.

Hedgerows and hedgerow trees			
P29	**Enhance and sympathetically manage hedgerows and hedgerow trees to achieve good ecological condition and support biodiversity.** Wider benefits: Food production, Aesthetic value, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Carbon storage, Air quality regulation, Cooling and shading, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Pollination, Pest control.	PM61 (countywide)	**Manage existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees to enhance their condition and longevity to benefit biodiversity.** Refer to hedgerow guidance and organisations like Hedgelink. Allow hedgerows to grow to a thick and tall condition or to be laid into appropriate or traditional 'profiles' (shapes and designs). Instead of cutting all hedges annually, consider moving to a two- or three-year management regime for suitable hedgerows, or longer where possible. Where possible (on sites with lots of hedges) ensure that the 2–3-year management regime is not undertaken on all the hedges on a holding at the same time. Retain hedgerow trees for as long as is safe to do so and, where suitable, manage tree-less hedgerows in a way that allows new hedgerow trees to emerge at suitable intervals. Lay or coppice suitable hedgerows on a long rotation to regenerate them when they show signs of becoming gappy. Aim to trim hedges after berries have been taken by wintering birds and avoid hedge cutting or trimming during bird nesting periods. Retain dead, dying, and decaying wood where safe and practicable in hedges and hedgerow trees. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): Species-rich native hedgerow (h2a5)
P30	**Create more hedgerows across Oxfordshire to support biodiversity**. Wider benefits: Food production, Aesthetic value, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Carbon storage, Air quality regulation, Cooling and shading, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Pollination, Pest control.	PM62 (countywide)	**Plant, or allow the growth of, new and diverse hedgerows.** Establish a diverse range of hedgerow species, particularly native species and those adapted to the particular location or range of climatic conditions. Plan to grow and manage hedgerow trees within the hedgerow at suitable intervals to increase the connectivity of these habitats for species. Consider planting native fruiting hedgerow species that provide nectar in spring and fruit in summer and autumn; for example, hawthorn, blackthorn, and grey willow would support a wide range of rare species and establishing Wild Pear (Pyrus pyraster) could help to re-establish this rare species in the county. Plan for maintenance and management whilst the young hedgerow establishes. Aim to enhance connectivity by planting and establishing new hedgerows so that they join up to existing habitats, especially any existing hedgerows or patches of semi-

			natural habitat to promote the movement of species through the landscape and offer a corridor. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): Species-rich native hedgerow (h2a5)

Invasive Species

P31	**Reduce damage to local species and habitats from invasive species or unsustainably high populations of species. Reduce the spread of invasive or problematic species across all necessary habitat types.** Wider benefits: Wood production.	PM63 (countywide)	**Slow, stop, and/or reverse the spread of invasive species that compromise the health of habitats in Oxfordshire.** Support or develop initiatives and actions to control or eradicate unsustainably high levels of invasive non-native species throughout all habitat types (including but not limited to, woodlands and freshwater habitats like rivers). If eradication is not possible or appropriate, actions to reduce, slow, or stop the spread of invasive, non-native species should be supported. Actions must be in alignment with the legislation about moving/handling/disposing of species. There is a UK Government list of invasive species which can be seen here. At the time of writing, some of the invasive species that are particularly relevant to Oxfordshire include, but are not limited to: Freshwater-associated species - American Mink, American Signal Crayfish, New Zealand pygmyweed, and Himalayan balsalm. Woodland-associated species – Grey squirrel, Muntjac deer. Problematic and invasive species are expected to change with future climatic variation and this action should be adapted to the specific, relevant, invasive, or problematic species at the time. More information about what to do and how to record invasive species can be seen here with research and evidence available to read here.

Wider environment – agricultural (improved grassland and arable) and rural landholdings.

Please note, you may wish to refer to priorities for other habitats in the above sections if they are present on your landholdings (e.g. grasslands and

scrub, woodlands, rivers, floodplain grazing marsh, orchards, and others).			
P32	**Support farm businesses, rural landholdings, and tenant farmers to make more space for nature within the farmed landscape, regenerate healthy soils, incorporate wildlife-rich habitats, include agroforestry, and improve water quality. This would create excellent food/fibre production systems that offer valuable, connected spaces for biodiversity too, enabling species to spread through Oxfordshire's fields, edges, and corridors.** Wider benefits: Food production, Wood production, Water supply, Recreation and leisure, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Carbon storage, Cooling and shading, Pollination, Pest control.	PM64 (countywide)	**Create and manage graded margins up to hedgerows and dry-stone walls to support birds and other farmland species**. Within fields that have hedges, provide margins that are graded in height (shortest near the field, longest grass at the hedgerow). These graded margins next to a thick hedgerow offer important nesting sites for birds including who seek long grass at hedgerow bases. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): arable field margins (c1a)
		PM65 (countywide)	**Create and manage wide arable field margins and in-field strips as wildflower grassland.** Methods vary and could include rotational mowing regimes to create wide in-field strips or margins (e.g. 3 – 18 metres) which offer cover for small mammals and refuge over winter for invertebrates. Remove arisings as needed to avoid enriching the soils and to avoid losing wildflowers to vigorous grasses. Manage arable fields, their margins, and in-field strips to encourage and retain populations of arable flowers and avoid spraying these areas. Alongside increasing biodiversity in those places, field margins and in-field strips can be positioned to connect to each other within farm holdings or between neighbouring holdings to help species to move through the landscape. Wide margins are particularly important alongside water courses and ditches to reduce diffuse pollution, erosion and enhance the biodiversity of the water course. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): arable field margins (c1a)
		PM66 (countywide)	**Create and manage field margins to improve and increase biodiversity around fields**. Maximise the diversity of field margins to provide a range of habitats within margins. Aim to vary management of margins to increase diversity. For example, annual cutting of the strip nearest the crop but with less frequent cutting nearer the field boundary. Variety could also be introduced by managing blocks, strips or whole margins at different intervals. In planted margins, tailor the seed mix diversity to

			include a variety of flowering plants that could provide continued options for pollen and nectar throughout an extended season. Include species in planted margins that are able to tolerate and flower under hotter and drier summers. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): arable field margins (c1a)
		PM67 (countywide)	**Create and improve areas that support rare arable plants on farmland.** If species of arable plants are present, and if it is appropriate for those species, you can support arable plant species on any relevant soil types by disturbing or cultivating some areas of suitable soil (typically each year in autumn) and allowing arable plant seeds to grow in the following years. Minimise or stop the use of herbicides within this area. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): arable fields – cultivated for annual flora (c1c9)
		PM68 (countywide)	**Support farmland birds over winter**. Implement measures to assist farmland birds survive across the hungry gap (mid-February to Mid-April): overwinter stubble, seed-rich winter cover crops using wild bird seed mixtures, unsprayed and unharvested arable headlands, and/or supplementary feeding. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): winter stubble (c1c5), arable fields - wild bird mix (c1c6), arable field margins (c1a)
		PM69 (countywide)	**Take action to improve farmland bird nesting success.** Offer and retain nesting and roosting sites for birds including; bird boxes, trees with hollows, standing deadwood, areas of scrub, dense hedges, suitable buildings and barns (including those derelict).
		PM70 (countywide)	**Retain, improve, or create habitat to increase the opportunity for wildlife to move through the landscape (e.g. wildlife corridors).** Improve the connectivity of habitats or of any permanent areas of uncultivated land that support species to move through the landscape. Aim to join up areas of habitat within farms and between neighbouring farms.

P33	**Increase biodiversity within farmland soils.** Wider benefits: Food production, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Carbon storage, Pest control.	PM71 (countywide)	**Across Oxfordshire's farmland, increase the biodiversity in soils by choosing cultivation practices that can regenerate species and produce healthy soils**. Take actions and use techniques that are suitable to the farm type and location to improve the abundance and health of species that produce good quality soils (e.g. minimum cultivation, cover crops, leys, grazing techniques, and crop rotations). Measure, and aim to improve the health, abundance, and diversity of soil species. Improving soil biodiversity will enhance the structure and quality of the soil enhancing productivity, building carbon content, and improving water retention and infiltration to help reduce runoff and leaving of soil nutrients. The actions to enhance grassland health and condition are described in the grassland section at the top of this document. Target habitats (UK Habs codes): temporary grass and clover leys (c1b), rye-grass and clover ley (c1b5), Legume-rich ley (c1b6), herb-rich ley (c1b7)
P34	**Increase the number, diversity and health of trees on farmland** Wider benefits: Wood production, Food production, Aesthetic value, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Carbon storage, Cooling and shading, Pollination, Pest control.	PM72 (countywide)	**Plant (or allow the growth of) diverse trees of various ages and types on farmland**. Plant trees, or allow trees to grow up, across different years (successional planting/successional growth) to broaden the age diversity of trees. This could include agroforestry, woodland, standard trees in hedgerows, scrub growth, shelterbelts, silvopasture, individual trees and/or orchards. You could create shelterbelts (windbreaks) made up of trees to protect livestock and crops from inclement weather (see the benefits of trees on arable farms here). Alternatively/additionally, you could incorporate trees or agroforestry into agricultural systems, particularly livestock grazing systems (silvopasture), or alongside crop production (silvoarable systems). This could include trees that can produce a fruit or nut crop (see agroforestry handbook).
		PM73 (countywide)	**Retain and/or plant in-field trees with suitable buffer zones to ensure continuity of open grown trees (live, dead, or dying) that support species**

			across the landscape. Retain existing trees within the farmed landscape, particularly veteran and ancient trees, and fence off ancient and veteran trees if necessary to protect them and their root zones from soil compaction and/or to enable new trees to grow nearby (see guidance on managing such trees).
P35	**Farm with nature by creating and implementing integrated pest management plans that reduce the need for chemical control of on plants, insects, and/or fungi**. Wider benefits: Food production, Interaction with nature, Pollination, Pest Control.	PM74 (countywide)	**Create a tailored integrated pest management plan to reduce the use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides**. When thinking about how to manage crop pests, plants, and diseases within farmland, implement measures that can support and work with biodiversity to work with nature to produce food (for example, NFU integrated pest management plans)
P36	**Improve the abundance and range of species that need specific additional potential measures within agricultural land.** Wider benefits: Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Pollination, Pest Control	N/a	See the 'Species Priorities List' to see the potential measures that could be taken to support species that use and benefit from habitats within this type of environment. Some of these measures are mapped.
Wider environment - Archaeological and heritage assets			
P37	**Restore and enhance biodiversity across the landscape in a manner that complements the landscape**	PM75 (mapped)	**Restore biodiversity around heritage assets and scheduled monuments in a complementary manner.** If appropriate and suitable, take action to create, enhance, or maintain habitats around heritage assets and scheduled monuments. Actions should aim to achieve a good

	and historical and cultural features. Wider benefits: Flood protection, Erosion protection, Water quality regulation, Carbon storage, Pollination, Recreation and leisure, Aesthetic value, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place		ecological condition to benefit biodiversity and should be undertaken in a manner that is complementary to the heritage feature(s), and not in a way that would cause them damage. Often, but not always, grassland actions are likely to be possible, sometimes other actions may be suitable too. However, this must be checked before plans can be agreed or formalised. Before planning habitat actions on sites with heritage assets, consult with the relevant authorities like the County Council Archaeology team (archaeologydc@oxfordshire.gov.uk) and Historic England.
Wider environment – villages, towns, cities, and green spaces **Please note**, in addition to the measures below, you may also wish to deliver other measures that might be present in your local area (e.g. grasslands, scrub, road verges and road verge nature reserves, woodlands, rivers, orchards, and others). The relevant measures for those habitat types can be found in the above sections of this list.			
38	**Enhance and create more, connected, habitats and spaces for nature in Oxfordshire's villages, towns, and cities to make biodiversity and a connection with nature part of daily life (at home, at work, and in parks and gardens) and to realise the wider benefits of nature in urban areas such as urban cooling, reduce surface water run-off and cleaner air.** Wider benefits: Recreation, Aesthetic value, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Flood regulation, Air quality regulation, Carbon storage, Cooling	PM76 (mapped)	**Create and/or manage greenspaces and habitats in urban areas to enhance their condition to benefit wildlife, improve connectivity, and provide wider benefits.** Consider opportunities to create, enhance, or manage habitats and wildlife-friendly features. In and around settlements, various actions can be taken to create and/or enhance greenspaces, and habitats like those listed within this document (above), including but not limited to; grasslands, scrub, road verge nature reserves, orchards, parkland, woodland, mosaic habitats, wetlands, freshwater habitats, and rivers. Many of the sections above have further advice and guidance to help with these actions. Vary the action to be suitable to the scale, size, and type of habitat or greenspace in question as well as any species present or nearby. Any actions taken should also be compatible with the current land-use and should respect community preferences. See Wild Oxfordshire's guidance here for supporting nature on your local patch. In urban environments, prioritise connectivity so that wildlife can more easily move between neighbouring land, and aim to establish a robust ecological network that supports wildlife movement through urban areas, making nature a part of daily life.

	and shading, Noise reduction, Pollination, Pest control		Actions to benefit biodiversity can also be tailored to deliver important benefits for local communities, including addressing inequitable distribution of environmental determinants of health and wellbeing', and improving climate resilience. Such actions could include innovative solutions like green (or brown) roofs, biodiverse swales, or rainwater gardens to mitigate the impacts of flooding. Other actions could include the use of vegetation cover to provide shade to mitigate excess heat and to filter particulate air pollution. The advice sheet offers guidance on managing parks and green spaces for pollinators but you can refer up to other sections in this list for guidance about e.g. creating orchards, enhancing woodlands, creating ponds, and more.
		PM77 (countywide)	**Integrate wildlife-friendly measures into homes, gardens, greenspaces and developments.** Take action to enhance these spaces for wildlife and consider key species that you could support in gardens and greenspaces. These may include birds, bats, hedgehogs, frogs, toads, bees, butterflies, and more. Consider installing bird boxes, bat boxes, swift bricks and other options that support wildlife in and around buildings where appropriate. For new homes being built, see this Wildlife Trust guide on 'Homes and wildlife - How to build housing in a nature friendly way'. In existing gardens and greenspaces follow suggestions for 'Wildlife gardening' e.g. how to build wildlife ponds, attract pollinators, plant native shrubs, trees, and hedges. Ensure any fences or walls have 13 by 13cm holes to create 'Hedgehog Highways' that allow hedgehogs to move through gardens. See a list of hedgehog friendly fencing suppliers here. Avoid using pesticides or peat-based compost in gardens and avoid introducing potentially invasive non-native species into gardens and other outdoor spaces. Remove existing invasive species where possible. See a list of invasive plant species here. Retrofit wildlife kerbs to existing gullies, particularly near existing nature sites, and install wildlife kerbs on new gullies as standard. This will provide safer passage for amphibians and small mammals around road gullies and drainage openings. Reduce recreational pressure on wildlife and habitats in urban areas by maintaining clear paths, keeping dogs under close, effective control, reducing the impact of cats on

			wildlife, and aiming to create or enhance some areas for wildlife in areas in places where there is little-to-no disturbance. Whilst these are important actions to take across the county, the impact of providing nature-rich spaces is likely to be highest near/within public infrastructure such as schools and hospitals where the health and social benefits of nature connection are particularly marked.
		PM78 (mapped)	**Create or enhance a mosaic of habitats in a manner and size that complements the current use of the land by the local community.** This action is suitable to take in and around community-use areas like playing fields, play spaces, cemeteries, golf courses, allotments, public parks, religious grounds and other community spaces or gardens. On land used by local communities, look for complementary opportunities to enhance the area to support wildlife and create space for biodiversity. This can be done in edges and patches and doesn't have to be the whole space. Consider opportunities like planting trees, hedges, orchards, creating ponds, enhancing grassland, allowing corners of scrub to develop, and keeping deadwood in the area. Actions should complement the needs of the local community for safety and access. Think about what species are present or nearby that this space might be able to support through, for example; hedgehog highways, bird boxes, bat boxes, beetle banks, bug hotels, and more. There are a range of organisations that can support you with this (BBOWT, CAG Oxfordshire, Wild Oxfordshire, TOE, Caring for God's Acre, and Sports England to name a few). Sports England have an action plan supported by committed funding that could be applied to local pitches (see case studies here). Whilst this is an important action across the county, actions that produce nature-rich spaces can be particularly beneficial near-to, or within, areas of public infrastructure like school, hospitals, and accessible green/blue spaces. In these spaces, the health and social benefits of nature connection can be great. Additionally, there are particularly deprived areas of Oxfordshire (see this report, page 22) that could be a focus for these actions.

		PM79 (countywide)	**Create and enhance wildlife-rich corridors of suitable habitat between, through, or near settlements in Oxfordshire.** Create new corridors or enhance existing corridors that offer room for nature and wildlife to move through towns, cities, gardens, parks, and villages and which include habitat for foraging and for resting/nesting. Consider the importance of dark corridors with minimal artificial lighting to benefit wildlife (read more about lighting and guidance here). Corridors should ideally join up habitats and may be possible through, between, or near to settlements and could be created alongside active travel corridors, providing benefits for both people and wildlife. Such corridors may include Public Rights of Way, permissive paths, accessible walking/wheeling routes, watercourses, footpaths, hedgerows, greenways and others.
		PM80 (countywide)	**Ensure that actions in urban areas offer wider benefits and meet relevant green space standards.** Whilst benefitting biodiversity, actions can also be tailored to deliver benefits for local communities, including addressing inequitable distribution of environmental determinants of health and wellbeing', and improving climate resilience. This could include innovative solutions like green (or brown) rooves, biodiverse swales, or rainwater gardens to mitigate flooding or actions such as increasing vegetation cover to mitigate excess heat through shading or to filter particulate air pollution. The Environmental Benefits from Nature Tool can be used to understand the wider benefits that might be gained or lost from changes in land use. Where relevant and appropriate, create or enhance multifunctional parks and green spaces to ensure that residents of new (and existing) housing have sufficient access to larger green spaces (meeting Natural England Access to Green Space Standards). This should be prioritised in areas with the least local access to greenspaces, where significant housing development is expected, where local habitats and species are under pressure from high levels of use by local communities, and/or where people and homes are highly vulnerable to negative impacts such as air pollution, urban heat island effects, flood risk, and others. See guidance in the Green Infrastructure Framework and

			read about the public health benefits of accessible greenspaces here. Consider opportunities to create and enhance greenways in cities to improve people's access to rivers and provide nature-rich corridors. Design and deliver new housing developments with sufficient accessible, nature-rich spaces for residents (meeting Building with Nature Standards). Whilst this is an important action across the county, actions that produce nature-rich spaces can be particularly beneficial near-to, or within, areas of public infrastructure like schools, hospitals, and accessible green/blue spaces. In these spaces, the health and social benefits of nature connection can be great. Additionally, 16 priority neighbourhoods have been identified in Oxfordshire(see this report, page 22) that could be prioritised for efforts to improve access to greenspace and could be a focus for these actions.

		PM81 (countywide)	**Increase tree canopy cover in Oxfordshire by planting and managing trees and woodlands in built up areas.** Plant trees and/or woodlands that can cool and shade the local environment and improve air quality. These trees could also create or maintain corridors for wildlife to support species to cross the county (in both rural and urban environments). This action offers particular benefits to human health by mitigating the impact of excessive heat and filtering particulate pollutants from the air. Planting trees and creating canopy cover in warmer areas of the county (especially urban environments) helps to reduce temperatures and increase the resilience of urban areas in the face of climate change. Planting trees between sources of particulate pollution (such as road traffic) and particularly sensitive areas such as schools, active travel corridors, and residential areas will have the most benefits for human health from improvements in air quality. Suitable locations could include green space, gardens, parks, schools, or as street trees. When planting new trees, plan for their long-term management, and plant them strategically, aiming to create corridors of trees that connect up urban greenspaces, gardens, or other habitats. Corridors could connect either to each other and/or to the

			wider countryside where possible. These corridors of canopies help local species to move and join-up their populations. Whilst this is an important action to take all across the county, this would be particularly important action to support and incentivise in built-up areas that have low tree cover, and in locations that experience particularly high vulnerability to heat or particulate air pollution. See this guide on how to select and plant urban trees, and see this new 'Trees outside woodland map' to see extent and location of woodlands and trees in England. Some of Oxfordshire's neighbourhoods have particularly low tree cover or access to green space and actions could be focused on these locations to maximise the benefits for people, health, and nature.
		PM82 (countywide)	**Carry out wildlife-friendly actions that also reduce flood-risk and the impact of heat in built-up areas.** Areas of Oxfordshire are increasingly vulnerable to the effects of changing climate patterns (including flooding, drought and excess heat). There are solutions that can reduce these impacts which also benefit nature, these are called nature-based solutions. Install more green walls, green roofs, or innovative surfaces on new or existing buildings that help to cool urban areas, catch water, and provide more space for nature. Link to further guidance. Increase vegetation cover to mitigate excess heat through shading and intercept rainfall. Keep gardens instead of creating more impermeable hard surfaces, and where possible, remove hard-standing surfaces in favour of permeable surfaces (ideally natural, green options that also benefit wildlife). These options to retain and create more permeable space helps to soak up water, reducing the risk of surface water flooding. Read about the impact of hard surfaces and the problem with paved gardens here. Integrate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to capture, hold, and manage the flow of water near built up areas and developments. SuDS are designed to manage rainfall and stormwater runoff in ways that mimic natural drainage processes and can also enhance the local ecosystem. Examples include rain gardens, mini ponds, orchards,

			wetlands, and balancing ponds. These SuDS features not only contribute to flood risk management but also serve to support biodiversity by creating habitats for plants, animals, and insects. Oxford City has published a Design and Evaluation Guide to help navigate sustainable drainage options and there are national standards for SuDS here.
		PM83 (countywide)	**Create and/or enhance community and local growing spaces, community farms, and allotments to improve soil health and benefit biodiversity.** Take actions to increase biodiversity and improve the health of soils in local growing spaces (farms, orchards, allotments) to enable long-term healthy food production that benefits local people and wildlife. Actions should be supported by local communities and suitable to the type of growing space. Look at guides which offer detail about growing food in community settings, permaculture principles, using water more sustainably and reducing the need for chemicals during food production. The National Allotment Society have lots of supportive information. Options will vary based on the type of site and could include the creation of ponds, hedges, hibernaculum, compost sites, and managing the area in a different or regenerative ways. Actions could also be taken for particular species like birds, bats, frogs, newts, snakes, and toads by creating areas of imperfection, nesting spaces, breeding spaces, and habitats or areas that benefit them.
		PM84 (countywide)	**Reduce pollution and damage to the environment by changing products, behaviours, and actions.** Support initiatives that could help to prevent damage to the environment and which contribute towards enhancing the condition of the environment (by reducing pollution into the environment across Oxfordshire, including in places where people live and work). There are a large range of actions that could be supported like preventing run-off, preventing littering, or cleaning up litter from local areas. Additionally, damage and pollution could be limited by changing commonplace habits, for example, reducing the use of chemical controls in the environment (such as herbicides), helping people to purchase products that are less harmful to the environment when put down drains, or

			to change sources of fuel. Some actions may focus on changes to diets or enabling people to buy more local produce. Other actions could include increasing healthcare options: for instance, offering more green social prescribing treatments to people, which can reduce the amount of pharmaceutical pollution in our waterways from medications taken by people. Oxfordshire Community Action Groups is a network of over 100 community action groups working in local communities across Oxfordshire to make it a safer, fairer, greener, more sustainable place to live, work and visit.
P39	**Build more awareness of biodiversity and enable more people to join and engage with habitat enhancement, creation, and education initiatives so that more people in Oxfordshire are connected with nature and feel more able to act as stewards for Oxfordshire's current and future environment.** Wider benefits: Recreation and leisure, Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place	PM85 (countywide)	**Offer courses, spaces, and opportunities for people of all ages to connect with nature and learn about nature recovery and practice environmental stewardship.** In order to deliver this kind of action, a variety of landowner and land manager projects would need to be enabled and supported in partnership with a range of organisations (where suitable). For example, the creation of visitor centres, of more areas of nature with accessible routes, and more accessible education opportunities for adults and young people that relate to nature recovery (including nature-friendly farming). Aim to improve awareness of the biodiversity crisis and efforts to address this, and address barriers to involvement so that more people from across all communities are taking action for nature. This can include opportunities around the identification and recording of species and habitats to contribute towards our understanding of local biodiversity.
P40	**Improve the abundance and range of species that need specific additional potential measures within, and around, settlements, people, and buildings.** Wider benefits: Education and knowledge, Interaction with nature, Sense of place, Pollination, Pest Control	N/a	See the 'Species Priorities List' to see the additional potential measures that could be taken to support species that use and benefit from habitats within this type of environment. Some of these measures are mapped.

You have reached the end of the LNRS ‘Statement of Biodiversity Priorities’

Appendices

Appendix A – Wider benefits from nature recovery

The benefits that nature provides to people are often known as 'ecosystem services'. In developing the LNRS we considered how nature recovery priorities could contribute towards delivering 18 ecosystem services. Healthy ecosystems, including plants, animals, soil and water (our 'natural capital) deliver a range of services (Figure A1). These include the provision of food, water, timber and fish, as well as cultural services such as nature-rich green spaces for recreation, beauty, education and interaction with nature. Nature also provides a range of regulating services including the control of floods, erosion, air and water quality, noise and climate, as well as pollination and natural pest control. All these services are described in Table A1.

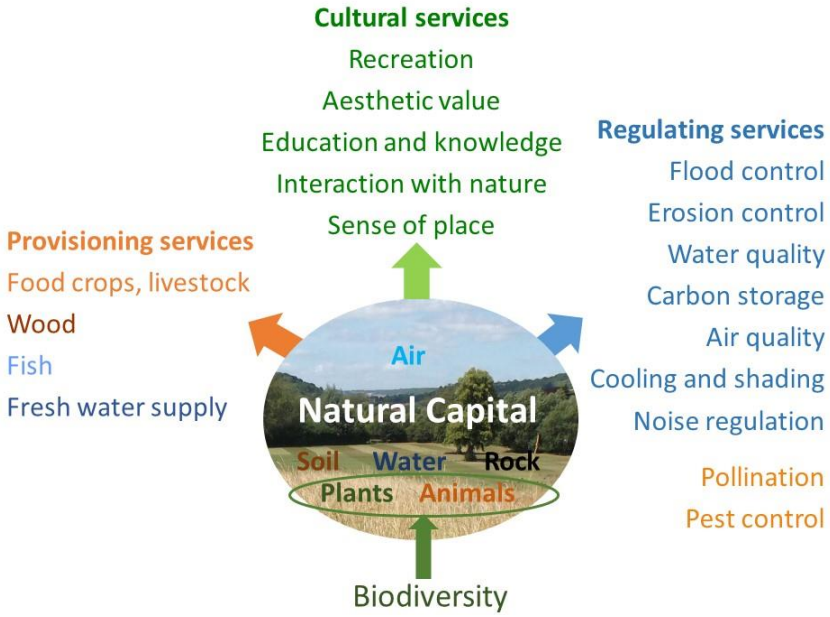


Figure A1. Healthy ecosystems can contribute to 18 ecosystem services.
Source: Alison Smith (2021) 'Natural Capital in Oxfordshire Short report', page 3. Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford.

Table A1: The 18 ecosystem services that were considered when identifying wider benefits for people from the LNRS.
Source: Alison Smith (2021) 'Natural Capital in Oxfordshire Short report', page 4. Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford.

Provisioning	**Food production**	Arable crops, horticulture, livestock, orchards, allotments, urban food, wild food (e.g. gathering berries or mushrooms).
	Wood production	Timber, wood production for paper, woody biofuel crops, coppice wood or wood waste used for biofuel.
	Fish production	Aquaculture, commercial fishing, recreational fishing (recreational fishing is also a cultural service, but the habitat conditions match those for fish production).
	Water supply	Impact of soil and vegetation on rainwater runoff and infiltration, and thus on groundwater recharge or surface water flow.
Regulating	**Flood protection**	Reduction of surface runoff, peak flow, flood extent and flood depth through canopy interception, evapotranspiration, soil infiltration and physical slowing of water flow.
	Erosion protection	The ability of vegetation to stabilise soil against erosion and mass wastage by protecting the soil from the erosive power of rainfall and overland flow, trapping sediment, and binding soil particles together with roots.
	Water quality regulation	Direct uptake of pollutants by terrestrial or aquatic vegetation; interception of overland flow and trapping / filtration of pollutants and sediment by vegetation before it reaches watercourses; breakdown of pollutants into harmless forms e.g. by denitrifying bacteria that convert nitrates into nitrogen gas. Also infiltration into the ground, allowing pollutants to be filtered out by the soil and preventing pollution of watercourses – though pollutants could enter groundwater supplies.
	Carbon storage	Carbon stored in vegetation and soil. In the context of land use change (with complete loss of habitats and often major soil disturbance), this is more relevant than carbon sequestered annually. The 'time to reach target condition' reflects the time taken for a new habitat to reach a typical carbon sequestration rate for a mature habitat.
	Air quality regulation	Removal of air pollutants by deposition, absorption and/or breakdown by vegetation. Fine particles ($PM_{2.5}$) are the most damaging type of pollution, but vegetation can also remove ozone and nitrogen oxides (by absorption into pores).
	Cooling and shading	Shade, shelter and cooling effect of vegetation and water, especially urban trees close to buildings, green roofs and green walls, which can reduce heating and cooling costs, or trees in urban parks which can provide shade on hot days.
	Noise reduction	Attenuation of noise by vegetation.
	Pollination	Pollination of crops (and wild plants, supporting other ES) by wild insects (mainly bees and hoverflies). Excludes pollination by managed honeybees.
	Pest control	Predation of crop or tree pests by invertebrates (e.g. beetles, spiders, wasps), birds and bats.

Cultural	**Recreation and leisure**	Provision of green and blue spaces that can be used for any leisure activity, e.g. walking, cycling, running, picnicking, camping, boating, playing or just relaxing.
	Aesthetic value	Provision of attractive views, beautiful surroundings, and pleasing, calming or inspiring sights, sounds and smells of nature.
	Education and knowledge	Opportunities for formal education (e.g. school trips), scientific research, local knowledge and informal learning (e.g. from information boards or experiences).
	Interaction with nature	Provision of opportunities for formal or informal nature-related activities, e.g. bird watching, botany, random encounters with wildlife, or feeling 'connected to nature'. There is some overlap with biodiversity, but access by people can have negative impacts on some wildlife habitats. Excludes recreational fishing; hunting / shooting (not covered); the intrinsic value of nature (covered by the biodiversity metric); existence value (from just knowing that nature exists).
	Sense of place	The aspects of a place that make it special and distinctive – this could include locally characteristic species, habitats, landscapes or features; places related to historic and cultural events, or places important to people for spiritual or emotional reasons.

Within this set of LNRS priorities and measures you will see 'wider benefits' associated with each priority. These are examples of the main benefits that each group of actions could provide alongside achieving the biodiversity priorities. This shows how nature recovery can play a key role in other priorities for the county, including climate resilience, health and well-being, air and water quality, and wider socio-economic benefits. Detailed examples are provided in the sections below.

It is important to understand that the actual benefits delivered will depend on the type of nature recovery action, the type and age of habitat, the location, public accessibility, and a range of other factors. This means that nature recovery actions can be optimised to deliver wider benefits and minimise trade-offs between goals. For example, in urban areas, trees or hedgerows can be positioned to act as air pollution barriers between busy roads and houses or schools. To help protect water quality, buffer strips of tussocky grass, trees and shrubs can be created alongside watercourses to intercept polluted run-off from farmland. Trees can be planted on steep slopes and erodible soils to help reduce soil erosion. Actions such as creating or improving parks, planting street trees, and creating wildflower meadows or community orchards can be targeted in urban areas that currently don't have much green space (see Oxfordshire's greenspace-deprived neighbourhoods).

There can also be trade-offs for some services. For example, planting woodland on farmland will produce benefits for carbon storage and flood protection, but also means it can no longer be used for food production. We have taken account of this when mapping the best locations for each measure. For example, we made it harder for the most productive farmland being selected for habitat creation actions (although some is still included). There are also limits to what nature can do. For example, while nature

recovery can help to absorb carbon dioxide and reduce air and water pollution, this must not distract from the urgent need to reduce emissions and pollution at source, which will have a far greater impact. Indeed, habitats used as a 'buffer' to soak up noise or pollution may have less value for wildlife.

Below are some more detailed examples of how measures in the LNRS can deliver wider benefits for people.

Climate change mitigation

It is estimated that Oxfordshire's soils and vegetation currently store about 85 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. That is equivalent to over 20 times the amount we produce every year by burning fossil fuels (four million tonnes). Oxfordshire's habitats also soak up about 316,000 tonnes of CO2 every year – about 8% of our annual emissions. So while the most urgent priority is to reduce emissions from fossil fuels and other sources, it is also vital to protect and enhance the great amounts of carbon stored in Oxfordshire's habitats. The LNRS can support this priority by prioritising areas to keep existing habitats in good condition and by recommending the creation of new areas of woodland, scrub, grassland, and wetland in places where they offer the greatest benefits for biodiversity too. On farmland, measures such as PM73 (increasing biodiversity in farmland soils) can also help to store a lot more carbon in the soil, and in urban areas measure PM78 (increase tree canopy cover) can also store large amounts of carbon in urban trees.

Climate change adaptation

The LNRS measures can play a key role in helping the county adapt to climate change. One of the main benefits can come from natural flood management, such as by planting trees in upper catchments to intercept and soak up rainwater, reducing flooding downstream (PM35, PM39). Also, rivers can be reconnected to their floodplains (PM40) to allow floodwater to gradually seep into the ground or slowly back into the river, reducing flood peaks in settlements downstream. In urban areas, creating more nature-rich green space (PM77) and tree canopy cover (PM78) can help to cool urban areas and provide shade in heatwaves, as well as soaking up heavy rain and reducing urban flooding. On farmland, measures such as PM73 (increasing biodiversity in farmland soils) can improve the infiltration in the soil, so that heavy rain is absorbed rather than running off the surface, eroding the soil and polluting nearby watercourses. Many of the actions in PM73 also add more organic matter to the soil, which helps it to store more moisture, meaning the soils are more resilient to droughts as well as enabling the land to hold more water and increase infiltration rates into bedrock helping to reduce flooding. Planting and maintaining trees on farmland (PM74 and 75) is very important for providing shade and shelter for livestock in very hot or stormy weather. Hedgerows (PM62 and PM63) also play a valuable role in reducing soil erosion and flooding during extreme weather events. All these farmland measures for reducing the impact of floods, droughts and heatwaves can reduce the economic cost of crop and livestock yield losses for farmers.

Pollination and natural pest control

There has been a dramatic decline in insect populations in the UK over the last few decades, including beneficial insects such as pollinating bees and hoverflies, and pest predators such as beetles, spiders and wasps. This has had a knock-on effect on other species that depend on insects for food, including birds, bats, reptiles and amphibians (frogs, toads and newts) – and these are also natural pest predators. Supporting pollinators and natural pest predators can increase crop yield and reduce the need for farmers to use expensive and dangerous agro-chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides.

Many of the LNRS measures can help to support our struggling pollinators and pest predators by providing habitat and food resources. Measures that create and maintain scrub, wildflowers and dead wood are particularly important, because insects need nectar from flowers as well as structurally diverse ('messy') habitats to use for nesting and over-wintering sites. Habitats including tussocky grass, dead hollow stems, leaf litter, different ages of scrub, dead wood, old trees with hollows, flaking bark and crevices, and patches of bare ground are all really valuable. The Oxfordshire LNRS consultation revealed strong support for more of these naturally diverse mosaic habitats. Examples of key measures include PM03 (creating grasslands with a bumpy ground structure and different sward heights), PM05 and PM06 (creating and maintaining flower-rich grasslands), PM07 and PM08 (creating and maintaining varied scrub patches on grasslands), PM17 to PM27 (creating and maintaining mosaic habitats including wood pasture and parkland with veteran trees), PM37 (creating dense shrubby habitat in woodlands), PM60 (creating dead wood habitat), PM61 to PM64 (creating and maintaining hedgerows and walls), PM66 to PM69 (creating flower-rich field margins) and PM76 (integrated pest management to reduce use of agrochemicals).

Human health and wellbeing

There is now strong evidence that nature-rich green spaces can improve human physical and mental health and well-being and can have wider socio-economic benefits. For example, interaction with nature can improve a range of health conditions including heart and lung health, high blood pressure, diabetes, immune function, depression and anxiety. Nature-rich green spaces in and around urban areas can make them a better place to live, work and invest, helping to attract visitors and businesses to the area and improving local economies. Urban trees (PM78) and hedgerows (PM61 to 63) can also help to trap air pollution and act as a noise barrier in urban areas.

Water quality

Improving water quality and improving the health of rivers and freshwater habitats emerged as most people's top priority from earlier workshops and surveys which were held in 2024 to inform the LNRS. The main route for tackling poor water quality is by reducing discharges of untreated sewage however this particular action is beyond the control of the LNRS. Reducing untreated sewage discharges is an action that needs to be enforced by the relevant organisations within industry and by national government which is why it is out of scope of the LNRS. However, some of the LNRS 'potential measures' in the table above can help to reduce water pollution including another source of water pollution – runoff from agricultural fields. Key measures include creating riparian buffers of trees, shrubs and tall, tussocky grassland on the edge of watercourses (PM40), chalk streams (PM45) and ponds (PM43), creating wet woodland in riparian areas (PM38), and creating reedbeds (PM44 and PM53) and wetland mosaics (PM51 and PM54). Measures to reduce soil erosion can also help to stop polluted soil being washed into watercourses: this could include ensuring that new woodlands (PM35), woodland/scrub/grassland mosaics (PM24), tussocky grasslands (PM03) and hedgerows (PM61 to 63) are created on steep slopes, especially where there are soils that are vulnerable to erosion. Finally, there are a number of habitat measures around the freshwater environment that will improve the structure, condition, and diversity of rivers, ponds and wetland habitats although these alone will not directly improve water quality.

Appendix B - The local, regional, and national plans, objectives, and/or strategies that were reviewed as part of the process of choosing potential priorities and potential measures for Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

During the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy 'priorities' and 'potential measures' you will see that, after we listed priorities and potential measures from workshops and the survey, we then reviewed these against local plans and strategies to add in, or add detail to priorities and measures.

When reviewing strategies or documents, those reviewing them were asked to look for whether any potential priorities, potential measures, particular locations, or particular targets were mentioned that needed to be considered when we finalised our list of priorities, potential measures, and targets for this LNRS. The strategies reviewed included:

National

- National Environmental Objectives
- Environmental Improvement Plan Objectives
- River Catchment management plans
- Water framework directive

Regional, local, and county projects

- Chilterns Nature Recovery Plan (currently being written)
- Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan
- Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan
- North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan
- Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan
- National Landscape Target 8
- North Wessex Downs Nature Recovery Plan
- Conservation Target Areas

County Council

- Oxfordshire County Council - Oxfordshire Environmental Principles
- Oxfordshire County Council - Minerals and Waste Local Plan
- Tree Policy for Oxfordshire
- Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan 2023-2050

District and City Council Local Plans and Green Infrastructure Strategies

- South and Vale District Council Joint Local Plan Preferred Options
- Oxford Local Plan 2036
- Oxford Local Plan 2040 (submission draft)
- Cherwell Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy
- Salt Cross Area Action Plan - yet to be adopted
- South and Vale Green Infrastructure Strategy
- West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 – adopted
- West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041. Focused Consultation: Ideas and Objectives. Aug 2023
- West Oxfordshire District Council Nature Recovery Plan 2024 – 2030
- Oxford Urban Forest Strategy A Master Plan to 2050 SEPTEMBER 2021

Whilst there was limited resource to review the neighbourhood plans at this stage, Oxfordshire's LNRS has run specific activities and events to engage with the 300+ parish and town councils within Oxfordshire through the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils. Parish and town councils were encouraged to participate in our surveys and workshops as well as other in-person events so that we could incorporate their priorities and potential measures.

In addition to written strategy documents, many organisations provided the LNRS with further information and data about locations where key activities are being undertaken or could be undertaken including information from Forestry Commission, Freshwater Habitats Trust, BBOWT, and many more. This has been used within our mapping process to create the Local Habitat Map.

Appendix C – project partner representatives who oversaw the priority setting for Oxfordshire.

The priorities and potential measures decision-making was overseen by a group of representatives from each and all of:

- Oxfordshire County Council
- The District and City Councils, biodiversity and planning representatives
- Natural England
- Forestry Commission
- Environment Agency
- Cotswolds National Landscape (representing protected landscapes in Oxfordshire)
- BBOWT - Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust
- Oxfordshire's Local Nature Partnership
- Wild Oxfordshire
- Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC)
- Director of the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE)
- University of Oxford, Environmental Change Institute, Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery

Appendix D – How was this list made?

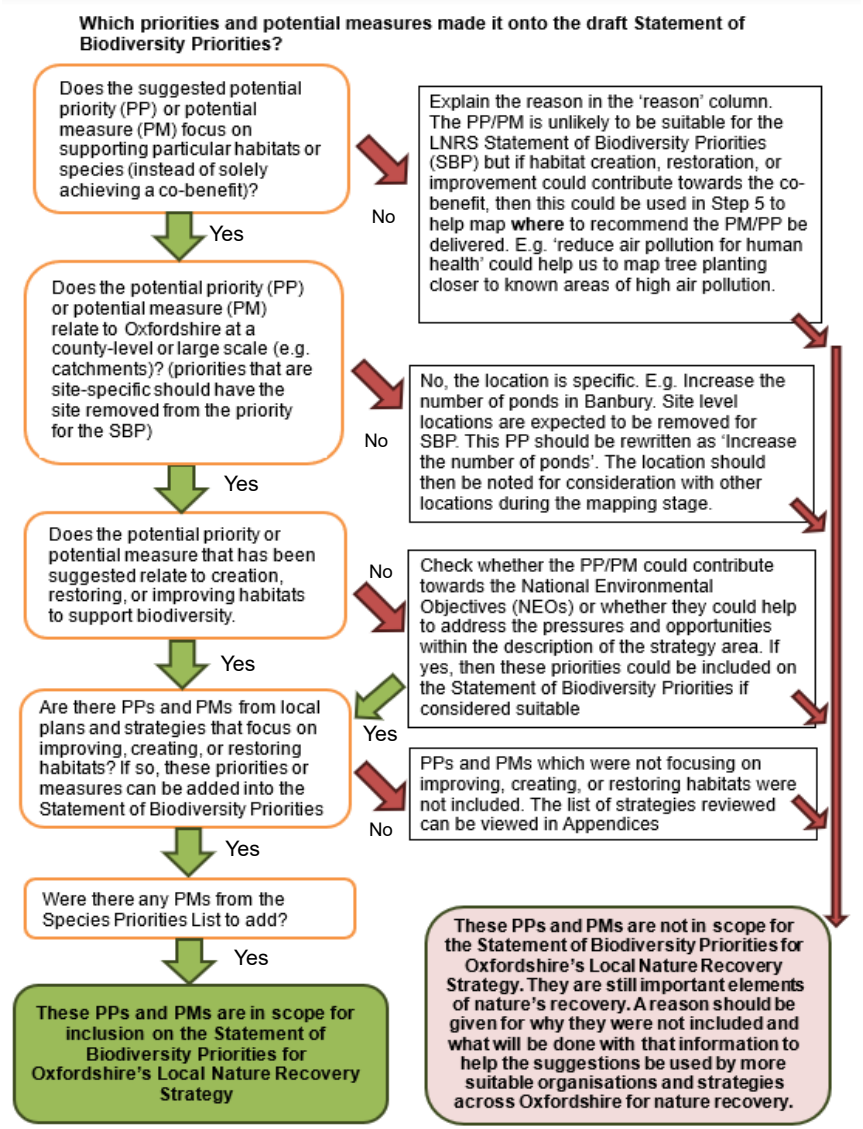
This ‘Statement of Biodiversity Priorities’ was produced by first collecting actions and priorities that were recommended to support biodiversity by local people and organisations who joined our workshops and used our survey in February and March 2024. We received 7,959 mentions of priorities and actions that people wanted to see be achieved in Oxfordshire and these were grouped into themes e.g. ‘create meadows’, ‘improve river condition’. The LNRS was able to include the 4,667 comments that mentioned creating or improving habitats for biodiversity. We were unable to include actions that didn’t relate to habitat creation or enhancement LNRSs are expected to focus mostly on actions to create and/or enhance habitats. The other requests mostly included requests to:

- Stop or reduce house building, developments, and infrastructure
- Regulate, fine, or punish, for poor practice
- Stop the creation of pollution
- Reduce traffic, or pets

Whilst it is beyond the scope of the LNRS to resolve those requests, it is of key importance to nature recovery that each of these issues are addressed by their relevant authorities and organisations.

The image of the flowchart in this document shows the process that was taken to decide whether proposed priorities and potential measures could be included on this list. The full process and further information about the 7,959 comments we received can be viewed on the LNRS website. The strategies that contributed to this process can be found in Appendix B.

In Oxfordshire, the process of agreeing the priorities and potential measures that are included in this document was overseen by representatives from a range of organisations (see Appendix C). These representatives helped to shape and refine priorities and potential measures and helped to sense-check the process whilst reviewing the priorities of local people and organisations from our workshop and survey results. To view further documents and spreadsheets that show how the statement of biodiversity priorities was made in more detail, please view the documents on Oxfordshire County Council’s LNRS website.


Which priorities and potential measures made it onto the draft Statement of Biodiversity Priorities?
Does the suggested potential priority (PP) or potential measure (PM) focus on supporting particular habitats or species (instead of solely achieving a co-benefit)?
No
Explain the reason in the 'reason' column. The PP/PM is unlikely to be suitable for the LNRS Statement of Biodiversity Priorities (SBP) but if habitat creation, restoration, or improvement could contribute towards the co-benefit, then this could be used in Step 5 to help map where to recommend the PM/PP be delivered. E.g. 'reduce air pollution for human health' could help us to map tree planting closer to known areas of high air pollution.
Yes
Does the potential priority (PP) or potential measure (PM) relate to Oxfordshire at a county-level or large scale (e.g. catchments)? (priorities that are site-specific should have the site removed from the priority for the SBP)
No
No, the location is specific. E.g. Increase the number of ponds in Banbury. Site level locations are expected to be removed for SBP. This PP should be rewritten as 'Increase the number of ponds'. The location should then be noted for consideration with other locations during the mapping stage.
Yes
Does the potential priority or potential measure that has been suggested relate to creation, restoring, or improving habitats to support biodiversity.
No
Check whether the PP/PM could contribute towards the National Environmental Objectives (NEOs) or whether they could help to address the pressures and opportunities within the description of the strategy area. If yes, then these priorities could be included on the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities if considered suitable
Yes
Are there PPs and PMs from local plans and strategies that focus on improving, creating, or restoring habitats? If so, these priorities or measures can be added into the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities
Yes
PPs and PMs which were not focusing on improving, creating, or restoring habitats were not included. The list of strategies reviewed can be viewed in Appendices
No
Yes
Were there any PMs from the Species Priorities List to add?
Yes
These PPs and PMs are in scope for inclusion on the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities for Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy
These PPs and PMs are not in scope for the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities for Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy. They are still important elements of nature's recovery. A reason should be given for why they were not included and what will be done with that information to help the suggestions be used by more suitable organisations and strategies across Oxfordshire for nature recovery.

Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

October 2025.



Statement by Oxfordshire County Council



In August 2023, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) was appointed as the 'Responsible Authority' to lead the preparation of our Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

OCC developed a partnership approach to this, working closely with our Supporting Authorities (Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Natural England) and a partnership of local nature recovery organisations. This partnership, led by OCC, engaged widely with local communities, environmental bodies, and other stakeholders to ensure that the strategy was shaped by local insights, expertise, and knowledge.

Local contributions have been invaluable in identifying priority areas for nature recovery, important species who need bespoke actions, and recommending which practical actions could have the greatest impact.

In addition, this strategy directly contributes to the national effort by the UK Government to deliver the 25 Year Environment Plan and the Environment Act 2021.

Our vision is clear: to achieve a well-connected, biodiversity-rich, network of nature that is resilient into the future, restored for the health and wellbeing of future generations, and for nature's own sake.

The Council has long recognised that the success of our natural environment is fundamental to the wellbeing of people and communities within the county. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is not just an environmental imperative but a social and economic one as well.

In alignment with this vision, OCC, the Supporting Authorities, and the partnership of organisations who contributed to the LNRS creation have committed significant resources and effort to ensuring that our strategy is robust, evidence-based, and responds to the priorities identified by local people.

It is now crucial that people and organisations across Oxfordshire work together to produce tangible improvements for nature in the county. Actions may include creating or enhancing habitats, improving connectivity between habitats and green spaces, and undertaking projects focused on species recovery.

This strategy aligns with key County Council policies and initiatives including our nationally-recognised programme of climate action work, our flood risk mitigation work, and contributes towards wider objectives in our county.

In future, the strategy will be reviewed and republished to adapt its recommendations to changes in the local environment. Over time, we and other organisations and individuals will be delivering meaningful changes on the ground in Oxfordshire and this County Council is committed to leading by example.

As we all move forwards into collaborative delivery of this strategy, it will be crucial to continue working closely with our communities, farmers, land managers, local businesses, and nature recovery organisations.

Together, we can achieve a resilient network of nature in Oxfordshire that supports wildlife, reverses the loss of local biodiversity, contribute towards national and global commitments, and produces tangible improvements to nature and to the quality of life for people in Oxfordshire. We know what needs to be done, let us not miss this opportunity to invest in nature, restore biodiversity, and meaningfully benefit all future generations to come.

Councillor Judy Roberts
Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action – Oxfordshire County Council

Foreword



Richard Benwell (left) is chair of Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership and chief executive of Wildlife and Countryside Link. Previously he has been policy adviser to the Secretary of State at Defra, and worked on policy and advocacy at WWT and RSPB. Matt Whitney (right) is the Manager of Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership and has worked closely with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy whilst developing initiatives across Oxfordshire focusing on delivering nature's recovery.



Chalk and limestone grasslands, extensive open wetlands, and scrubby wet woodland are some of the many fragile, fantastic habitats found in Oxfordshire. Brush through a flower-packed grassland on a sunny summer's day and you might be lucky enough to see an Adonis Blue or a Duke of Burgundy butterfly rise into the air.

Restoring, linking, and expanding these now-rare habitats are just some of the priorities in this Local Nature Recovery Strategy. If we're successful, Oxfordshire will have more wonderful wildflower meadows, clean freshwater habitats, and other habitats which, with luck, will enable the wildlife that depend on them to thrive across our County.

Successfully restoring populations of species, like these butterflies and the habitats that support them can be our Butterfly Effect — a series of actions, that together, add up to significant worldwide change.

Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is part of an LNRS latticework across England, which aims to halt the decline of wildlife in this country by 2030. That target, in turn, is Westminster's contribution towards a global mission to stop biodiversity loss. The worldwide decline of biodiversity is the story of a billion local losses every day. Turning round the fate of our animals, plants, and fungi, including the 800-900 species which are known to be at risk from local extinction here in Oxfordshire is our responsibility to the world.

To improve the state of nature in Oxfordshire, the county needs to restore around thousands of hectares of "priority habitat" and create around tens of thousands of hectares of semi natural habitat by 2030. The types of habitat and their suitable locations are driven by the priorities set by those who have engaged with the LNRS, overseen by ecologists, and using evidence from an understanding of soil data and geology. This combination of knowledge has helped the LNRS to create a focused set of priorities and, where particularly suitable, a map of focused opportunity areas showing a county-wide route that could create resilient, connected ecosystems and save threatened wildlife. It is also driven by common sense and pragmatism, identifying priorities that work for communities, businesses, and local people as well as nature.

After the final version of the strategy is published in 2025, delivering that much environmental change in Oxfordshire by 2030 will be a huge challenge.

Oxfordshire's Local Nature Partnership has identified a funding gap of at least £800million to recover nature in Oxfordshire. Closing that gap will need much more public investment in nature-recovery as well as private investment. The ONLP and the LNRS hope that the Government will see the overwhelming case

for investment in those who are delivering Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities as a great way to rebuild natural infrastructure with the support of local communities. There's also a huge need for more Government support to develop people and groups who can provide green skills and nature-positive planning, so that areas across England can plan ahead intelligently and make space for nature alongside the need for development and wildlife-friendly food production.

Even with the most ambitious Government action, delivering the LNRS priorities will need collaborative action from individuals, communities, and businesses across Oxfordshire. Nature's recovery simply cannot succeed without farmers being supported to lead the charge towards regenerative, nature-friendly land management. Similarly, recovery will never get there without investment from local businesses or without action by local communities and individuals engaging with and doing their bit for nature where they live and work.

Whether you're reading this as a home-owner wondering whether to rewild your garden, as a landowner considering the shift to regenerative management, or as a business owner considering how to create a legacy, we must all work together to deliver the LNRS's biodiversity priorities.

It's called a "Local Nature Recovery Strategy", but that's really just the beginning. If we deliver the priorities in these pages, the results won't just be for nature, they'll strengthen our economy, help mitigate and improve Oxfordshire's resilience to climate change, boost public health, and secure an improved, healthy, and functioning environment to support future generations. If we succeed, the benefits won't just be local, they'll be Oxfordshire's answer to international environmental action. Please join us in taking rapid, decisive action for nature in Oxfordshire. Let's bring our County to life.

Richard Benwell, Chair of Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership (OLNP) Matt Whitney, Manager of Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership (OLNP)





1. Executive summary



The truth is: the natural world is changing. And we are totally dependent on that world. It provides our food, water and air. It is the most precious thing we have and we need to defend it - Sir David Attenborough.

Oxfordshire's LNRS identifies local areas that need targeted resource driven towards them in order to create a resilient network of nature. Currently, the most important habitats are fragmented and are negatively impacted by pollution, agricultural intensification, and development, leading to a decline in the local environment and species. Additionally, many are falling out of management which will worsen the situation for local biodiversity. This LNRS proposes that Oxfordshire needs to target local resources towards the delivery of a well-connected, biodiversity-rich network of nature that is resilient to benefit future generations and for nature's own sake. The LNRS identifies key locations to deliver various nature recovery actions on a map of Oxfordshire and also lists countywide actions that need to be delivered all across the county. There are actions for everyone to contribute towards, whether you have a house, garden, local park, or farm.

What's in this document?

This document gives context to the strategy, describes biodiversity in Oxfordshire, introduces what LNRSs are and why they are needed. The document then describes key pressures that threaten biodiversity, actions needed to recover nature and wildlife, and points to the full list of LNRS-recommended actions. This document should be read alongside the other three parts of the LNRS which, together, make up the LNRS. The other three parts of the LNRS are the 'Statement of Biodiversity Priorities', the 'Species Priorities List', and the 'Local Habitat Map'.

These actions are fundamental to human health and wellbeing, providing air, water, food, and shelter, mitigating extreme weather, storing carbon, pollinating crops, regulating pests, and offering space for nature and exercise. To halt and reverse declines, we must work together to create a connected, resilient mosaic of quality habitats. These actions will not only help the environment and wildlife to flourish for nature's own sake; they are also fundamental to human health and wellbeing. A healthy natural environment provides the air, water, food and shelter that humans are dependent on. It also mitigates the impacts of extreme weather events, stores carbon, pollinates crops, regulates pests, and offers space for people to enjoy nature and exercise. Many of these benefits have been lost and are still being lost as the environment continues to degrade. To halt and reverse these declines, we must work together to create a more connected, resilient mosaic of quality habitats. Those who deliver these actions are not just helping nature but simultaneously providing a public good for us all.

Oxfordshire is fortunate to have many people and organisations who care deeply for nature and understand the wider benefits of a healthy environment. Over 200 nature recovery groups and organisations, as well as many landowners and farmers, are making a difference daily and have been leading the way to recover species populations and to improve habitats for wildlife. The LNRS is designed to empower those who are already taking action as well as to help inform project creation and funding opportunities for those who are getting ready to take action.

Call to action - Use this LNRS to identify which actions you can take, and together through collaborative action, Oxfordshire can create a resilient, connected, and functioning network of nature, restoring biodiversity for the health of nature, people, and future generations.

Acknowledgements,

This page shows the 'LNRS partnership' who, led by Oxfordshire County Council, prepared the LNRS for Oxfordshire.

Each and all of these organisations contributed time, expertise, and enthusiasm regularly throughout the development of Oxfordshire's draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy since 2023. This document refers to the collective group as the 'LNRS partnership' and refers to all the authorities and organisations represented here.

The LNRS could not have been created without them and their support.

Oxfordshire County Council would also like to thank the thousands of additional people and organisations across Oxfordshire, not displayed here, who also contributed significant time and energy into the LNRS through engagement, contributions to the project, data-sharing, and more.

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Biodiversity in the UK and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)

Introduction

'Biodiversity' refers to the variety of all life forms, including plants, animals, fungi, and micro-organisms. A landscape that is rich in healthy biodiversity provides the essential necessities for the survival of humans and wildlife, from fresh water, clean air and climate regulation to food, medicines and more. These benefits do not come from individual species but from a rich variety of species and functioning habitats working together.

Global Biodiversity status

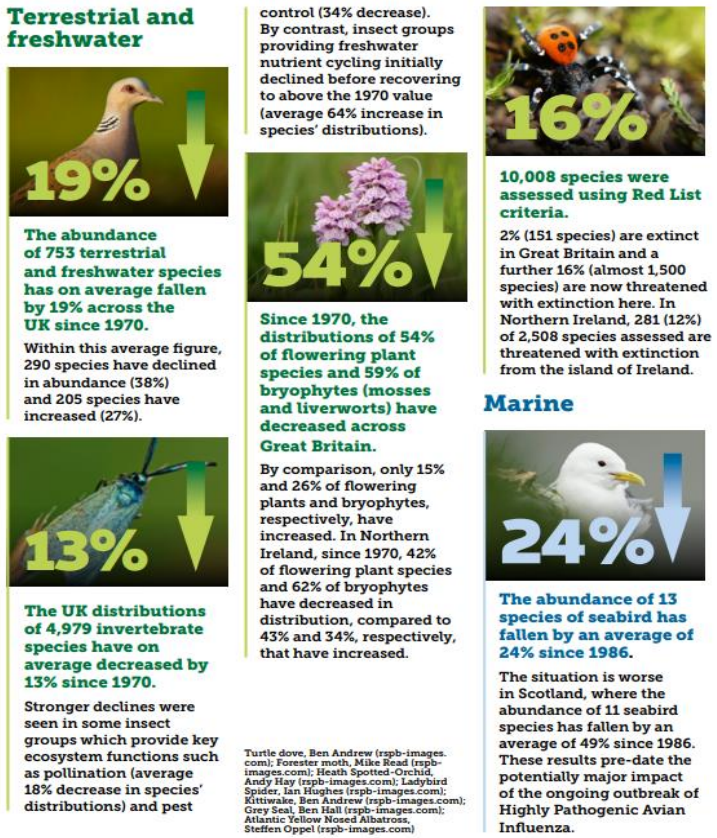
On average, countries across the world only have an average of 75% of their biodiversity remaining since recording began. Unfortunately, the UK ranks in the bottom 10% of countries meaning that we are among the world's most nature depleted countries.

UK biodiversity decline

According to the State of Nature 2023 report, nearly one in six of the UK's species are at risk of extinction (of those which are sufficiently well recorded) and since 1970, the UK has experienced a 19% decline in the abundance of species. England itself has experienced a 32% decline in species numbers. This decline in biodiversity is primarily due to habitat loss and fragmentation resulting from human land use competing with nature including intensive agriculture and development. The report recognizes the need for a different approach, one that enables people and nature to live well together.

Government initiatives

The government's message is becoming louder, that the UK must act to reverse biodiversity losses. This means that the LNRSs are being created across England at an exciting time, a time where policy and funding are beginning to come together at a national level in recognition of the biodiversity crisis, alongside commitments and targets for positive change. This presents an exciting opportunity for nature and wildlife in the UK. For example, projects in England have recently been funded by Defra and Natural England to deliver landscape-scale change including restoring biodiversity across 99,000 hectares of landscape including the West Midlands, Cambridgeshire, the Peak District, Norfolk, and Somerset. Projects in Oxfordshire have also had two recent successes in their bids for funding to deliver Landscape



State of Nature 2023, p4. A description of trends in biodiversity over time.

19%
Across the UK species studied have declined on average by 19% since 1970.

16%
Nearly one in six species are threatened with extinction from Great Britain

Recovery projects. The two Landscape Recovery projects in Oxfordshire include the Evenlode landscape recovery project along the Evenlode river, and the second is the Ock and Thame landscape recovery project. These projects will focus on a range of benefits including delivering high quality habitat networks with high carbon storage on low productivity land helping to create financially and environmentally sustainable farming systems and local environment. The projects will be delivered by local farmers and land managers in partnership with local people and conservation organisations to focus on outcomes such as clean and plentiful water, healthy soils, and thriving plants and wildlife.

Legislation and Implementation

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) were introduced by the UK government through the Environment Act 2021. Authorities in England were tasked to start developing these in June 2023 with an expectation to publish these online in 2025. The statutory guidance requires authorities all across England to create a list of biodiversity priorities to achieve in each area and to develop these priorities and actions through engagement and consultation activities with local people and organisations. Alongside the list of priorities to achieve for both habitats and species, LNRSs are asked to create a map of their area to highlight which local areas are already important for biodiversity, and which could become particularly important in the future. This map suggests where habitat creation and enhancement work should be prioritised in the county to benefit biodiversity.



State of Nature 2023 p65

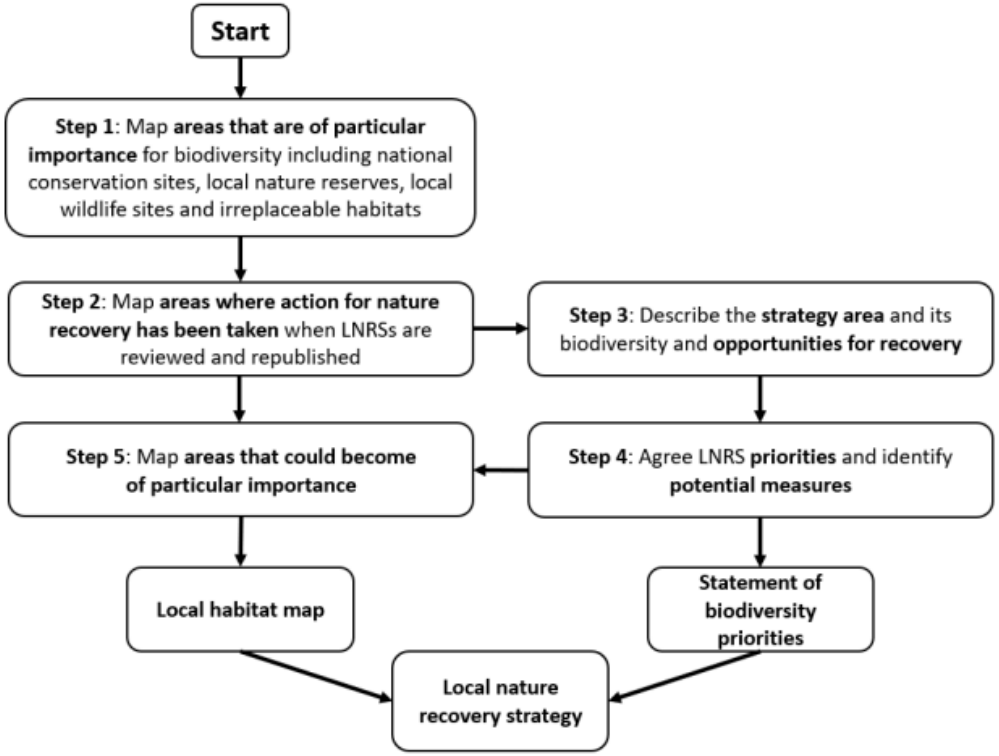
Nature Recovery

The term ‘nature recovery’ can be interpreted in a range of ways. For the LNRS, ‘nature recovery’ refers to the process of enhancing or creating habitats through actions on the ground. These actions, if delivered, would enable wildlife to recover in number and abundance and would deliver benefits for local people like helping to mitigate flood risk. This is what the LNRS means by nature recovery work. The LNRS has a certain level of ‘scope’ (things that it has the legal power to achieve) and LNRSs are expected to contribute towards nature recovery by creating a list of focused priorities and actions to achieve in the local area, and to map where those actions should be taken in the county to provide the greatest benefits for biodiversity and the wider environment.

Oxfordshire County Council's Role

In June 2023, Oxfordshire County Council was appointed by Defra as the 'Responsible Authority' for leading the production of the first LNRS for Oxfordshire and were tasked with leading the preparation of the strategy. Oxfordshire County Council then set up the 'LNRS Partnership', a set of organisations shown on page 6 who closely supported and shaped the development of the strategy and gave oversight throughout its preparation. Defra and Natural England provided statutory guidance to re sponsible authorities showing the steps that they expect LNRS production to follow (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Order of steps to be followed in preparing contents of a local nature recovery strategy



What is the Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

The LNRS is expected to help people and organisations across the county to co-ordinate nature recovery efforts and funding opportunities. The purpose of the LNRS is to indicate which areas of the county need which targeted actions to create a create a bigger, better, and more joined up network for biodiversity to recover. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has created four key elements which, together, make up the strategy. These are:

- **A Description of the Strategy Area** (this document)
    - A written description of biodiversity in Oxfordshire, the opportunities, and the pressures on biodiversity with a summary of what needs to be done.
- **A Statement of Biodiversity Priorities**
    - A written list of the most important outcomes (priorities) to achieve for biodiversity in Oxfordshire and a list of actions (potential measures) that would need be taken to achieve the priorities.
- **A Species Priorities List**
    - A written list of species which need additional, bespoke actions above and beyond the general habitat improvements on the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities (above). This species priorities list states the specific actions needed to recover particular individual species or groups of species.
- **A Local Habitat Map** –an online and interactive map tool which shows:
    - The existing areas of Oxfordshire that are particularly important for biodiversity
    - Areas that could become particularly important for biodiversity. These are priority locations for creating a nature recovery network in Oxfordshire and the LNRS has mapped a range of habitat creation and enhancement priorities as well as some species-specific actions to deliver in these locations.
    - Some select, wider biodiversity information about Oxfordshire to support people and organisations to develop nature recovery projects that can maximise wider benefits too, such as natural flood management.

The LNRS is expected to help people and organisations across the county co-ordinate effort and funding opportunities towards the delivery of a bigger, better, and more joined up network for nature. Some actions will be spatially targeted to key areas in the county whereas other actions will be important for as many people as possible to deliver across the county to improve the landscape and environment as a whole.

Can LNRSs be changed in future?

Defra have outlined a process of preparation and publication for Local Nature Recovery Strategies. They have also outlined a review and republication process to update these strategies in the future (see Figure 2). Once a strategy is published, the authority has a period of between 3 – 10 years before the Secretary of State is expected to ask all authorities to review and republish the strategy as part of a national review and update. During the 3 – 10 year interim period, the maps and documents are not typically allowed to be changed.

Figure 2 Local nature recovery strategy review and republication cycle



Biodiversity in Oxfordshire

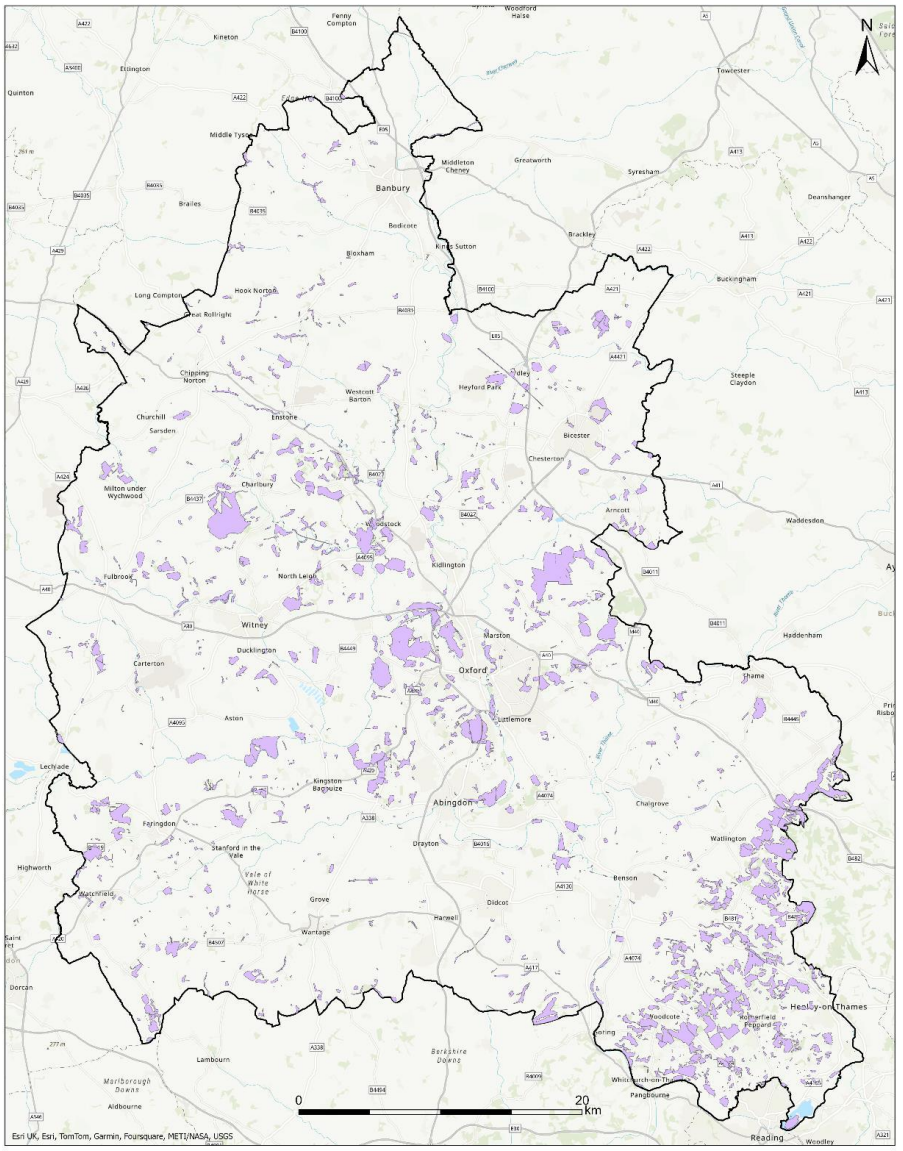
Oxfordshire's biodiversity: a summary.

Oxfordshire covers 260,595 hectares of southern England and is the most rural county in the South East (Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2023). The State of Nature in Oxfordshire report (2017) describes the county as having "a diverse and interesting geology, criss-crossed by eight river systems, that create a gentle yet complex landscape. As such, it supports a variety of habitats, from fragrant chalk grasslands scented with wild thyme, to fungi-strewn beech woods; from pockets of damp, reedy fen and acid grassland to marshy meadows full of birds." Throughout the document this variety of habitats and species and the landscape in which they are found is referred to as 'nature' and the collective variety of our animals, plants, fungi, and microorganisms is often referred to as 'biodiversity'.

However, when we map out the locations in Oxfordshire that Government consider to be 'of particular importance for biodiversity' a fragmented picture can be seen. The existing habitats in the county are small, separated, not necessarily in good condition, and show that some areas contain far more space dedicated to nature and biodiversity than others. In total, only 6.5% of Oxfordshire (16,866 hectares) currently meets the criteria for 'areas of particular importance to biodiversity'. See Appendix A to see detail about how this map was made.

You can read full details about how the areas of particular importance were mapped by Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) on the LNRS webpage. Sites which could be mapped included National Nature Reserves (NNRs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and areas of 'irreplaceable habitat' (defined in the National Planning Policy Framework) including lowland fen, ancient woodland, and ancient and veteran trees. Some of these types of sites overlap with

Oxfordshire LNRS Baseline Map



each other (i.e. there may be ancient woodland or fen sites within Local Wildlife Sites or SSSIs).

Of the total areas mapped, the table below shows that 4.3% (11,197.4 hectares) of the county consists of local and national conservation sites (NNRs, SACs, SSSIs, LNRs, and LWSs). 3.7% (9,624.3 hectares) classifies as irreplaceable Ancient Woodland & Lowland Fen habitat, much of which is contained within existing local or national conservation sites. In addition, 0.3% (894.5 hectares) of the county is covered by patches of Wood Pasture and Parkland which contain ancient or veteran trees and there are also an additional 1,700 ancient and veteran trees recorded outside of wood pasture and parkland which cover a further 0.06% (148.4 hectares) of the county, However ancient and veteran tree records are not yet comprehensive across the country and are regularly being updated across England as more trees are being recorded.

SITE TYPE	AREA (ha)	% OXFORDSHIRE
Local & National Conservation Sites	11,197.4	4.3%
Irreplaceable Habitat: Ancient Woodland & Lowland Fen	9,624.3	3.7%
Irreplaceable Habitat: Ancient & Veteran Trees	148.4	0.06%
Irreplaceable Habitat: Wood Pasture & Parkland with Ancient & Veteran Trees	894.5	0.34%
Total Area (without overlaps)	**16,866.1**	**6.5%**

Table 1. The values in this table represent the total area of each site or habitat type, and the total area is presented without overlapping site or habitat types.

Of all of the 6.5% of mapped areas that are particularly important for biodiversity, a third of the total area (5,693 hectares) is currently not protected by any national or local designation and exists outside of a conservation reserve or area. This map of the areas of particular importance presents an updated view of the core biodiversity-rich locations in Oxfordshire and was specifically requested by Defra to act as a starting point from which LNRSs were expected to plan a bigger, better, and more joined up network of nature in Oxfordshire.

There are many further areas across Oxfordshire which experts also consider to be important or irreplaceable which don't currently meet government criteria to be mapped as an 'area of particular importance for biodiversity', and experts were invited to share their knowledge to be incorporated into the LNRS's vision for the bigger, better, more joined-up network.

Oxfordshire's Land use and Natural Resources

In addition to those core sites that are particularly important for biodiversity, there are many habitats and types of land cover such as farmland, buildings, gardens, golf courses, woodland, standing water, orchards, and more which can be found throughout the rest of the county. This section describes the types of habitats and land cover which can be found across Oxfordshire. (Source: Agile Nature Recovery Map of Oxfordshire, University of Oxford)

[Design team to insert pie chart to surpass the table Table below – see comment to see how pie chart will look]

Summary categories	Hectares	Percentage	
Arable (42%)	110,683	42%	
Improved grassland (27%)	71,491	27%	
Plantation woodland (3%)	9,063	3%	
Semi-natural woodland* (6%)	15,412	6%	Semi-natural*
Traditional orchards* (<1%)	256	0.1%	Semi-natural*
Wood pasture and parkland* (1%)	2,246	1%	Semi-natural*
Semi-natural grassland* (5%)	12,871	5%	Semi-natural*
Scrub, heath, wetland* (1%)	1,747	1%	Semi-natural*
Water* (1%)	3,136	1%	Semi-natural*
Green space & gardens (7%)	17,318	7%	
Manmade (6%)	16,371	6%	
Oxfordshire total area	260,595	100%	All landcover types
Sub-total of area that is semi-natural*	35,668.29	14%	*semi-natural habitat types

Agricultural Land

The majority of Oxfordshire's land (73%) is used for agriculture and much of that area is, and has been, intensively farmed using a significant amount of chemical inputs to produce crops and food. Of the 73%, 43% is arable, 27% as improved grassland, with 3% under other classifications. However, both arable and grassland fields can make space for nature, arable by creating margins, buffer strips, or permanent areas that are set-aside for nature, and grassland by managing grazing and creating areas of habitat like in-field trees and ponds in addition to enhancing the species diversity of the grassland. In this way, farmland can contain space for nature that complements their main purpose of food production, and there have been changes in farming practices with large numbers of farmers moving towards schemes that benefit nature alongside food production as part of their business.

Managed sensitively, productive farmland can support a wide range of wildlife and offer corridors that connect habitats across the county. Agricultural practices to improve soil organic matter can both increase the biodiversity of the soil and store additional carbon. Additionally, having wildlife and habitats on farms can provide pollinators, integrated pest control, wind-breaks, and shade which can all benefit the production of food.

Urban and settlements

About 6% of Oxfordshire is covered by manmade 'built development' including houses, buildings, bridges, roads, railways, sealed surfaces and so on. A further 7% is domestic gardens and urban greenspace such as playing fields and allotments. Together this means 13% of the county is currently used as homes, gardens, places of work, and other buildings and infrastructure.

The area used for homes is expected to grow in Oxfordshire. In the 6-years between 2014 and 2020, 2,710 hectares of sealed surfaces (e.g. paved areas, car parks, driveways) were created. In comparison, in the 6-years between 2017 and 2023, just 0.4 hectares of lowland heathland were restored, 2.3 additional hectares of reedbed were created, 7.4 hectares of traditional orchards were created, and woodland cover increased by 0.2% (about 520 hectares).

Semi-natural habitats

'Semi-natural habitats' are those which have most of their ecological processes and biodiversity intact, although many of these have still been altered by human activity and may be dependent on ongoing management. 14% (about 36,500 hectares) of Oxfordshire is classified as semi-natural habitat. Of that 14%, 6% (about 15,500 hectares) is semi-natural woodland, and 8% (about 20,800 hectares) is other semi-natural habitats including flood plain meadows, chalk grassland, parkland with scattered trees, wetland, scrub, heath, and a tiny area of traditional orchards (see a more detailed chart on the next pages). There are also around 17,000km of hedgerows and lines of trees along field boundaries.

Woodland

As of 2020, woodland covered 9.2% (about 24,000 hectares) of Oxfordshire, just under the average 9.9% woodland cover for England (data from TVERC). Approximately one third of Oxfordshire's woodland is plantation (woods which have been planted to grow timber and so are not 'semi-natural habitat'). Many of Oxfordshire's woodlands are small – 38% are less than 10 hectares in size, indicating a scattered and fragmented habitat type. 3.4% of all woodland in Oxfordshire is ancient (about 11,500 hectares). Of that ancient woodland area, just over 2,500 hectares are plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS).

Carbon Storage

It is estimated that 23 million tonnes of carbon is stored in Oxfordshire's soils and vegetation, and that in addition 115,000 tonnes of carbon is sequestered each year by healthy soils and vegetation. A further 3.5 million tonnes of carbon would be sequestered between 2020 and 2050 if there was no further

change in land-use or ecosystem condition (Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire). By creating more habitat, there is opportunity to store even more carbon.

Minerals

The geology of the County has enabled a thriving minerals industry to develop, providing sand and gravel from the river valleys, soft sand in the south west of the County, and limestone and ironstone in the north and west. A survey in 2009 found that 78% of sand and gravel and 51% of crushed rock produced in the county is used in Oxfordshire. Many large areas of habitat creation have or will be delivered through the restoration of minerals sites in the County, including through the Lower Windrush Valley Project.

Definitions relevant to pie chart and the above section:

- Arable: land used for growing and producing crops, also includes intensive orchards.
- Improved grassland: grasslands for pasture that have been highly modified through reseeding and frequent fertiliser application. Typically over 50% perennial ryegrass, white clover and other high-productivity agricultural species. Also includes unidentified natural surface.
- Plantation woodland: coniferous, mixed and broadleaved plantations, unknown woodland and felled woodland
- Semi-natural grassland: acid, calcareous and neutral grassland, purple moor grass and rush pastures, unidentified semi-improved grassland (including 'rough grassland' from OS Mastermap), 'marshy grassland' (some of which is just improved grassland on the floodplain), poor semi-improved grassland, tall herb and fern, bracken, and ephemeral vegetation
- Scrub, heath and wetland also includes a few hedgerows which are on the TVERC habitat map (typically because this has been provided by a restoration project; most hedgerows are not included)
- Water: rivers, streams, canals, drainage ditches, lakes, ponds and reservoirs
- Greenspace and gardens: domestic gardens, parks, cemeteries, churchyards, playing fields, allotments, amenity grass, grassed roundabouts and verges
- Man-made: buildings, sealed surfaces, roads, rail, tracks, bare ground, landfill, quarry, Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land (a priority habitat comprised of a mosaic of early successional habitats), sand, and new development

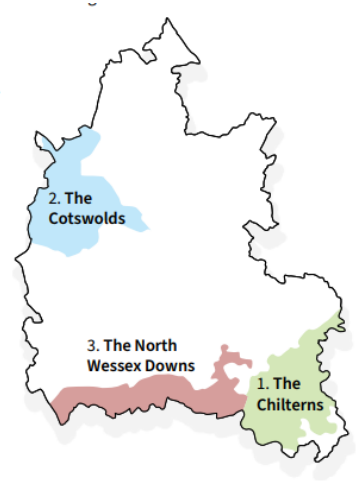
Important Habitats, Species and Designated Sites in Oxfordshire

The value of some habitats in Oxfordshire are recognised with a range of statutory and non-statutory designations which aim to protect the county's best and exemplar spaces for nature.

National Landscapes

Oxfordshire contains parts of three National Landscapes which cover about 25% of the county and are designated to conserve and enhance their outstanding natural beauty. Oxfordshire's three National Landscapes are:

1. **The Chilterns** National Landscape. Oxfordshire is home to 28% of the Chilterns National Landscape (233km2 which covers 8.9% of Oxfordshire). This area is well known for its ancient woodlands, chalk downland, chalk streams and scrub communities (including important juniper scrub).
2. **The Cotswolds** National Landscape. Oxfordshire is home to 12% of the Cotswolds National Landscape (248km2 which covers 9.5% of Oxfordshire). This area is well known for areas of open High Wold, the Evenlode and Windrush river valleys, the Wychwood Forest, areas of unimproved limestone grassland and floodplain meadows. A good population of farmland birds still exists on arable land in this area.
3. **The North Wessex Downs** National Landscape. Oxfordshire is home to 186km2 of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (covering 7.2% of Oxfordshire). This area is well known for chalk grassland, chalk streams, populations of farmland birds and veteran trees.



World Heritage Sites

Blenheim Palace and Park was awarded World Heritage Site status in 1987 and is one of only 17 registered sites in England (one of 30 in the UK). Blenheim Park also contains an important SSSI, containing one of the finest areas of ancient oak-dominated pasture woodland in the country with lakes of regional importance for breeding and wintering birds.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

Oxfordshire has seven internationally designated Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) which fall partly or entirely within the county. SACs are designated where they support internationally important habitats and/or species and the sites receive strict legal protection.

- **Aston Rowant**: One of the best remaining examples in the UK of lowland juniper scrub on chalk.
- **Chilterns Beechwoods:** Beech forests on neutral to rich soils, stag beetle *Lucanus cervus*, dry grassland and scrublands on chalk.

- **Cothill Fen:** Largest surviving example of alkaline fen in central England, alder woodland on floodplains.
- **Hackpen Hill:** Dry grasslands and scrubland on chalk with a significant population of early gentian *Gentianella anglica.*
- **Hartslock Wood:** Yew woodland and chalk grassland supporting one of only three UK populations of monkey orchid *Orchis simia.*
- **Little Wittenham:** One of the best studied great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* sites in the UK.
- **Oxford Meadows:** Lowland hay meadows including the larger of only two known sites in the UK for creeping marshwort *Helosciadium repens*.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

There are 113 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Oxfordshire that cover a total of 4475.7 hectares (which is 1.17% of Oxfordshire). These SSSI sites are designated as important nationally for their wildlife or geology. 50.48% of Oxfordshire's SSSIs are in favourable condition (by area), with 47.45% in favourable recovering condition. 0.99% SSSIs by area are considered to show no change, with 0.76% declining and 0.19% destroyed (Natural England 2024). A list of the 113 SSSIs can be viewed in the TVERC reports on the County Council LNRS webpage.

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are sites identified at a County-wide level for their wildlife-rich habitats, or particularly important species. All Local Wildlife Sites that meet the necessary criteria are designated; this differs significantly from the process of identifying SSSIs, as the latter are a representative sample of sites. Local Wildlife Sites don't receive legal protection but are identified and protected through the planning process. Like SSSIs, LWS are surveyed on a rolling programme, with most sites being reassessed approximately every 10 years. Between 2005 and November 2024, 36 sites were removed and 94 sites were added to the total number of Local Wildlife Sites. At the latest update in 2024, Oxfordshire had 399 Local Wildlife Sites (6670.4 hectares which is 2.5% of Oxfordshire) with a further 71 proposed new or proposed extensions to LWS (1195.8 hectares in total) under assessment (TVERC, 2023). Currently the percentage of the county covered by LWS is 2.5%, much lower than in some neighbouring counties such as Berkshire (8%), and much lower than the English average (5%) (The Wildlife Trusts, 2016).

In Oxfordshire, 45% of Local Wildlife Sites were recorded to be in positive conservation management in 2023 - 2024. For context, the equivalent figure across England in 2023 -2024 was 35%. There has been a gradual improvement in the proportion of Local Wildlife Sites in positive management in the County from 34% in 2016- 2017.

Road Verge Nature Reserves

Road Verge Nature Reserves (RVNRs) are verges rich in biodiversity, often including a number of scarce and threatened plants and habitats. RVNRs provide connectivity between wildlife areas, helping to maintain and restore a green network through which wildlife can move and survive. Green verges provide a vital link between what can otherwise be inhospitable landscapes, providing benefits for both wildlife and

people. There are currently 52 RVNRs located across the county, including examples of limestone and chalk grassland, acid grassland and neutral grassland.

Habitats of Principal Importance

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 identifies 56 types of habitat in England that it calls 'habitats of principal importance' for the conservation of biodiversity. The list is intended to help public bodies be aware of biodiversity conservation in their policy or decision making, to inform landowners planning nature recovery and to help funding bodies support suitable nature recovery. Oxfordshire is home to 20 types of 'habitats of principal importance', which are described in the table below:

Lowland Meadows: a key habitat in Oxfordshire, dependent on low fertility soils and traditional management methods. Flower rich, important for invertebrates and ground nesting birds such as skylark. The county holds 25% of all of UK's floodplain lowland meadows (a rare community of the NVC 'MG4' plant assemblage).

Lowland calcareous grassland: a key habitat in Oxfordshire, associated with areas of chalk and limestone geology, found particularly in the North Wessex Downs, Chilterns and Cotswolds. Flower rich, important for invertebrates (particularly butterflies).

Acid grassland: of restricted distribution in Oxfordshire, associated with sandy soils such as those on the Mid-vale Ridge. Generally, not flower rich but important for rare plants and invertebrates.

Floodplain Grazing Marsh: a key habitat in Oxfordshire, associated with river floodplains. Sometimes flower rich, important for wading birds.

Lowland Fens: a key habitat in Oxfordshire, particularly in the Cothill area. Important for rare invertebrates and plants. May support water vole and safe resting sites for otter.

Eutrophic Standing Waters: likely to be found in old gravel pits and reservoirs, often important for waterfowl.

Mesotrophic Lakes: these have lower levels of nutrients than Eutrophic Standing Waters, and can be particularly rich in plant and invertebrate species. There are only a few examples in Oxfordshire, to be found mainly amongst the old gravel pits of the Lower Windrush Valley.

Ponds: found throughout Oxfordshire, may be rich in plants and invertebrates. Likely to be the most important breeding sites for amphibians, including great crested newt, as well as many dragonfly species.

Reedbeds: of restricted distribution in Oxfordshire, important for birds including the Bittern, may support water voles or rare plants.

Rivers: found throughout Oxfordshire, provide important wildlife corridors. Likely to support water vole, otter, and a variety of invertebrates. All of Oxfordshire's river catchments fall into a number of catchment partnerships, set up by the Environment Agency and hosted and run by local groups to oversee the implementation of actions to address pressures on the water environment. Chalk streams in the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs are a local and special habitat type which is rare globally with the majority of all the world's chalk streams found within England.

Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures: these wet pastures are of restricted distribution in Oxfordshire, found mainly around Otmoor and the Shill Brook in West Oxfordshire.

Lowland Wood Pasture and Parkland: important for veteran trees, invertebrates and bats. Found mainly on Oxfordshire's old estates.

Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland: a key habitat in Oxfordshire, found mainly in the Chilterns.

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland: found across Oxfordshire, those with rich ground flora are of particular biodiversity interest. Also important for bats, woodland birds and butterflies, occasionally support dormice.

Wet woodland: of restricted distribution in Oxfordshire, likely to be adjacent to waterbodies or part of a mosaic of wetland habitats. Supports birds and rare invertebrates.

Traditional orchards: of restricted distribution in Oxfordshire, dependent on traditional management methods. Important for bats, rare invertebrates, mosses, lichens.

Arable Field Margins: strips around field edges managed to provide benefits for wildlife – can provide important food sources for birds and invertebrates.

Hedgerows: an important linking habitat found throughout Oxfordshire, of particular biodiversity value when they consist of a large proportion of native woody species. Used by foraging birds and bats, dormice and a range of invertebrates.

Lowland Heathland: of restricted distribution, important for reptiles and invertebrates

Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land (OMHPDL): examples in Oxfordshire include former quarries and ash lagoons – can be particularly important for birds, invertebrates and specialist plants.

Wildlife rich habitats that do not meet the current criteria for priority habitats

In addition to the above list of Habitats of Principal Importance, there are numerous other habitats that are wildlife-rich but do not meet the strict criteria to become a Habitat of Principal Importance. These habitats include scrub; wildflower grassland that is species-rich but that does not meet the criteria of the three grassland priority habitats; and mosaics of habitats made up of a mixture of any or all of scrub, grassland, woodland, and ponds and other wetland habitats. The importance of these other habitats is reflected in the LNRS 'Statement of Biodiversity Priorities', which includes numerous measures dedicated to the enhancement and creation of these habitats.

Species trends in Oxfordshire

Species trends in Oxfordshire generally reflect patterns seen across England. For some species we have local data sets and can understand local trends in more detail. The following trends mostly come from the State of Nature in Oxfordshire Report (2017).

Species 'on the brink' (at risk of being lost) in Oxfordshire

Whilst there have been significant historical losses of a wide range of species, the species below represent some of the species that have been declining particularly fast in recent years (many since 1998) to the point that species are now considered extinct or near extinct in Oxfordshire. This is not an exhaustive or definitive list, there may be other species which meet this categorisation which we do not yet have sufficient information about.



Wall butterflies, grassland specialists. Previously widespread, now considered extinct in the County having not been recorded since 2009



The marsh fritillary which was rapidly declining in 1998 is now considered near extinct in Oxfordshire

Hazel Dormouse: there are very few records for Dormice in the County. It is unclear whether this is partially due to under-recording of this species.



We have recently lost the Wood white butterfly which was last recorded in 2008



Nightingale had disappeared from Oxfordshire with the last confirmed breeding records in the County from 1998 and only 2 sightings in 2020 and in 2021. However, a land manager has recently recorded the first breeding pairs in the county in the past 4 years after dedicated habitat management work and their range could expand with the creation of suitable habitat



Following recent significant declines, the only Native crayfish, the white clawed crayfish is now extremely rare in Oxfordshire and has been particularly damaged by the introduction of American Signal Crayfish.



The Adder is typically found in heathland habitats but is now very rare (all but extinct) in Oxfordshire. Whilst it was considered to have a stable population in 1998, there are only a handful of records in the county since 2010.



In 2017, Otmoor was the only reliable site in Oxfordshire where Turtle doves still bred, they have not been recorded breeding there since 2020. Through the work of Operation Turtle Dove there is potential for this species to recover

Declining Species



Apart from at the RSPB's Otmoor reserve, curlew numbers decreased by 51%, lapwing by 21%, snipe by 88% and redshank by 50% in Oxfordshire between 2005 and 2015. These declines are attributed to loss of wet grassland habitat and predation impacts. More recently, the Curlew Recovery Project estimates that there is currently a total population of 60 pairs of Curlew in the Upper Thames (including a few in Buckinghamshire), with strong recovery continuing at Otmoor, but there is also evidence of declines in many of the smaller populations.

The Upper Thames Butterfly Atlas 2016 data (Asher et al., 2016) shows declining trends of the wider countryside butterfly species, which are now experiencing the same sort of drop in abundance that the habitat specialists suffered 30 years ago. The black hairstreak butterfly, found only in hedgerows and thickets of blackthorn in woodlands on the heavy clay soils between Oxford and Peterborough, has suffered a dramatic decline nationally (losing 43% of its population since the 1970's) but the Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire colonies seem stable due to targeted conservation efforts to maintain habitats for these species in certain locations.





Willow tits, which like scrub and wet woodland, are the most rapidly declining woodland bird species locally. Several other woodland bird species in Oxfordshire have been in long term decline and on the Red List for Birds for some time (BoCC4, 2015) include lesser spotted woodpecker, marsh tit and hawfinch.



Banbury Ornithological Society (BOS) "Winter Random Square Survey" has shown that several resident farmland birds, including yellowhammer and linnet, declined greatly in the 70s and 80s, before stabilising somewhat in the late 90s and 2000s. For a few, the declines are continuing, notably corn bunting and tree sparrow (ed. Easterbrook, 2013).

Increasing Species

The Adonis Blue, silver washed fritillary, purple emperor and brown argus are all butterfly species which have expanded in range, if not abundance (Upper Thames Butterfly Conservation, 2016).





Between 1900 and 1998, water voles (*Arvicola amphibius)* suffered a 95% reduction in their range in the UK. During the period 2009 to 2024, against the backdrop of a national decline, the total spatial coverage of water vole 'Local Key Areas' in Oxfordshire increased by 85% as a result of co-ordinated water vole conservation and mink control activities; this can be interpreted as an overall improvement in the fortunes of this species in the county.



In the first three national otter surveys of England (late 1970s to early 1990s), otters were just starting to recover from their extensive national declines and were almost entirely absent from the Thames catchment and Oxfordshire. However, the banning of toxic chemicals, improvements in water quality and legal protection have all helped to bring otters back to the Thames catchment, augmented by a small independent re-introduction of captive-bred animals by the Otter Trust in 1999. The first few positive sites in Oxfordshire came in the 1991-94 survey and now otters are widespread across the county both in urban and rural areas, reflecting their gradual but continued national recovery.



After an absence from the county of about 200 years, bittern, marsh harrier and common crane have returned to breed in the new reedbed at RSPB's Otmoor reserve.

Re-introductions

This section focuses on some key species which have either been introduced to Oxfordshire, or could, in future be reintroduced to Oxfordshire.



Natterjack toad. With its specialist habitat requirements, the natterjack toad has always been rare in the county. This species went extinct from the county in the twentieth century but was more recently re-introduced to a sandy-heathland site on a farm in Oxfordshire where a breeding population has become established.



Red kites became extinct in England as a result of persecution. In 1990 they were successfully re-introduced at a site on the Oxfordshire/Buckinghamshire border in the Chilterns, establishing a self-sustaining and expanding population.



Eurasian Beavers have begun to be reintroduced in England. Local Nature Recovery Strategies are asked to consider species which could be suitable for reintroduction to their relevant counties and people and organisations across Oxfordshire have repeatedly mentioned the opportunity to reintroduce beavers. It would be crucial to plan this reintroduction carefully with the support from relevant landowners and with management plans for future populations.

Nationally important populations of species and their habitats which can be found within Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire is home to a number of species and habitats which are important at a national level. This is often because they are found in few (or no) other locations in the country.

Plants

- Oxfordshire's calcareous grasslands support nationally important rare plants, including the bulk of the UK populations of downy woundwort, meadow clary, early gentian and Chiltern gentian and all of these species are in decline. Downy woundwort is found nowhere else in the UK but the Oxfordshire population has been struggling and would benefit from targeted recovery work.
- Oxfordshire has one of the largest UK populations of the nationally rare downy-fruited sedge *Carex filiformis*. Our wet grasslands and fens support the vast majority of the UK's population of creeping marshwort *Helosciadium repens* and fen violet *Viola persicifolia.*
- The River Ray floodplain is a stronghold for the rare true foxsedge *Carex vulpina* (Feber, 2013).
- One of only three UK populations of monkey orchid is found at Hartslock nature reserve.
- Bluebells *Hyacinthoides nonscripta* are widespread in Oxfordshire woodlands but under threat globally.
- One of Britain's rarest trees, the native black poplar is a tree of wet woodland and forested floodplain. Thought to be declining over the long-term in Oxfordshire, more information is needed about this species using DNA-testing to confirm the identity of the true native trees. Planting projects could enable recovery.
- Box woodland is extremely limited in the UK, localised to only about 10 sites in the country. There is a location in Chinnor where an example of mature box woodland can still be found.

Breeding curlew

- The Eurasian Curlew is identified as Near Threatened at a global scale by the IUCN. With 58,000 pairs reported in the UK in 2020, the UK holds 40% of the European curlew population and 25% of the global population. With an estimated 60 breeding pairs, the Upper Thames is one of the important lowland breeding sites with an active partnership working on The Curlew Recovery Project.

Lowland Meadows

- Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is considered to be one of the best lowland hay meadow areas in the UK, with vegetation communities that are perhaps entirely unique which reflects the influence of long-term grazing and hay-cutting on lowland hay meadows. Other good examples of this habitat are found in the floodplains of the Thames, Cherwell and Ray. One example includes the Thames at Swinford, landscape-scale community restoration plans are well underway led by the Nature Recovery Network to restore over 210 hectares of ancient, restored, and recreated meadow. This area includes the internationally rare ancient floodplain meadows (MG4). There are only 1200 hectares of MG4 lowland floodplain meadows remaining in the UK, 25% is in Oxfordshire and reconnecting these will support their survival.

Calcareous fens

- Oxfordshire hosts a complex of calcareous species-rich fens that form the largest remaining group of such habitats outside East Anglia and North Wales. Cothill Fen SAC (JNCC, 2016) is the largest surviving example of alkaline fen in central England, which supports the Clubbed General Soldierfly, Southern Damselfly, rare horseflies as well as endangered Black Bog Rush and Broad-leaved Cotton Grass (indicative of the rare M13 plant assemblage).

Chalk Streams

- Streams arising from chalk aquifers such as the Letcombe Brook, Chalgrove Brook and Ewelme Stream support characteristic species such as brown trout, bullhead and other species dependant on clear, fast flowing water and gravel substrates. Chalk streams are a globally rare habitat, with only 224 in England (TVERC data).

Veteran Trees and Wood Pasture

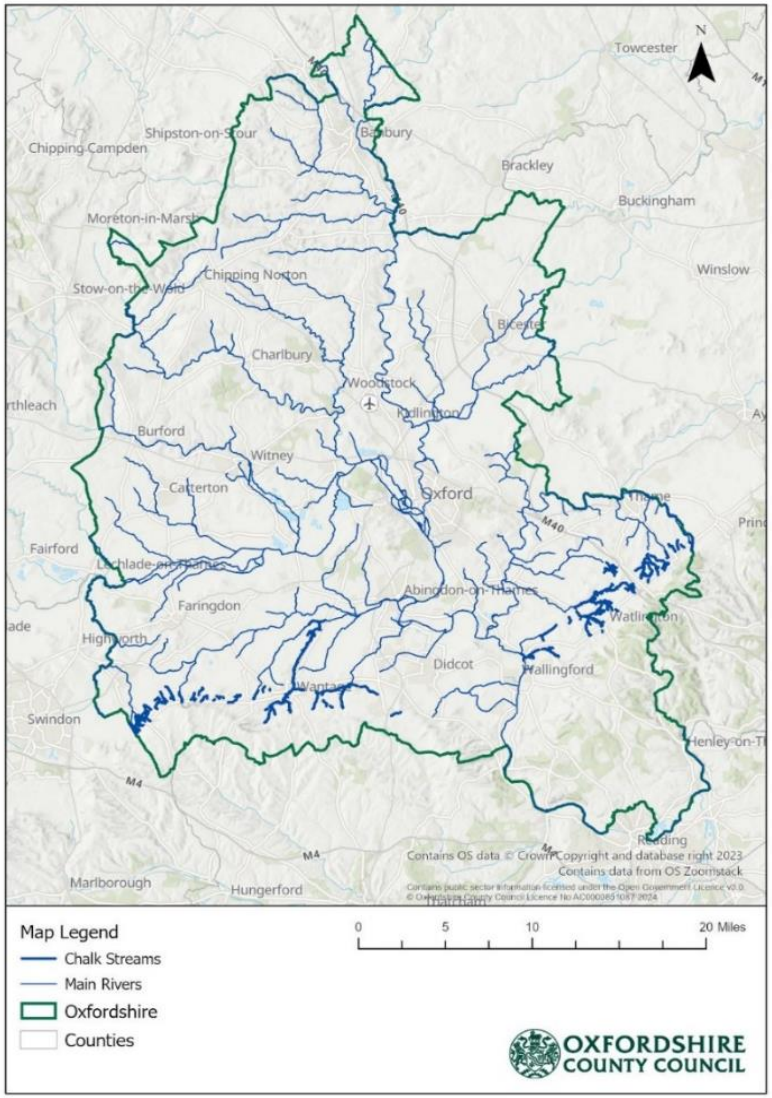
- Blenheim Palace in Woodstock hosts one of the greatest collections of ancient oak trees in Europe, including one that is 1,000 years old. There are a range of other sites of importance for veteran trees and wood pasture; an English Nature report of 2005 concluded that the many parklands and long history of wood pasture management in the Thames & Chilterns region highlights its national and international importance for habitats and species associated with veteran trees.

Research Sites

- Wytham Wood, owned by the University of Oxford, is one of the most well-studied woodlands in the world.
- Oxford has a long-standing cultural and scientific association with swifts – the colony at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History has been the subject of the Oxford Swift Research Project, started by David and Elizabeth Lack in 1947. This is one of the longest running studies of any species of bird, and has contributed greatly to our knowledge of the species.
- Little Wittenham Special Area of Conservation is one of the best-studied great crested newt sites in the UK.

Water Environment

- Oxfordshire is home to several rivers and river catchment areas. The county contains freshwater features like chalk streams, ponds, temporary pools, fens, and is classified as one of Freshwater Habitat Trust's (FHT) 'Important Freshwater Areas' which you can read more about in their Freshwater Network brochure. FHT state that these areas, including a large part of Oxfordshire have "nationally significant concentrations of freshwater biodiversity, rich in threatened plants and animals. These places, from upland river landscapes to lush lowland pondscapes, are under threat, but they are also our biggest hope for freshwater biodiversity recovery." As one of the 24 Important Freshwater Areas in England, Oxfordshire has a significant opportunity as one of the most important areas in the UK for freshwater life, to target action to recognise and restore all freshwater habitat types across the county at a landscape scale. In the long-term, Oxfordshire could restore naturally functioning, self-sustaining populations of freshwater plant and animal species.



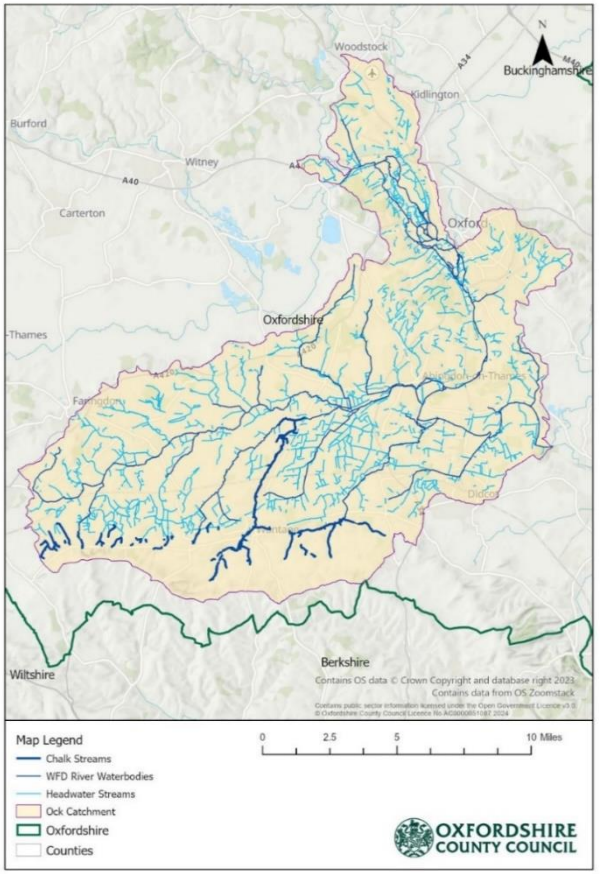
Rivers and River catchments in Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire is largely situated in the Thames River basin, with just small parts of the county draining to the Warwickshire Avon and the Great Ouse. The county contains over 3670 kilometres of watercouse including the designated main rivers (1015km) and their smaller tributary streams and headwaters (2660km).

Through the LNRS engagement process with people and organisations across Oxfordshire it has been clear that improving the quality of freshwater habitats such as rivers, streams, and their catchments is a top priority. Watercourses act as opportunities to connect people and nature in a continuous pathway even amidst densely populated urban areas and intensively farmed landscapes. However, barriers such as weirs and locks do block natural fish migration. Rivers and their connected environments have key roles as crucial habitats for wildlife and provide an array of eco-system services, and therefore, warrant a high level of focus for restoration.

For those looking for more detail about the history, character, and biodiversity recovery opportunities of each river and catchment in Oxfordshire, Appendix B gives a comprehensive overview of the key challenges and opportunities for biodiversity in each catchment and provides information about each Catchment Partnership (groups of organisations working together to improve water quality and habitats in the catchment area of each river). Appendix B is organised by catchment and river, and readers can navigate to the page or pages that relate to the specific catchment/river they are most interested in. The order of the document starts with an introduction to Oxfordshire's rivers and catchments, followed by sections on the River Thames, River Windrush, River Evenlode, River Cherwell (including the River Ray), River Ock, and River Thame. Each section discusses the unique characteristics, ecological importance, challenges, and opportunities for biodiversity within that catchment.

Rivers in the Ock Operational Catchment



Oxfordshire's national and landscape character types

Biodiversity varies across the UK and variations in the type of landscape, geology, and how people have used the land does influence the type of wildlife and habitats found in different parts of the country. The government's environmental advisory body Natural England categorizes England into 159 National Character Areas (NCAs), each with distinct geological, cultural, and biodiversity characteristics. Eight of these NCAs are present in Oxfordshire and each area is associated with a particular set of landscapes, geology, and particualr recreational or cultural associations with the area including heritage sites and certain types of businesses.

The map illustrates the 'National Character Areas' which run across Oxfordshire's landscape. Each coloured area represents a unique type of landscape distinguished by different geology, soil types, biodiversity, history, or land-use. These differences give rise to different types of habitats, wildlife, and features in the landscape that also shape our sense of place within Oxfordshire. Historic towns, open farm fields, and woodlands, are all integral parts of the character of these areas.

Appendix C provides an overview of the distinct NCAs in Oxfordshire, detailing their geology, biodiversity, cultural land-use, and notable species in the area. Each section emphasizes what could be done to maintain and enhance habitats relevant to that area and describes how nature benefits both wildlife and people in the NCA.If you'd like to delve into further detail for any of the particular National Character Areas of Oxfordshire and see which nature recovery actions might be most suitable for the specific landscapes local to you, you can find a 1-2 page description of each area within Appendix C. Many of the details in Appendix C have been collated from Natural England's National Character Area profiles, the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study and Wild Oxfordshire's website.

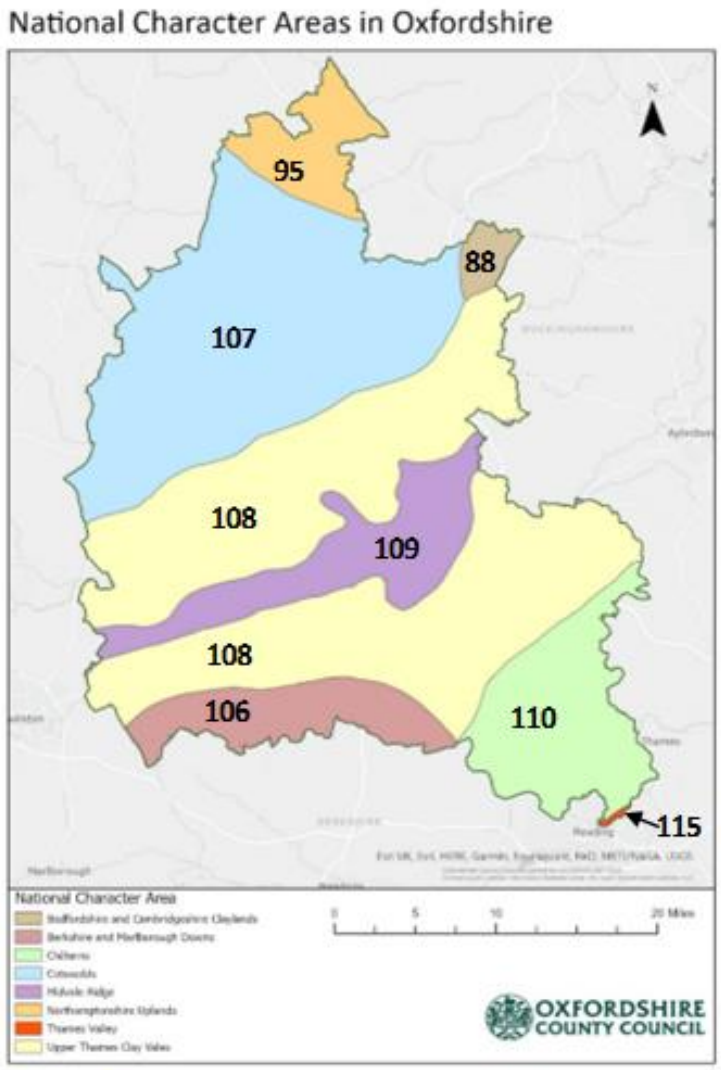


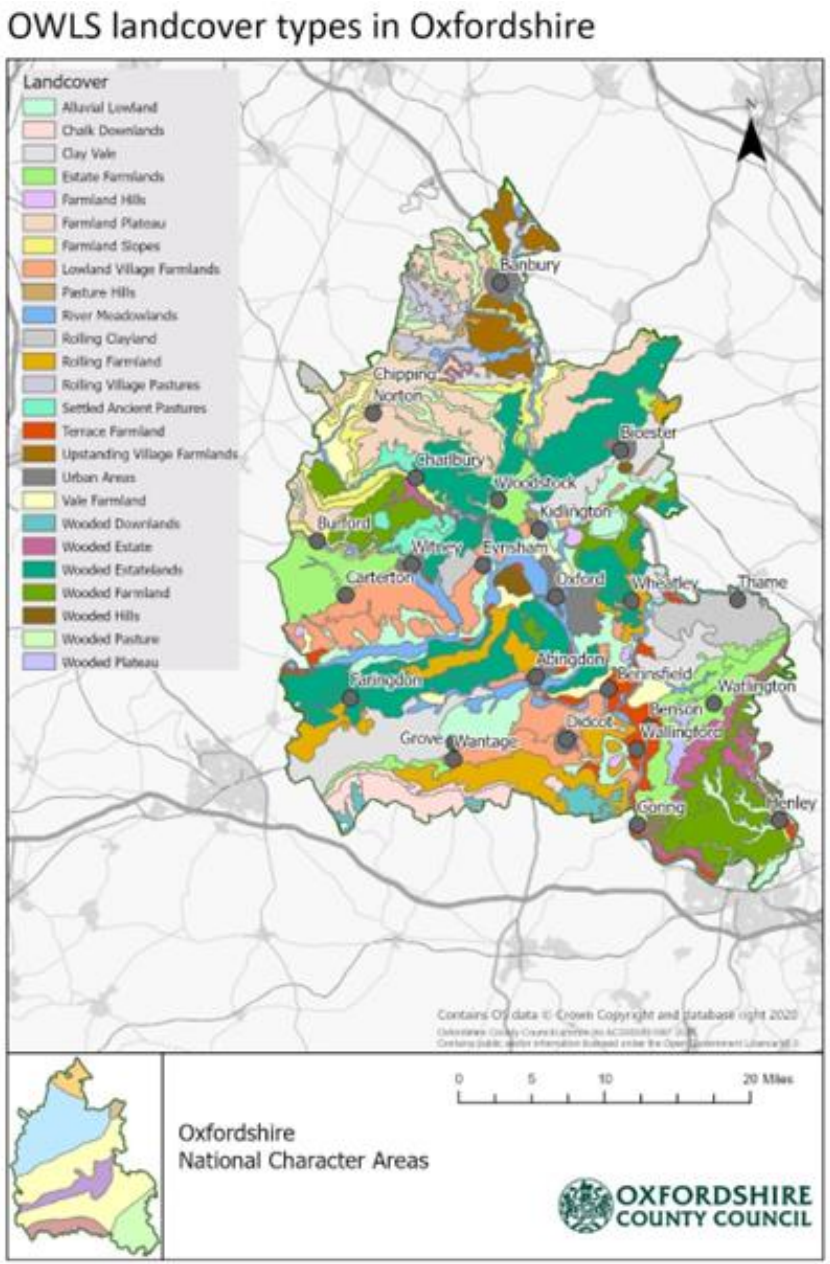
Figure X: Oxfordshire's National Character Area (NCA) map.

Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study

In addition to the NCA areas a previous initiative in Oxfordshire, the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (2004), created a breakdown of the county showing 25 different types of Landscape Character Types (LCAs) which cover Oxfordshire. Each Landscape Character Area shows the typical habitats and biodiversity for different areas of the county. To use a more interactive version of the OWLS Landscape Character Types and read about other landscape character assessments, please view the website.

These varied landscape character types can help guide biodiversity actions in each area to ensure that actions are complementary to the relevant landscape type.

The different landscapes, habitats, and soil types found in Oxfordshire shaped which nature recovery actions the LNRS's Local Habitat Map has mapped into different locations. Recent 2023/2024 data on soil types were used as well as recent data on the location and types of habitats in Oxfordshire. Despite using the latest available data, it is still important for people who are looking to take action to check their sites and consider how their nature recovery projects or actions can complement the various landscape types found across Oxfordshire. You can find more information about the OWLS Landscape Character Types in your area of Oxfordshire by looking at Appendix C which contains more detail and describes the characteristics of the different parts of Oxfordshire.

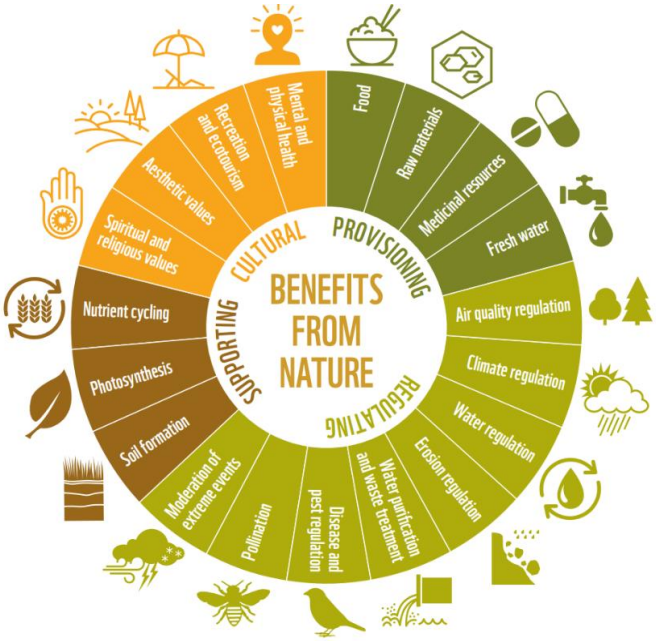


Benefits of nature

As well as being vital to human survival itself, by providing air, water, food and shelter, nature provides numerous other gifts which are touched upon in this section. Natural habitats provide essential services like water purification, flood regulation, and carbon sequestration. Accessible, outdoor spaces also offer opportunities for people to connect with nature and enjoy the outdoors, promoting both physical and mental well-being and offering key educational opportunities for people to learn about nature and biodiversity. In addition, some parts of the county have geology that has been identified as having key resources that we rely on to live well and provide building materials to produce homes and infrastructure.

Healthy ecosystems in Oxfordshire provide numerous benefits, including food production, water quality improvement, and recreational opportunities. If Oxfordshire can maintain a healthy natural environment, then the county will be in a better position to ensure the long-term provision of these services and benefits described on this page. Without effort to restore nature, the county should expect to continue to lose these gifts that nature provides. Many people in the county have already experienced challenges with growing food, managing water, a decline of species, difficulty cooling down, poorer air qualiy and other impacts.

Nature recovery actions described in the LNRS not only help our wildlife and species to thrive, but if well-coordinated across the UK, could significantly improve human health and wellbeing into the future and enhance local resilience to climate change. The image on this page illustrates the range of 'services' that a healthy landscape can provide and reminds us all of the importance of nature to our day-to-day wellbeing.



Source: Living Planet Report 2018 | Pages | WWF

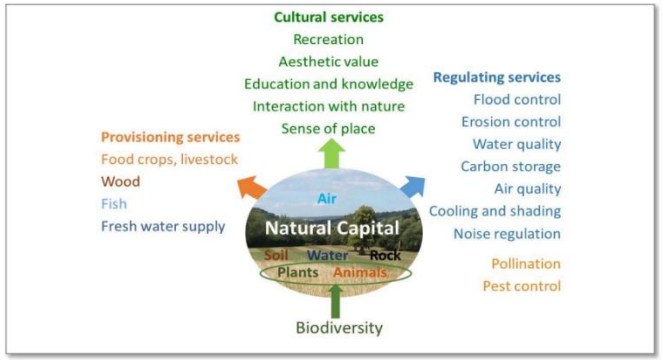


Figure 1: Natural capital stocks deliver flows of ecosystem services that underpin human health and wellbeing

Source: Natural Capital in Oxfordshire Short report, p3, Alison Smith,

Nature and people

Thriving natural systems and ways for people to connect with them are fundamental to wellbeing. The benefits or gifts that we receive from nature, such as the food we eat, outdoor spaces for physical and social activities, and mitigation of floods and heat, all rely on actions from people that enable a healthy natural environment. Undertaking environmentally positive actions help us maintain a positive relationship with the natural world.

Oxfordshire is a relatively wealthy county, but there are significant socioeconomic and health inequalities. Ten areas of Oxfordshire are ranked among the 20% most deprived areas in England, with 1 in 5 children living in poverty. The impact is profound, people in more affluent areas are expected to live around 11-12 years longer than those in poorer areas of the county. Oxfordshire also has higher than average levels of social isolation and loneliness, with a quarter of adults not meeting physical activity recommendations. Rates of depression and other types of poor mental health are also rising, especially in deprived areas, influenced by a complex range of behavioural, socioeconomic, structural, and environmental factors which all impact people's health and wellbeing.

The positive impacts of access to greenspace and connection with nature on wellbeing are well established. Physical and mental health are boosted through:

- Increased physical activity in nature-rich outdoor spaces, social contact, community connectedness, skills enhancement, and nature connection.
- Mitigation of environmental harms such as extreme heat, increased risk of flooding, and the impacts of air pollution.
- Other environmental benefits like natural flood management, soil health, food security, education, and employment.

Nature not only helps keep individuals fit and well but access to areas of nature can also help reduce inequality, e.g. by reducing common health problems that are often worse in places with lower access to nature. Improving access to areas of nature can improve health and quality of life for people in the local community by offering:

- High-quality green infrastructure to enable people to get around, exercise, and be outdoors
- Community engagement initiatives that bring people together and offer ways to boost wellbeing and reduce loneliness
- Opportunities for new types of healthcare, such as green social prescribing (which supports people to engage in nature-based activities to improve their mental and physical health)

Since the typical approach to healthcare requires a lot of resources (and is responsible for 4% of carbon emissions nationally), improving the environment and access to nature offers effective, nature-friendly ways to treat and prevent conditions and boost the quality of life amongst local communities. The evidence for incorporating nature recovery into a strategic approach to inclusive and sustainable economies is growing.

However, opportunities to connect with nature and experience its benefits are not equally distributed in Oxfordshire. Groups that consistently miss out include those from lower-income households, minoritised ethnic groups, people who have been forcibly displaced (such as refugees and people seeing asylum), and people with disabilities or long-term conditions. These groups are also disproportionately affected by climate and nature crises and are currently underrepresented in the UK environment sector.

In recent years, Oxfordshire has developed a strong commitment to environmental equity and Healthy Place Shaping, in line with the Environment Improvement Plan 2023. Our understanding of local environmental inequalities is expanding, as evidenced in the 2024 Director of Public Health Annual Report and research from the Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, which highlights 16 priority areas where inadequate accessible greenspace collides with social deprivation. You can find these 16 priority areas on the LNRS Local Habitat Map too showing where nature recovery efforts could also offer great benefits to local communities.

These issues are now recognised in national and local health and environmental policy, with increasing attention to high-quality green infrastructure that offers regular opportunities to connect with nature as part of your daily life, and targeted initiatives to support vulnerable groups. This includes funds through allocated towards the national Green Social Prescribing programme.

How are urban areas represented within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

Within the LNRS you will find actions to deliver in urban areas in the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities. These actions help to increase biodiversity and areas of nature in villages, towns, and cities in Oxfordshire and these actions can be referenced to enable local communities to make a case for nature recovery projects including projects that harness the power of nature to help mitigate heat and manage water and flood risk in urban areas. Actions that are recommended include increasing the number of street trees, creating innovative spaces for nature like green roofs, producing wildlife friendly gardens and parks, or adding spaces for nature such as bird boxes, swift bricks, hedgehog houses and more.

Gardens and greenspaces make up 7% of Oxfordshire's land, buildings make up a further 6%. This 13% of the county represents a very real opportunity for local people, parishes, and community groups to make space for nature. You will find some corridors and locations mapped out on the LNRS Local Habitat Map as being opportunity areas that could particularly contribute towards the creation of a joined-up network of nature. However, urban actions are important to deliver across the county, anywhere that people live, work, and go to school. The LNRS aims to bring greater recognition to the importance of actions in villages, towns, and cities across Oxfordshire where many people, groups, and parishes are already delivering impressive nature recovery projects and initiatives.

Pressures on Oxfordshire's environment and wildlife

What is a 'pressure'? In the context of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), a 'pressure' is considered to be something that threatens Oxfordshire's biodiversity (animals, plants, fungi, and soil microorganisms) and puts it at significant risk of long-term harm (for example, something that may hinder or prevent a species or type of habitat from being able to survive) or prevents its recovery. In other words, the pressures listed below are listed because they may cause (or be causing) significant damage to nature and wildlife locally. In addition to the creation and enhancement of future habitats, pressures must be managed to prevent harm to the remaining areas of nature. The current pressures in Oxfordshire include:

- **Climate change:** Climate change is accelerating at a rapid pace and significantly quicker than many climate models had previously anticipated. Changes in weather events because of this climate change threaten biodiversity in a number of ways including:
    - More regular and prolonged heatwaves of increasing intensity,
    - Increasingly dry summers periods with minimal rainfall, resulting in drought conditions,
    - More intense periods of rainfall during winter leading to increased flooding,
    - Increasing number of storms and high winds.
    - Changes in phenology (seasonal changes in plants and animals from year to year e.g. emergence of insects and flowering of plants).

    These changes are taking place at such a rapid pace and at sufficient magnitude that many species and habitats will increasingly find themselves exposed to environmental conditions that do not support their survival. Spring is now advancing by 2.5 days per decade, plants are flowering and fruiting earlier and leaf fall is delayed; this can affect food chains with some species that rely on one another falling out of sync. High genetic and species diversity in natural populations are essential to enable successful adaptation to climate change in the long term. However, it is expected that species will struggle to adapt quickly enough to climate change therefore their best chances of survival will be to have the chance to move and migrate in order to find new locations with suitable environmental conditions. This requires a joined-up network of varied habitats to enable species to move. Changes to weather patterns are expected to be a catalyst that pushes many species to need to move from their current locations into new cooler, drier, more sheltered areas. It is predicted that many species may need to move northwards to survive these changes in weather and conditions. In addition, climate change is contributing to the increasing prevalence of a range of invasive species, pests and disease that have already created a significant burden on native species and will continue to threaten biodiversity.

    Creating new habitats and improving existing habitats to create a larger network for nature which is bigger, better, and more joined up offers opportunities to improve nature's resilience to climate change, whilst offering a range of co-benefits including carbon sequestration, urban cooling, and natural flood management.

- **Insufficient resource, support, and trained professionals**: A key pressure is the lack of investment in the enablers of nature recovery. Delivery of the actions needed won't be possible without financial investment, trained and willing people, and resources and equipment suitable to improve and create habitats. For example, the delivery of nature recovery actions will rely on the availability of suitably trained professionals including (but not limited to) ecologists, foresters, arboriculturists, hydrologists, entomologists, species recorders, and many more. Without these people, we cannot expect knowledge and skills to be shared more widely with the public.

- **Managing Growth (Housing and Infrastructure Development):** Growth and development are significant pressures on nature in Oxfordshire. There is a growing requirement for development sites, mineral extraction sites, and landfill sites. This growth negatively impacts nature when habitats are damaged or destroyed, but also when they are disturbed, fragmented, and/or when development results in pollution such as light, noise or sewage. Between 2011 and 2020, an average of 3,154 houses were built **each year** in Oxfordshire (Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire, p.29). The county's resident population is predicted to expand from the current 725,000 to 853,000 by 2030 so Oxfordshire must carefully consider how to safeguard wildlife, nature, and people. To help nature recover, growth should be carefully planned to avoid harming existing biodiversity-rich spaces and should deliver net gains in biodiversity which support local nature recovery, as well as providing space for nature within developments, including planting native species of local provenance, providing roosting and nesting features within buildings and enhancing genuine public access to nature in a way that supports local wildlife. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment should be a key consideration for new developments and infrastructure and designs should prioritise the creation of corridors that enable wildlife to move through the county unhindered. Housing and infrastructure developers, and mineral and waste operators must make space for nature and must limit damage to existing habitats and species. Managing this pressure must include timely improvements to sewage treatment infrastructure to limit pollution entering the environment as a result of development, as well as the development of sustainable supplies of natural resources that minimise the adverse impacts on the natural world. Whilst the LNRS is not intended to be used to prevent development, it recognises the clear historical impact on nature from development and supports the principle of sustainability and planning positively to support local nature recovery through future growth.

- **Recreational pressure**: While Oxfordshire does have publicly accessible greenspace, the majority of the county's greenspace is not publicly accessible and there is no single accessible site larger than 500 hectares that meets the ANGST criteria of being close to residents (Oxfordshire's green space deprived neighbourhoods, Martha Crockatt 2024). Habitats and green spaces in Oxfordshire are used by people and pets, which can impact adversely on wildlife in sensitive sites. Access to these spaces is an important asset for people's health and wellbeing, but it needs to be managed and respected to avoid damaging sensitive habitats or causing declines in species that are more sensitive to disturbance. Increased provision of multi-functional greenspaces which provide for both wildlife and people could reduce the pressure on sensitive wildlife areas, whilst also contributing towards the priorities in the LNRS by creating more habitats across the county that are bigger, better, and more connected.

Responsible use of these spaces will be key to their success at supporting nature. For example, litter must be managed and controlled to limit damage to spaces that people have access to. Such an approach should provide more space for people and nature, whilst also providing undisturbed spaces for nature recovery.

- **Dogs and Cats:** Pets are known to cause damage to wildlife. Cats can harm birds and mammals, while dogs that are not under close, effective control can either directly harm wildlife if chased or caught, or indirectly damage populations by disturbing nests and preventing ground-nesting birds from breeding (Countryside Code). This may mean that dogs should be kept on leads in certain places or at certain times of year to support wildlife. If domestic animal waste (such as dog waste) is not collected it can pollute the area and impact other animals especially if bags of waste are left in the environment. Tick and flea treatments also pollute the environment when animals are washed and water enters the environment or when they swim in ponds and rivers which builds up toxins in the water and damages a range of wildlife. Pet owners must be willing to engage responsibly with the environment and understand their responsibilities throughout the lifespan of their pets to minimize damage to nature.

- **Pollution**: A number of pollutants are described within the pressures section already but there are a range of other pollutants from various sources, including industry, agriculture, transportation, traffic and congestion, wastewater, sewage, and household activities that contaminate the air, soil, water and impact the health of wildlife and people. Reducing the diverse range of pollutants that enter the environment was a repeated, clear request from people and organisations across the county we engaged with when developing the LNRS and this action sits with every person, business, and organisation. The greatest impacts come from the largest polluters but cumulative actions by individuals also create significant change.

- **Air quality**: In Oxfordshire there have been significant improvements in air quality in recent decades, primarily due to reductions in coal burning (Director of Health Annual Report 2023/24), with reductions in nitrogen dioxides, and particulate matter between 2010 and 2021, however ammonia emissions have remained largely the same. Ammonia and Nitrogen Dioxide pollution result in increased nitrogen deposition which can affect many sensitive habitats and species which cannot tolerate raised levels of pollution. High risk areas for nitrogen deposition include habitats close to urban areas and major roads, combustion plants and intensive livestock units (apis.co.uk)

- **Agricultural Intensification:** Intensive, conventional farming practices, such as the heavy use of pesticides and fertilizers, degrade soil quality, reduce biodiversity, and harm fungi and soil life. This in turn damages the soil and soil life until the land is no longer able to support food production, wildlife, or habitats. Since more than 70% of Oxfordshire's land is farmed to produce food, there is a significant opportunity within the county to offer more space for nature if farmers can be supported to integrate sustainable farming practices, and space for habitats, into their businesses. Many farmers in the county are already taking action to increase tree cover, change cultivation practices, use cover crops and leys, and

allocate more land to support biodiversity. However, without financial support, these positive steps (and the public services they provide) are at risk. Farmers who manage their land to support nature while producing food offer very real opportunities to tackle the biodiversity crisis and create a more resilient network of nature throughout Oxfordshire.

- **Pests and Disease:** Diseases and pests change over time and we are currently experiencing significant impacts on wildlife due to disease and pest damage. It is expected that warmer average temperatures and wetter environments could further increase the prevalence of pests and diseases in the UK. Within the past 100 years, the UK has lost around 30 million Elm trees due to Dutch Elm Disease. The Elm used to be one of the common English tree species, alongside Ash and Oak. Now, Ash faces a current threat of extinction from Ash Dieback, a relatively new disease to the UK. Around 90% of Ash trees are predicted to be lost; however, research continues. These are just two examples of many other pests and diseases that are increasing the vulnerability of Oxfordshire's wildlife and habitats. Because of the increasing prevalence of pests and diseases, it is more important than ever to be ambitious in our efforts to enable nature to adapt and build resilience to pests by increasing the area of biodiverse habitat, improving management, and connecting habitats up.

- **Invasive Non-Native Species and Unsustainably High Populations of Species:**
Introducing non-native species can threaten native flora and fauna and disrupt ecological balances (Great Britain Invasive Species Strategy). The Woodland Trust states that non-native species alone cost the UK economy a startling £4 billion per year, whilst also causing steep declines in certain native species like white-clawed crayfish, red squirrels, and water voles. In Oxfordshire, species such as the white-clawed crayfish have already been pushed to the brink of survival due to the introduction of the American Signal Crayfish. Currently, there are a number of invasive and/or non-native species present in Oxfordshire, as well as native species that have reached unsustainably large population sizes, causing excessive damage to habitats and other species. Invasive/non-native species include American Signal Crayfish, American Mink, Himalayan Balsam, grey squirrels, and some deer. Some native deer species have also reached such large population sizes that they present a key challenge for biodiversity by causing excessive levels of damage to other species. Not all non-native species carry the same risks or threats to biodiversity but those that do can exterminate local populations of species or cause significant damage to habitats across the country. This pressure from invasive species is expected to change over time as weather patterns and species compositions change. Local actions will need to adapt quickly in response to these pressures.

Pressures on Oxfordshire's rivers and waterways

- **Habitat Degradation**: Historic alterations have been carried out on most of Oxfordshire's watercourses such as dredging, embanking, straightening channels, building obstruction in the river channels such as weirs, and drainage of the adjacent floodplains, as well as building on these floodplains which puts these developments at risk. The cumulative effect of these actions across the landscape disrupts natural in-river and

floodplain processes, diminish habitat diversity, and impede the movement of freshwater species, degrading rivers and freshwater habitats across the county. Although much has been done to restore our rivers and remove or bypass barriers in the last few decades, there is still much more to do to restore habitat quality and properly reconnect rivers with their floodplains.

- **Water Abstraction**: the high demand for water for conventional agriculture, industry, and domestic use (which will increase as more homes are built) means that a significant amount of water has to be abstracted from our groundwaters and watercourses to meet this need. This water is taken partly from groundwater sources such as the Cotswold limestone aquifer that feeds some of the headwaters of the rivers that flow into Oxfordshire, and also the major surface water abstraction at Farmoor, west of Oxford, from the River Thames. Abstraction from groundwater and surface waters can result in low water levels and reduced flows in our rivers, changing and degrading the habitat that aquatic species rely on. Much has been done to alleviate these impacts in the county and wider Thames catchment as far as possible without jeopardising supply, but further reductions in abstraction pressure (particularly from the Thames at Farmoor during the summer) will require the development of new sustainable water resources. Careful water management, including reducing personal consumption, re-use of grey water and installing water butts to capture rainwater for garden use, and improved leakage control and demand management by water companies are all important in reducing future abstraction need.



- **Pollution**: Pollution from various sources, including agricultural runoff, urban runoff, and untreated sewage storm discharges, contaminates water bodies with nutrients, chemicals, and pathogens, degrading water quality and threatening freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity. Across the county rivers will be expected to take on the increased wastewater from any new housing developments and this should be carefully considered around areas that are already pushed to their limit, highly polluted, or are upstream of others who are already liable to flooding. Within the Thames there are 31 major sewage treatment works in the catchment area and the pressure to develop new homes is placing increased pressure on these sewage works, especially in the light of the infrastructure replacement which is needed to combat the growing problem of the ingress of groundwater and flood waters into sewerage systems. Continued investment into improving the quality of treated effluent, and an upsurge in funding to address storm discharges, are expected to have positive benefit for biodiversity river health, freshwater habitats, and people, but it also important that measures continue to be taken to address diffuse pollution from agriculture and urban areas.

Summary of pressures

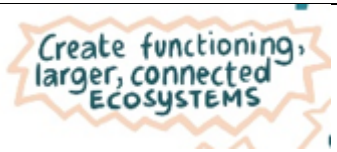
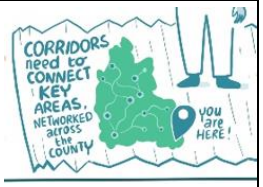
The LNRS identifies some specific measures to reduce some of these pressures and overall aims for a biodiversity-rich network for nature which is bigger, better, and more joined up; achievement of such a network will help increase nature's resilience to many of the pressures mentioned. However, many of the pressures above relate to wider issues including how people treat the environment, the perceived value of nature, practical problems that need improvements such as infrastructure and sewage systems, and the influence of climate change.

Addressing the causes of these pressures requires collaborative efforts from everyone including authorities, policymakers, researchers, conservation organisations, farmers and landowners, utilities companies, developers, minerals and waste operators, businesses and local communities to implement sustainable land management practices, sustainable water resource management, habitat restoration initiatives, invasive species management strategies, and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help to mitigate the impacts on nature. Steps now towards relieving the pressures on biodiversity could safeguard nature in Oxfordshire to create large, functioning and healthy ecosystems to pass on for generations to come. This is important for nature's own sake as well as for all the natural resources that we rely on nature to provide from clean air, clean water, food, shelter, medicines, and much more.

The Oxfordshire LNRS vision - A well-connected, biodiversity-rich, network of nature that is resilient into the future, restored for the health and wellbeing of future generations, and for nature's own sake

It's clear that Oxfordshire is home to a diverse array of habitats and wildlife, but that many of these are decling rapidly due to pressures such as development, pollution, and agricultural intensification. It is important that Oxfordshire restores the local environment both for nature's own sake, and for the health and wellbeing of people and wildlife. The LNRS is based on three following principles that guide the species actions, habitat actions, and the locations that the LNRS has mapped out as focused areas for nature recovery work.

LNRS Principles

1. **Enhance what we have**	Take action to enhance and manage the areas that are already important for biodiversity in Oxfordshire. This must be the foundation of nature recovery efforts so that wildlife does not further decline and has biodiversity-rich core sites to disperse out from. 
2. Create more habitats to achieve a connected network of nature	Focus local efforts and resources towards the creation of a strategic network of habitats that prioritises connectivity. Ensure that environmental improvement considers nature as a connected set of habitats and species. Create and enahnce habitats to achieve a wide ranage of biodiversity-rich habitat types that are joined by corridors and together, create a resilient network of nature that will be resilient to pressures such as climate change.  
3. Make space for nature everywhere	Take action to create spaces for wildlife across the county thorugh individual or group actions at home, at work, in local community spaces, and in schools to make nature part of daily life for everyone helping both biodiversity and addressing unequal access to nature across Oxfordshire. Take actions to support species to survive and spread across the county in all areas, both urban and rural. Across the rural landscape, managers of agricultulral land must be supported and incentivised to deliver sustainable agricultural practices to help wildlife flourish across the wider landscape of Oxfordshire. Focus on healthy soils, low/no chemical inputs, setting aside space for wildlife to help with pests and pollintion, improve water quality, create space for water to be held across the landscape, minmise soil erosion, and create high nature-value food and fibre production systems.

This image was produced during one of the early LNRS workshops with local community members. It tells a story that was repeated by groups and people throughout Oxfordshire and represents the local ambition for ecological recovery. It displays core ambitions, actions, and priorities that have shaped the LNRS and acts as a call-to-action for both individual and community involvement in environmental stewardship.



Shaping the vision for nature



Throughout its preparation, the strategy was shaped by input from local people and organisations. We heard from people through surveys, workshops, in-person meetings, and map data shared by **more than 3,000 people and organisations** in Oxfordshire. Throughout this process, the decisions made were overseen by the LNRS Partnership, a group of authorities and representatives for Oxfordshire's environment (see page X).

Outline of the engagement process

1. Early 2024 - Asking people what the biodiversity priorites Oxfordshire's LNRS should be. The LNRS held 14 workshops with around 400 people and held an online survey with around 650 responses.
2. Mid 2024 - Inviting people to tell us about locations where they are recoving nature using a map tool with around 200 responses.
3. Late 2024 – Presenting a first draft version of the strategy to local people and inviting the public to suggest changes to the draft LNRS thorugh a formal public consultation. We had around 2,100 responses showing strong, positive engagement with the strategy.
4. 2025 – Publishing what we heard from the consultation responses, making changes to the strategy based on public responses, and finalising the strategy to invite local authorities to approve its publication.

In addition to the farmers, landowners, businesses, schools, local community groups, nature recovery orgnaistions and many other who were part of shaping the strategy, the LNRS also held consistent meetings with neighbouring auhtorities to ensure that our six neighbouring LNRS authorities were informed of our progress, and vice-versa. This enabled us to modify the LNRS map at our boundaries to create smooth, continouous corridors for nature across beaurocratic borders.

A summary of the full engagement process, demographics of those who engaged, and the data we captured from the different steps is available to download and view on our LNRS webpage.

[request for design to please insert images of quotes direct from the surveys/workshops/etc as images on this page]

LNRS Nature recovery actions – How to achieve the LNRS vision

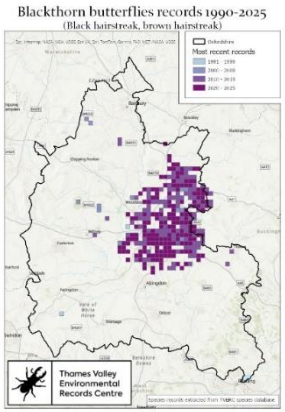
Habitat actions

Having reviewed habitats that are important for biodiversity in the county and hearing the priorities held by local people and organisations in Oxfordshire, this LNRS created a list of important biodiversity actions to deliver in Oxfordshire. These are listed in the LNRS '**Statement of Biodiversity Priorites'** which states an agreed set of **84 important actions** to deliver in the county to achieve biodiversity priorites like improved water quality, improved connectivity between habitats, improving the condition of our existing habtiats of importance, creating new habitats, and enhancing areas for nature in both the urban and agricultural environments across the county. You can view the full list of actions here.

By delivering any of the actions on this list, you can be confident that your project is contributing towards a widely agreed set of local nature recovery priorities. A diverse range of projects will be required to achieve nature recovery and achieve all of the priorities.

Species-specific actions

Many species in the county will benefit from the broad habitat improvements described in the Statement of Biodviersity Priorites (above). However, some species in Oxfordshire will need more bespoke actions to recover. For example, some species may need to be introduced into the county (like the beaver), some certain ground-nesting birds may require fencing or help to protect their nests whilst their chicks hatch and fledge (like the Curlew), and fish across the county need suitable fish passes to be created to enable them to move throughout rivers and streams to breed and disperse. In cases like these, creating a broadly good habitat is not, by itself sufficient to recover those species who need an additional bespoke action. The LNRS has therefore identified **63 bespoke species actions** on the LNRS '**Species Priorities List**'. You can view the full list of species actions here.



All of these actions are needed to help recover species that need more bespoke actions in addition to the general enhancement of habitats across the wider environment. The 63 actions focus on species such as hedgehogs, swifts and house martins, bats, juniper, and many more. By taking these actions you can be confident that you are helping to halt the loss of biodiversity in Oxfordshire. The list also shows you where those species have recently been recorded in the county help if you're not sure whether you're in the right area to support those species (see image).

[design to insert small images of species from the list]

LNRS Nature recovery locations – where to deliver the LNRS

In the case of both species and habitats, many people and organisations in the county told us that they are willing and able to take action to support nature but many people reported to the LNRS that they were unsure where to act or what to do. The LNRS supports you through the 'Local Habitat Map'.

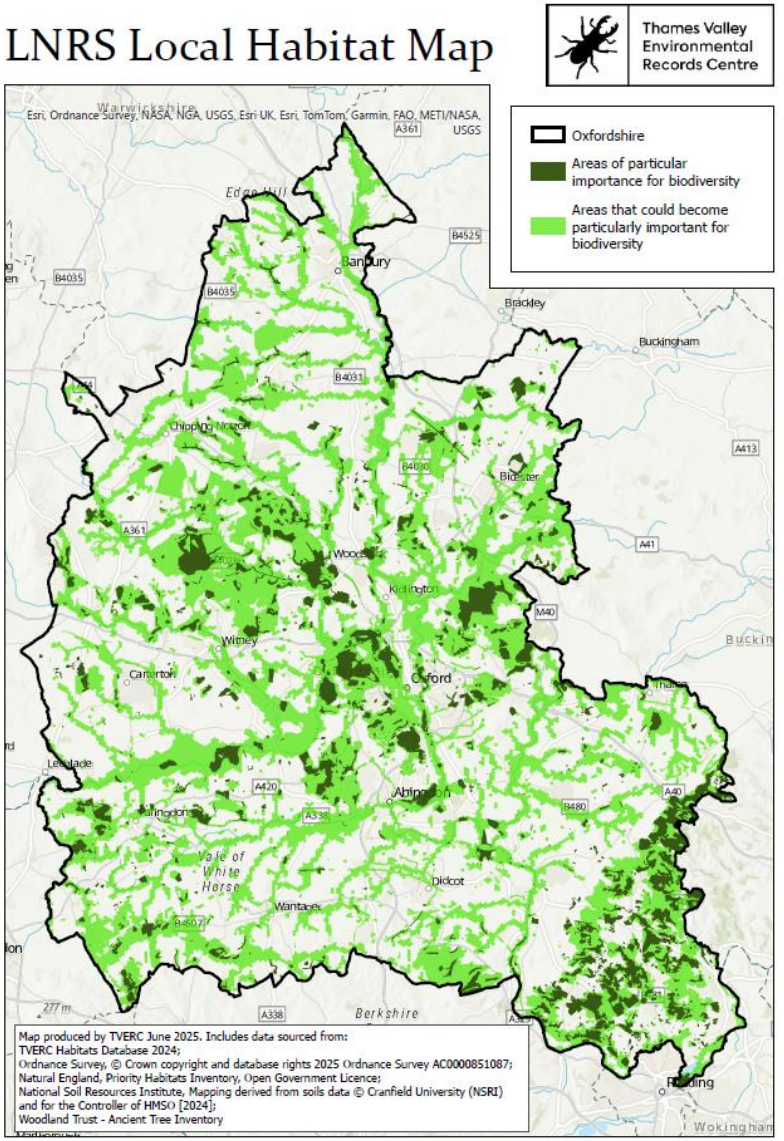
The Local Habitat Map

The Local Habitat Map sets out a collaboratively created vision for which areas of the county could become of particular importance for biodiversity in the future. This map offers a blueprint that organisations, landowners, and individuals across the county can contribute towards and can deliver, together. Together these areas show where the vision of the LNRS could be achieved. If Oxfordshire can deliver nature recovery actions in the majority of these areas we would all have achieved a bigger, better, more connected and resilient network of nature to share with future generations.

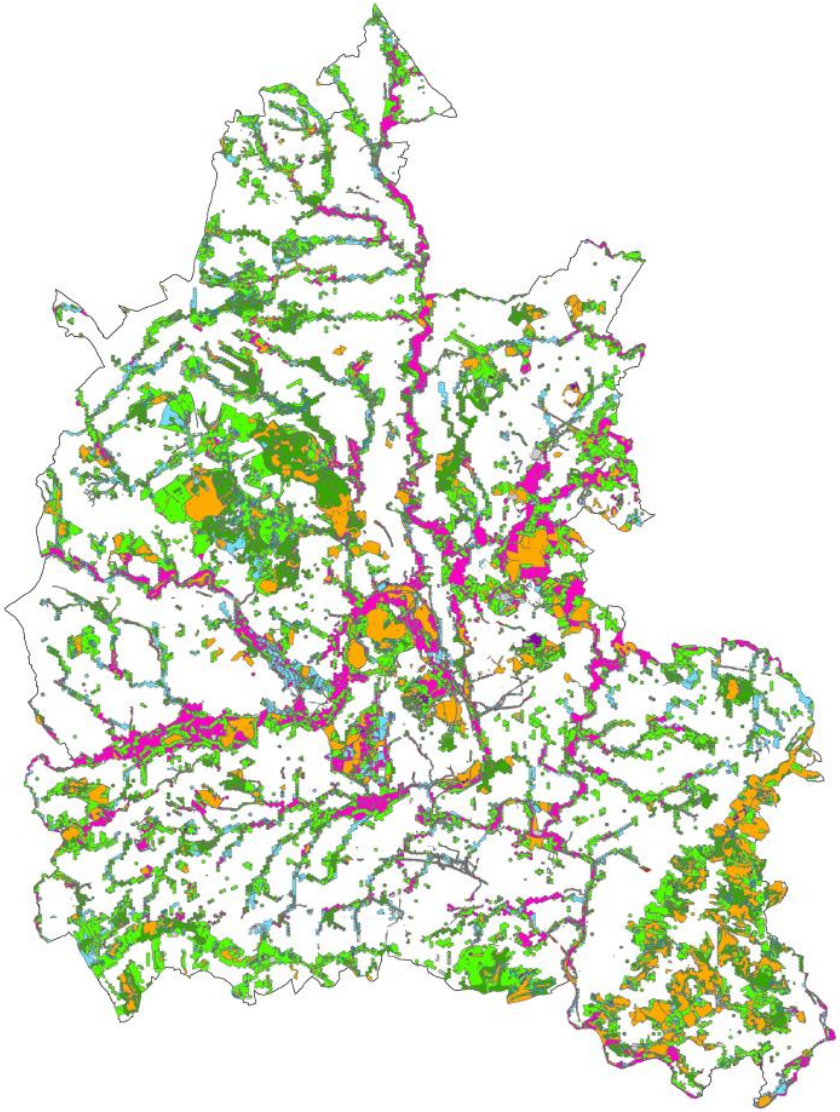
The dark green areas show the existing areas that are particularly important for biodiversity. The light green areas are the areas that the LNRS recommends for targeted nature recovery actions. They are areas that could become important for biodiversity if nature recovery actions can be delivered in those locations. Together, the green areas cover 40% of Oxfordshire and show the overall network that could be achieved.

Within that overall area, the LNRS has picked out which different actions are recommended in which locations of the county (e.g. where to create woodland, restore fens, manage scrub, or create ponds). See the multicoloured image below to get a sense of this variety. The map is designed to be viewed and used online as an interactive tool to enable you to view which actions to take in your local area. Please click here to view the online map.

Even if you're not in the green network, there are still countywide (unmapped) actions that you can take to support nature recovery in any part of Oxfordshire.



Users of the strategy can use the LNRS's interactive 'Local Habitat Map' tool to see which areas of the county have been recommended for which nature recovery actions (e.g. woodland creation, fen restoration, pond creation or any of the other mapped actions for habitats or species).



Key

Light green – grassland creation/enhancement
Dark green – woodland, orchard, parkland creation/enhancement
Pink – wetland creation and enhancement
Purple – heathland and scrub creation/enhancement
Light blue – rivers, ponds, lakes and riparian habitat creation/enhancement
Orange – Enhance existing areas of particular importance for biodiversity.
Red – urban habitats to create/enhance

This image is designed to a give a sense of the range of actions being recommended in various areas of the county but it does not exactly prescribe what must be done in those locations. There are further actions that overlap in various areas, or which are too small-scale to see at this county-view (e.g. actions for particular species). All sites must undergo 'on the ground' assessments to ensure that they are suitably ground-truthed before taking actions. To best view these, please zoom into areas using the 'Local Habitat Map' and read the LNRS 'Before you Start' guide on the webpage.

How was the Local Habitat Map made?

The mapped areas were informed by local ambition, guidance, and data from more than 3,000 local people and organisations in Oxfordshire during workshops, surveys, meetings, and more. These mapped areas create a targeted set of locations where focused habitat creation or enhancement actions are recommended.

1. Step 1 – Ask people to tell us about important habitats and priorities that the LNRS map should focus on
    - We heard a huge amount including the priority to create connectivity, and particular features that should be mapped like chalk streams, fens, scrub, rivers, and areas to enhance urban biodiversity.
2. Step 2 – Collect data to understand where the important features are, or where they could be in future.
    - The LNRS used 62 different datasets that helped us to map different, important features in the county. See the full list in Appendix D.
    - For example, we had map data that told us where Oxfordshire's existing habitats are (orchards, woodlands, ponds and so on) and others that told us where the urban greenspaces are, where the high productivity farmland is, and so on.
    - Some datasets, like the Cranfield Soil data helped inform our mapping of where future habitats could be created.
3. Step 3 - Agree which important features we could include in the map, which we may need to avoid, and how much of them we could include
    - For example, it was agreed to include 100% of all the chalk streams and fens in Oxfordshire. Some habitats that were less rare had lower targets. This is the process of prioritising, we could not select every area of every habitat otherwise we would not be prioritising.
    - We set some areas of the county to be more suitable for nature recovery action (like the National Landscapes), we set other areas of the county, like the best and most productive farmland to be less suitable for habitat creation actions, and we also set a goal to spread nature recovery actions across the county, to ensure that each district had a certain amount to deliver.
    - These targets and settings were tweaked based on engagement with local people and organisations and the decisions were made by the LNRS Partnership including nature recovery organisations and authorities from across Oxfordshire.
4. Step 4 – A draft version of the map was presented to the public for oversight and we had strong participation from people across the county
    - We received nearly 2,000 comments across the map with agreement, ideas, and suggestions for changes from individuals, developers, farmers, local authorities, and more.
5. Step 5 – we made changes to the mapping to produce the final version of the Local Habitat Map
    - Where we heard requests for minor changes we made these (e.g. adjusting the boundaries of the mapping slightly)
    - Where we heard about any errors, these were corrected
    - Where we received evidence of nature recovery projects underway, these were built into the mapping.

This is a high-level summary of an in-depth process. For the full technical detail of how the map was created, please see the report in Appendix E.

Building on previous work in the county

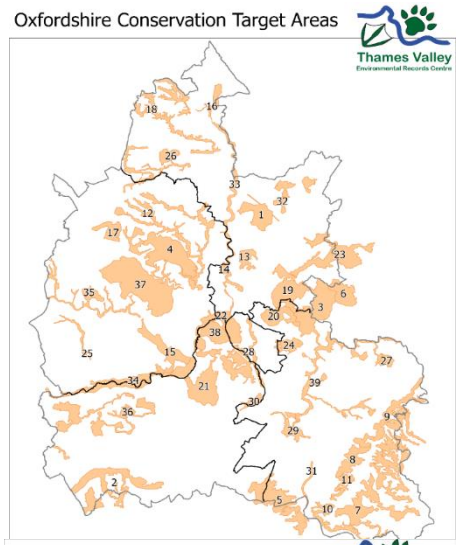
Identifying target areas for nature recovery is not new for Oxfordshire. Groups across the county had worked on a number of previous initiatives to prioritise where habitat creation and enhancement work should be targeted. Local people and organisations made a clear case that the LNRS should build on this previous work, using the areas as a foundation for the LNRS map to amplify the previous work whilst also bringing in wider audiences and the latest local information and knowledge. The Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy builds upon a rich history of conservation efforts within the county, leveraging past initiatives such as the Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) and the draft Nature Recovery Network (NRN).

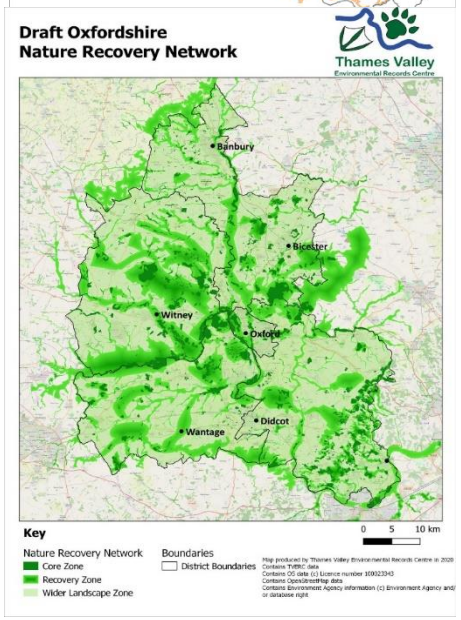
The Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) began in 2006 and were a pivotal tool for mapping out which areas of the county hold significant ecological value. As of 2025, there are now 39 such CTA areas in Oxfordshire that cover about 20% of the county. Their purpose has been to identify which areas of the county should be prioritised for nature recovery actions. This targeted mapping aimed to preserve existing habitats, enhance their quality, and create better-connections between them to help wildlife thrive. See more about CTAs on Wild Oxfordshire's webpage here. These areas continue to be managed and the areas are evolving over time.

After the momentum of the CTAs, ecologists and environmental organisations came together in Oxfordshire to develop local mapping further. They produced a draft Nature Recovery Network (NRN) - read more here on Wild Oxfordshire's website. The draft NRN aimed to identify which places are 'core' habitats that should be enhanced, and which areas could be 'recovery' areas where habitats could be created to link up the 'core' sites. It aimed to expand conservation efforts, seeking to create a more extensive and interconnected system of natural spaces, promoting the idea that nature recovery needs to be a county-wide endeavour. The NRN emphasized the importance of spatial targeting.

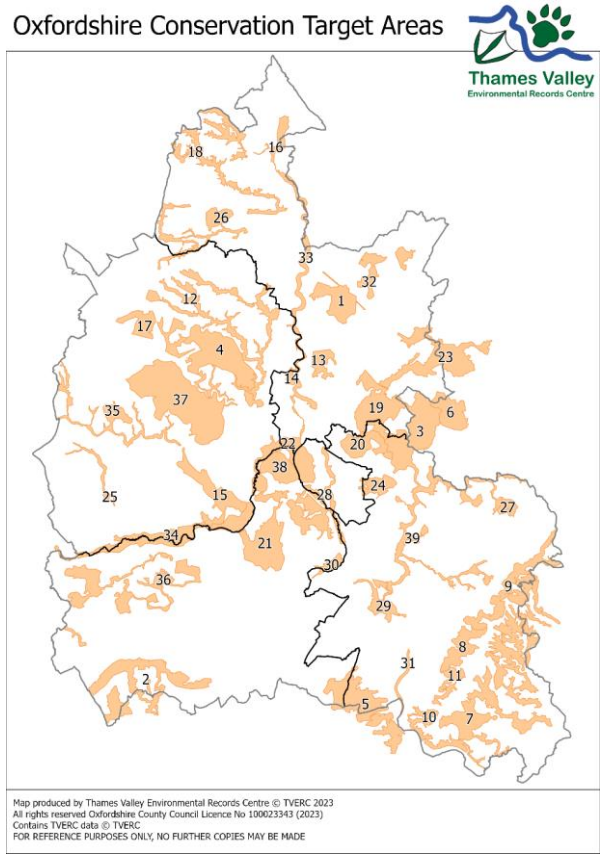
In essence, the LNRS Local Habitat Map represents an evolution of past conservation efforts, combining the targeted approach of the CTAs with the expansive, interconnected vision of the NRN, whilst ensuring that there are opportunities a wide range of people and organisations across the county to input into the creation of the strategy. The LNRS incorporated both the CTAs and the NRN areas into the LNRS Local Habitat Map. It mapped the CTA areas to ensure that conservation efforts would still be targeted towards these locations and it covers the majority of the draft NRN area but with further corridors and connections shaped by local input.

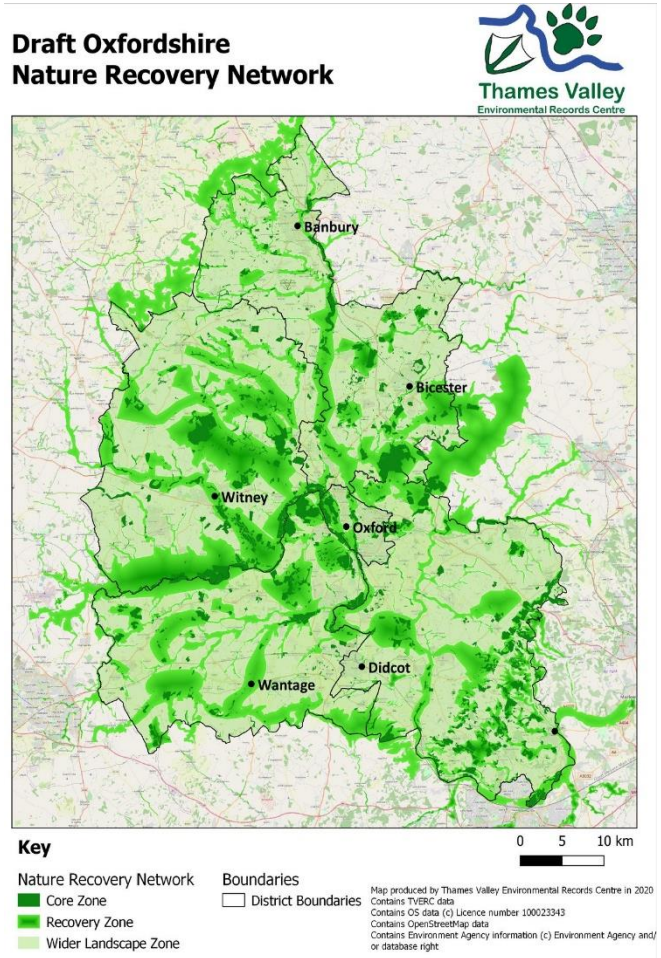
The LNRS is not expected to map every nature recovery action that could happen in every part of the county. The government guidance tasked LNRSs to prioritise and consider trade offs understanding that there are a range of pressures and expectations on Oxfordshire's land, from food production to space for housing and the LNRS aimed to identify the most beneficial areas to target nature recovery whilst balancing other needs e.g. by choosing land with lower agricultural value.

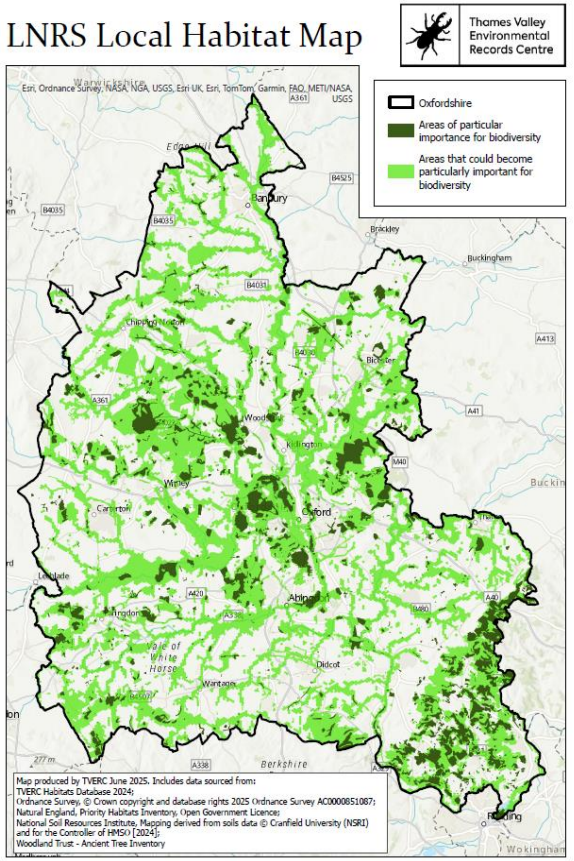




This shows the evolution from the CTAs, the draft NRN, through to the LNRS Local Habitat Map.







Conservation target areas began in 2006 and covers about 20% of the county.

Draft NRN areas developed in 2020 and covers about 30% of the county.

The LNRS areas developed in 2025 covering about 40% of the county.

What are the key differences in the LNRS Local Habitat Map compared with previous spatial strategies?

- A wide range of around 3,000 responses went into shaping the strategy from people and organisations across Oxfordshire. These contributions of local knowledge and data helped to create the actions, species, and locations recommended for recovery. This is the largest audience contributing to a countywide biodiversity strategy in Oxfordshire to-date.
- Greater focus was put into freshwater habitats and using the watercourses as natural opportunities to enhance connectivity and prioritise freshwater habitat improvements.
- Within the LNRS Local Habitat Map network, there are specific actions mapped to each of those locations. This has not been done in previous mapping.
- Map users can interact with the map and click on any area of the map to see which nature recovery actions are recommended in that area.
- There are still actions to take in the wider landscape outside the network for habitats, farmland, rural areas, and the urban environment.
- There are actions to take for both habitats and for specific species to promote their recovery with a particular process followed to identify the species that would benefit most from bespoke actions.
- More urban habitats and community land are included for specific biodiversity enhancements in the LNRS. The LNRS not only aims to reverse the decline of biodiversity but also to foster a sense of pride and stewardship among the community, empowering everyone to do their bit in their local area to contribute towards a joined-up, healthy, environment in Oxfordshire.
- The Responsible Authorities will have a requirement to monitor nature recovery actions taken in the future, to report on these, and to review and republish this strategy (including the map) during the next 3 – 10 years.

How to deliver the LNRS?

How can nature recovery actions be rolled out across Oxfordshire

If Oxfordshire delivers the majority of the LNRS's mapped actions, the total area of nature-rich habitats would more than double benefitting future generations and for nature's own sake. This will:

- **Enhance biodiversity**, halting the loss of species
- **Boost resilience** against climate change
- **Provide public benefits**, helping to alleviate flooding and extreme heat, and providing clean water, recreation spaces, and improving health and wellbeing.

The mission of the LNRS is to empower everyone in Oxfordshire to do something for nature recovery and contribute towards the creation of a more resilient network of nature. With this strategy, Oxfordshire is in a better position to know what needs to happen, and where those actions could be delivered.

Who is expected to deliver the LNRS?

All of us. All people and organisations across Oxfordshire are the delivery partners of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and many are already delivering brilliant work to help nature recover. The LNRS helps us to build on this. Some people may contribute through direct actions on the ground, others may be enabling actions by offering funding or providing the land to take action on.

These are actions that individuals, communities, nature recovery organisations, landowners, farmers, businesses, utilities companies, developers, minerals and waste teams, and authorities can be taking and enabling to enhance the local environment to benefit both people and wildlife. Some people may be able to enable others through funding, or volunteering for example, others may have land or areas of land that they wish to dedicate towards biodiversity, others may be writing policies that help these priorities and actions to be delivered or building visitor centres and preparing educational materials to help people access and learn about the environment. There is no single person or organisation who is expected to deliver the LNRS alone, everyone has something they can do to support biodiversity to recover.

Delivery of actions is expected to happen by a large range of people including local communities, landscape partnerships, owners of local wildlife sites, managers of other designated sites, local authorities, nature-friendly farmers, and by project teams working across county borders. Actions in the LNRS are expected to be delivered and enabled by the following people (including but not limited to):

Regional and national bodies	Local organisations/groups/authorities	Communities/individuals
Government, Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Health and social services, Utilities companies, minerals operators, developers, National Farmers Union, Country Land and Business Association, land and business advisors, national businesses, the three National Landscapes, Canal and River Trust, neighbouring counties and authorities, British Association for Shooting and Conservation, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, RSPB	Local Authorities (County, District, and City councils), Oxfordshire's Local Nature Partnership, BBOWT, Wild Oxfordshire, CAG Oxfordshire, farm cluster groups, catchment partnerships, Freshwater Habitats Trust, Thames 21, Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment, Earth Trust, partnership projects for nature recovery.	You and other individuals at home/work/university/school/community spaces, farmers, landowners, land managers, parish and town councils, local community action groups, local businesses.

Cross-border working and delivery projects

Some projects will need to be particularly large scale to ensure that England's future environment is fit to support wildlife. These include cross-border, regional, and national projects. Often these regional and cross-border projects will contain a programme of activity working across varied landscapes and bringing together a range of partners, seeking to enhance ecological networks. Projects may also look for opportunities to support the northward movement of species in response to changing climates, and Oxfordshire is situated between a large number of counties meaning it has a key strategic role to allow species to move, into, across, and up through the county.

Landscape scale projects should aim to

- Unite partners across political and institutional boundaries
- Set clear priorities that guide funders and policymakers
- Plan to enable species to move and adapt in response to climate change over the next 10, 50 and 100 years

The LNRS encourages people to consider delivering projects of scale and there are regional projects that cross into Oxfordshire that are proposing landscape-scale benefits for biodiversity. See the State of Nature in Oxfordshire 2017 for a more detailed description of a range of ongoing projects in Oxfordshire. Some of the larger scale proposals include Big Chalk, initiatives underway in the Bernwood, Otmoor Ray area, and landscape recovery work being delivered in partnership often with support from farm clusters, and catchment partnerships. For a sense of the scale of these projects, Big Chalk aims to create a robust ecological network of all habitats found on calcareous landscapes across 19% of England (24,000 kilometres squared) a scale hitherto unimagined. There has also been a bold proposal to create a '100 square mile Regional Nature Park' across Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire which can be read about here. This LNRS has also been shared with neighbouring counties to foster cross-border opportunities for nature recovery. Collaborative efforts are crucial for ensuring a cohesive approach to habitat restoration and wildlife conservation.

Monitoring the delivery of the LNRS

As actions are deliverd across the county, the LNRS will need to record what has happened, and where. This will help us monitor the delivery and effectiveness of the strategy.

- **Cyclical monitoring:** Every 3-10 years Defra will instruct authorites to review and republish their LNRSs in a repeating cyle.
- **Reporting**: Authorities will be asked to report which nature recovery actions have been delivered for habitats and species and to map out the delivery locations.

Further guidance from Defra is expected to be shared with authorities to enable them to prepare their monitoring process in accordance with national plans. We expect that we will be asked to monitor and report on the actions that are delivered for habitats and for species across Oxfordshire.

Once we have received guidance on monitoring expectations from Defra, we plan to develop monitoring processes and create local targets during the delivery phase. The targets will be SMART Oxfordshire targets created in collaboration with Oxfordshire's Local Nature Partnership and will link to national objectives.

Funding and support

For some actions such as making your garden hedgehog friendly, creating a small orchard, making a pond, or putting up bird boxes on farms or at home, some people will be able to deliver these without additional funding. Some others may have enough resources themselves to start surveying their sites, talking to the relevant organisations, and getting the okay to deliver those actions. However, for the majority of larger-scale nature recovery projects, community projects, and landscape-scale actions significant financial investment (grants an payments) will be required to enable people in Oxfordshire to deliver landscape scale changes. Typically, such funding and payments currently comes from local authority schemes, national charities, Biodiversity Net Gain developments, agri-environment and land management schemes, government grants, and local or regional funding bodies.

The LNRS webpage has a section called 'How to help nature now' with a range of links to organisations and support to help you take action. A range of organisations already offer funding and investment to support nature recovery efforts and you can make a case to these funders and highlight how your project will deliver LNRS actions.

Whilst LNRSs do lay out a clear blueprint for action, plans alone won't stop biodiversity loss. The recommended actions must be funded and supported by a diverse range of people, organisations, and partnerships. LNRSs are intended to guide national, regional and local funders (via mechanisms such as Biodiversity Net Gain, green finance and future agri-environment schemes) to channel resources into creating larger, better-connected networks for nature, though government has yet to clarify exactly how LNRSs will link with agri-environment payments.

Advice and engagement

After the publication fo the LNRS, it is expected that many local people and organisations will need some help to understand, use, and deliver the LNRS. Many local nature recovery organisations and authorities are already helping lcoal people take actions that align with the LNRS and they will continue to provide support. Additionally, those working on the LNRS intend to engage and meet directly with people who want to deliver nature recovery actions. This may include creating opportunities such as a forum for local people to access advice on how to deliver LNRS actions and how to report any actions they take. This is particularly relevant to farmers since agricultural land accounts for more than 70% of the county. However there needs to be a range of advice for all audiences across Oxfordshire such as parish and town councils, catchment partnerships, community groups, and businesses to enable them to understand and deliver actions for species and habitats in appropraite locations using LNRS recommendations combined with professional advice.

Influencing planning policy

All public authorities will have a duty to have regard to the LNRS which will be another way that the LNRS helps to deliver nature recovery actions and influence planning policy. The recent update to the Planning Practice Guidance contains a new legislative requirement for all Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to "have regard" to LNRSs. A meeting was convened between the Responsible Authority (Oxfordshire County Council), Natural England and representatives from Oxfordshire's Local Planning Authorities (Cherwell, West Oxfordshire, Oxford City, South Oxfordshire, and Vale of White Horse, and Oxfordshire County Council). The authorities agreed that:

> It is important to recognise that some of the Local Planning Authorities in Oxfordshire were at an advanced stage in plan preparation when this LNRS was being developed. For Local Plans being prepared whilst the LNRS was still in draft form (before October 2025), it was clearly not possible for the individual LPAs to fully consider and describe how their plans should *'have regard'* to this final version of the LNRS.
>
> Local Planning Authorities in the early stages of plan preparation should be able to fully consider how their plans and policies interact with the LNRS and should seek to take a positive approach, where possible identifying opportunities to help delivery of the LNRS. It may not always be possible to avoid situations where allocations for alternative uses overlap with the mapped extent of the LNRS, particularly where land suitable for development is in very short supply. In these circumstances, LPAs should seek to plan positively for the delivery of the potential measures identified in the LNRS within the proposed development and use this as a driver for the delivery of on-site BNG and green infrastructure networks.
>
> Where existing or proposed allocations within more advanced Local Plans overlap with the mapped extent of the LNRS, this can be viewed as a positive opportunity for the potential measures identified for that part of the network to be delivered. This could include targeting on-site BNG at delivery of the potential habitat measures identified in the LNRS and integrating appropriate habitats into green-infrastructure networks and landscaping for the proposed development. It may not always be possible to accommodate the exact mapped extent of the LNRS within the developments but opportunities to link and connect habitats within the sites green infrastructure should be taken.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVES: How would the delivery of the LNRS contribute towards national objectives and targets?

There are some national obejctives and targets that we know the LNRS is expected to contribute to and these are laid out below along with information about how the Oxfordshire LNRS contributes towards these. The overarching ambition of DEFRA's 25 Year Environment Plan is to 'leave our environment in a better state than we found it and to pass on to the next generation a natural environment protected and enhanced for the future'. The plan highlights six key areas for action, one being to establish a **Nature Recovery Network**. The LNRS's Local Habitat Map is one of the 48 local habitat maps that will be joined together across England to produce the national 'Nature Recovery Network'. It is expected that the national Nature Recovery Network will offer a tool to drive the strategic protection and restoration of nature and wildlife, as well as providing greater public enjoyment of the countryside; increased carbon capture; and improvements in water quality and flood management. This section summarises the relevant national environmental objectives (NEOs) that Local Nature Recovery Strategies seek to contribute towards.

ENVIRONMENT ACT (2021) - The Environment Act sets new legally binding targets for nature, water, air quality and waste reduction in England.

National objectives	How the strategy contributes
Biodiversity on land - Restore or create in excess of 500,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitat outside protected sites by 2042, compared to 2022 levels	Oxfordshire's LNRS identifies locations where 'potential measures' (actions) could be taken to create or enhance habitats. Oxfordshire's share of the national target is to deliver at least 10,000 hectares.
Biodiversity on land – Halt the decline of species abundance by 2030. Ensure that species abundance in 2042 is greater than in 2022, and at least 10% greater than 2030	All habitat actions proposed in Oxfordshire's LNRS are designed to make a positive contribution for a huge number of species. Additionally, targeted measures have been created to address species needing bespoke support.
Biodiversity on land - Reduce the risk of species' extinction by 2042, when compared to the risk of species' extinction in 2022	The strategy recommends and identifies targeted habitat creation and enhancement actions to support the recovery of threatened and near threatened local species.
Woodland cover - Increase total tree and woodland cover from 14.5% of land area now to 16.5% by 2050	The strategy identifies where new woodland and trees can be planted, where existing woodlands can be expanded, and where to create or enhance areas of trees outside of woodlands to benefit nature and deliver other environmental outcomes. This includes recommended actions to plant trees in urban environments to people and biodiversity.

Improve water quality and availability - Reduce nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and sediment pollution from agriculture into the water environment by at least 40% by 2038, compared to a 2018 baseline	Actions suggested by the strategy can help improve the water environment. For example, by creating riparian buffers along water courses it is possible to reduce the surface water input of pollution to watercourses whilst also creating wildlife corridors.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (2023)

The Environmental Improvement Plan introduced several additional commitments in addition to the aims and objectives in the Environment Act to guide government's approach to restoring the environment.

Objective	How this LNRS can contribute
Work to ensure that everyone in England lives within 15 minutes' walk of a green or blue space	Oxfordshire's LNRS identifies opportunities to create and enhance habitats and greenspaces near to homes to support access, biodiversity, and wellbeing as well as a range of other benefits.
Restore 75% of our water bodies to good ecological status	Oxfordshire's LNRS establishes county priorities to improve water quality and the structural diversity of rivers with some additional measures focused on particular species such as beavers, fish, and water voles. These habitat and specie actions would make a significant, positive contribution to the water environment.
Protect 30% of land and of sea in the UK for nature's recovery by 2030	Oxfordshire's LNRS identifies opportunities to create and enhance wildlife-rich habitat across 40% of the county including National Landscapes and new habitat areas that could meet 30by30.
Support farmers to create or restore 30,000 miles of hedgerows by 2037 and 45,000 miles of hedgerows by 2050	Oxfordshire's LNRS establishes a priority to enhance and create hedgerows, recommending countywide delivery of hedgerow planting as well as the sensitive management of all existing hedgerows. This LNRS supports this action wherever it is possible. The map does have some species locations identified where certain species may particularly benefit from hedgerow creation or management.
Manage our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry.	Oxfordshire's LNRS identifies sites for woodland management to enhance woodland condition and offer benefits for nature as well as wider benefits.

Restore 75% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest to favourable condition by 2042. By 31 January 2028 50% of SSSIs will have actions on track to achieve favourable condition.	Oxfordshire's LNRS targets habitat creation and enhancement near to SSSIs and recommends appropriate management to enhance the condition of all designated sites.
Ensure delivery & management of actions & policies that contribute towards our 25YEP goals are suitable & adaptive to a changing climate	Oxfordshire's LNRS focuses on creating more, larger, better-connected habitat areas to support climate resilience and to enable species to move and respond to climate change. Creating a resilient network of good quality habitats is our best opportunity to defend nature.
Make sure LNRSs include proposals for Nature-based Solutions which improve flood risk management where appropriate	Oxfordshire's LNRS has mapped and prioritised habitat measures in flood-prone areas and provided information about natural flood management actions across the county as well as specific locations. The LNRS also incentivises sustainable drainage systems in settlements in Oxfordshire to manage rainwater. The LNRS Local Habitat Map recommends many potential measures near to waterbodies and within flood risk zones to improve flood risk management.
Reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides by 73% and ammonia by 16% by 2030 relative to 2005 levels	Oxfordshire's LNRS Statement of Biodiversity Priorities promotes the creation of buffers around habitats and sensitive sites to support emission reduction indirectly through land use changes. Whilst we have done this to try to support sensitive habitats, the LNRS itself has a limited ability to influence nitrogen oxide emissions.
Reducing the rates of introduction and establishment of invasive non-native species by at least 50%, by 2030	Restoration of habitats may sometimes involve the removal of invasive non-native species and this LNRS has recommended management of such species where necessary as a priority and an unmapped, countywide potential measure.

30 by 30

The UK has committed to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030 (30by30) and government recognise that this vision will require significant investment to deliver. This LNRS has been prepared to help contribute towards 30 by 30, acting as a strategic tool that could be used to drive investment towards nature recovery actions in key locations in Oxfordshire to contribute towards the national and international

30by30 target to protect and manage 30% of land and water for nature by 2030. Projects in the LNRS delivery phase could deliver part of the 30by30 vision if their project sites meet the following three criteria:

- the purpose or management objectives include positive conservation outcomes for nature
- there are long term commitments to biodiversity and protections against loss or damage to biodiversity
- management and monitoring are in place to deliver and evaluate the intended benefits for nature.

To support the creation of such sites, the LNRS local habitat map has mapped a range of locations totalling an area greater than 30% that could be suitable for these criteria although sites will need to be assessed on an individual basis.

What you can do now

Throughout the process of preparing this Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), it was clear that people are excited and motivated to help nature to recover. When our first survey asked 650 people whether they would like to do more to increase nature in Oxfordshire, 97% (626 people) either agreed or said they were already doing the most that they can. You can see a further breakdown of responses to our survey on the LNRS webpage.

To decide on what to do next, you could:

- **View the Local Habitat Map**, find recommended actions near you
- **Read the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities**, a list of countywide actions that need to be taken to recover the local environment
- **Check the Species Priorities List,** target your project to support species that need extra actions
- **Visit "How to Help Nature Now"** on the LNRS website for toolkits, "Before You Start" guidance, local contacts (BBOWT, Wild Oxfordshire, NFU), and funding links.
- **Do your site assessment** Before you begin creating or changing habitats, remember that all sites must be assessed in person to first ensure the planned actions are appropriate. You will need to contact relevant professionals, survey habitats, check for species, check for any archaeological features, and verify whether the soil type is suitable for the intended actions. The LNRS has created a "Before you Start" guide to support you with these site assessment checks and help you plan your project with confidence.

Together, people and organisations can turn this strategy into reality and secure Oxfordshire's nature for generations to come.

Glossary

Whilst we aim to explain most terms as they are used throughout the strategic documents a number of acronyms are regularly used and this page explains what each acronym stands for.

- **APIB** – areas of particular importance for biodiversity, these are existing sites that meet certain criteria assigned by Defra
- **ACB** – areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity, these areas are targeted for habitat creation and enhancement work by LNRSs
- **BBOWT** – Berks, Bucks, and Oxon Wildlife Trust
- **CTA** – Conservation Target Area, locations in Oxfordshire that have been identified as target areas for conservation action
- **draft NRN** – draft Nature Recovery Network, a previous spatial plan for recovering nature in Oxfordshire produced in 2020.
- **LCT** – Landscape Character Types, an area in Oxfordshire that has is given a name to describe common shared biodiversity, natural, cultural, or historic features found in that geographical area
- **LNR** – Local Nature Reserve
- **LNRS** – Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which is made up from this document, the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, the Species Priorities List, and the Local Habitat Map.
- **LNRS Partnership** – a number of organisations and authorities who all regularly and consistently contributed to the development of the LNRS since 2023
- **LWS** – Local Wildlife Site
- **NCA –** National Character Area. These areas each have distinct geological, cultural, and biodiversity characteristics and have unique names.
- **NNR** – National Nature Reserve
- **OCC** – Oxfordshire County Council
- **OLNP** – Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership, a partnership made up of representatives from the public, private, third, and health sectors. Its purpose is to radically enhance nature, its positive impact on the climate and the priority its given, helping to make Oxfordshire a place where people and nature thrive.
- **OWLS –** Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (2004), created 25 different types of Landscape Character Types which cover Oxfordshire
- **PM –** Potential measure. An LNRS-recommended action that could be taken to create/enhance habitats or to benefit particular species
- **RA** – Responsible Authority, the authority appointed by government to lead the preparation of the strategy
- **SA** – Supporting Authority, the local planning authorities and Natural England who have a key role in developing and approving the strategy
- **SAC** – Special Areas of Conservation
- **SBP –** Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, one of the core LNRS documents that lists important actions to deliver to enhance and create habitats in Oxfordshire.
- **SPL** – Species Priorities List, a list bespoke actions needed by certain species in Oxfordshire to enable their recovery
- **SSSI** – Site of Special Scientific Interest
- **TVERC** – Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre, the Local Environmental Records Centre for Oxfordshire

Appendices

- **Appendix A (here) – Report on designated sites, irreplaceable habitats and areas of particular importance for biodiversity.** A detailed report listing the county's designated sites and irreplaceable habitats in Oxfordshire showing how 6.5% of Oxfordshire meets criteria to be an area of particular importance for biodiversity. Produced by TVERC, find it here on the LNRS webpage.
- **Appendix B (here) – Description of the biodiversity features and recovery opportunities associated with each river and catchment in Oxfordshire.** Each river and its catchment has a 1-2 page description of the river's history, modifications, pressures, biodiversity of note, and key opportunities for recovery including maps of each river, headwater streams, any chalk streams, and the boundary of the catchment.
- **Appendix C (here) – Description of the biodiversity features and recovery opportunities associated with each National Character Area (NCA) in Oxfordshire.** Each NCA has a 1-2 page description of the areas geology, landscape character type, biodiversity, cultural land-use, and notable species in the area. Each description gives examples of actions that could be taken in those areas to benefit local species or to create, manage, or enhance habitats. There are maps of the OWLS landscape character types found within each NCA area.
- **Appendix D (here) – A table of over 60 datasets used to inform the LNRS mapping.**
- **Appendix E (here) - The technical report describing how the LNRS Local Habitat Map was created.**

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Species Priorities List

Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Draft version 06 September 2024







OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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Introduction

'Species' are the types of animals, plants, fungi, and other living things that exist as part of nature. Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are designed to help to recover populations of species, especially those who are at risk of extinction from the local area.

Many species are expected to benefit from general habitat improvement and creation actions (e.g. enhancing woodlands and creating ponds).

The LNRS already recommends these general habitat actions on the LNRS's 'Statement of Biodiversity Priorities' document and this should benefit a wide range of species. However, some species need more specific actions that aren't part of general habitat creation or enhancements.

To ensure that the LNRS also supports those species with more specific needs, this document identifies those species in Oxfordshire which are believed to need more targeted recovery actions.

This list is expected to be reviewed and republished every 3 – 10 years along with all other LNRS documents. The exact timing of the review is decided by the Secretary of State.

What is the Species Priorities List?

The 'LNRS Species Priorities List' is one of four parts of the LNRS (there are three written documents and one map tool). The Species Priorities List is a table of species that need very specific actions to support them to survive, recover, or spread further in Oxfordshire. The Government asked for these LNRS Species Priorities Lists to contain a manageable number of deliverable actions to help focus local resources towards halting the loss of biodiversity. LNRSs were advised to include the species that are most likely to benefit from specific, targeted actions as well as species which the local area has a particular national stronghold of.

In brief, the species on this list are all species that require specific actions over and above the general good management and creation of diverse habitats.

Examples of such specific actions that could be suitable for this list include bespoke habitats being created or managed in a particular way for certain species, reintroductions and translocations of species, or taking practical actions to stop the negative impacts of a particular threat or pressure on a species. These actions must be above and beyond the actions we have already listed on the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities.

How was this list made?

This ‘Species Priorities List’ was produced in steps following a methodology created by Natural England and Defra which can be viewed on the LNRS website.

First, the LNRS asked Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) to identify which species in Oxfordshire are considered to be ‘threatened’ or ‘near threatened’ with extinction. This list was 879 species long.

We then invited local species experts to review the list and add any species that they thought we had missed, the number of species on this list rose to 883.

Next, the list of 883 species were reviewed, one-by-one to work out what action they would need to recover. Some may need bigger woodlands, others may need particular grazing patterns, and some may need more research. Based on the type of action that the species needed, the LNRS assigned them into a certain category (seen in the table below.

For a full description of the process, see the LNRS website.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Needs more / bigger / better / more connected habitats	Needs targeted habitat management	Needs improvements in environmental quality	Needs bespoke conservation action(s)	Needs better evidence base / on-the-ground action isn’t the priority	Needs action outside of England	Vagrant species / occasional visitors / invasive species
These species are likely to benefit from the LNRS measures (actions) listed on the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities and do not need to be singled out for specific LNRS Species actions.	Yes, these species are likely to be suitable for LNRS species priorities	Yes, likely to be suitable for LNRS species priorities	Yes, likely to be suitable for LNRS species priorities. (Species which have no/poor data about their locations should be assigned to Category E.)	Not suitable for LNRS species priorities list	Not suitable for LNRS species priorities list	Not suitable for LNRS species priorities list

The categories (A – G) in the table were created by Natural England to support LNRSs to separate species out. We categorised each and all of the 883 species into the categories A – G with support from Thames Valley Environmental Centre and local species experts.

Experts helped to add and remove species from categories, sense-check the process, inform the LNRS about which species needed which actions, which locations are important for which species, and the types of habitats that these species rely on for survival.

During the process of separating species into categories and working out which actions they needed, there were many species that were expected to benefit from widespread, broad, habitat-level actions (e.g. enhancing grasslands, leaving deadwood in woodlands, creating ponds).

These widespread habitat actions are already recommended in the LNRS's 'Statement of Biodiversity Priorities' which means that the LNRS has already listed the actions which should support the recovery of those species. They haven't therefore been listed again here. In comparison, there were some species that need a more specific action (e.g. create electric fencing around nests to prevent predators from getting to them).

Since the actions are quite specific, they would likely be missed out of general habitat creation or management techniques but listing them individually here allows the LNRS to focus effort towards their more specific recovery needs.

To halt the loss of biodiversity in Oxfordshire, it is of key importance to support both sets of priorities (the specific species actions on this list, and the habitat-level actions on the 'Statement of Biodiversity Priorities').

How will LNRS 'Species Priorities Lists' contribute towards the government's species ambitions?

The government has set legally binding targets to:

- Halt the decline in species abundance by the end of 2030
- Increase species abundance by the end of 2042 so that is greater than in 2022 and at least 10 per cent greater than in 2030
- Reduce the risk of species' extinction by 2042, when compared to the risk of species' extinction in 2022

LNRSs were advised by the government's Department for the Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) that the "LNRS is a critical new tool for driving the national ambition to increase species abundance and reduce risk of species extinctions… the LNRS system forms a coordinated spatial approach for planning a nationwide network of more, bigger, better, better-connected habitat to support species recovery and resilience.

Each strategy contributes to this national picture by planning coherent ecological networks at the local level to help local species populations thrive."

To support species, LNRSs are advised to follow particular processes to create a written list of local priority species and to propose specific measures (actions) which would help to recover and enhance local populations.

In some suitable cases, actions have been mapped onto the LNRSs 'Local Habitat Map' to show where those actions could produce the greatest benefits for the species. This may be particularly important where isolated populations of rare species remain.

A note on climate change

At the time of writing, the below actions were expected to be the most suitable ways to support the recovery of these species.

However, there are expected changes to climate patterns with warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers predicted, as well as increasing extremes in weather events and storms, although these changing patterns may be unpredictable.

The LNRS recommends that the actions listed on the following pages should be adapted based on the latest understanding of changing climates in order to best support the recovery of these species

How to navigate this document?

The target species in this document are organised into broad categories shown in bold below. The categories are organised in alphabetical order.

You can click on any of the headings below to navigate to the relevant pages and species.

For species in the groupings below, most will have a picture, their name, and a map which you can see through the link at the end of the document.

Next to their name is a column that tells you:

- the recommended action (potential measure) to support their recovery
- a column that tells you particular locations where focused effort could be beneficial (if known)
- a column with names of other threatened and near threatened species that would also benefit from the action.

You can view a list of these species in alphabetic order in Appendix A at the end of this document.

Key

Settlements and buildings	
Agricultural land	
Semi-natural grasslands	
Freshwater and wetlands	
Woodlands and trees	

- **Amphibians**
  - Great Crested Newt.
- **Birds**
  - Bittern (and Marsh Harrier), Breeding Waders, Curlew, Farmland Birds, Montagu's Harrier, Nightingale, Stone Curlew, Swifts and House Martins, Tawny Owl, Turtle Dove, Willow Tit.
- **Butterflies and moths**
  - Barberry Carpet Moth, Blackthorn butterflies, Dark Green Fritillary, Duke of Burgundy Butterfly, Liquorice Piercer Moth, Moths of Dyer's Greenweed, Silver Spotted Skipper, Small Blue butterfly, Striped Lychnis Moth, White Admiral, White Letter Hairstreak, Wood White butterfly.
- **Fish, crustaceans, and snails**
  - Fish, White Clawed Crayfish, Desmoulin's Whorl Snail, Mountain Bulin Snail.
- **Fungi and Lichens**
  - Fungi and fungi-associated plants found with woodland, Lichens (on veteran trees).
- **Insects and spiders**
  - Beetle of Autumn Gentian, Cigarello Gall-Fly, Clubbed general soldierly, Dung specialists and dung beetles, Ellipteroides alboscutellatus, Lousewort flea beetle, Meadow Ant Hoverfly, Noble chafer, Snail killing fly, Southern Damselfly, Spider (Tuberta maerens).
- **Mammals**
  - Bats, Beaver, Hazel Dormouse, Hedgehog, Otter, Water Vole.
- **Plants, flowers, and trees**
  - Black Poplar, Creeping Marshwort, Devil's bit scabious (and Marsh fritillary), Downy Woundwort, Fen violet, Juniper, Limestone fern.
- **Reptiles**
  - Adder, Common Lizard.

The next pages contain the Species Priorities List for Oxfordshire.

Amphibians

Species by Common Name (ordered A – Z)	Potential measure (the action needed to help the relevant species to recover). Potential measures are in bold with additional detail about the species added below.	Particularly important locations for the action(s)	Which species are intended to benefit most?	Habitat
Great-Crested Newt  Link to map	**Create or maintain fish free ponds, which ideally are within 1km of other ponds that could support Great Crested Newts.** Aim to have diversity within pond structure, depth, shape, and edge vegetation. Include a gently sloping entrance to suitable pond edges. Within suitable range of breeding ponds, ensure the existence of foraging habitats and undisturbed areas of deadwood or stones for hibernation which can include creating hibernacula. New development/infrastructure could include amphibian-friendly landscaping e.g. dropped kerbs, wildlife-friendly gully pots, SuDS ponds, and large amphibian tunnels. Varied pond sizes and shapes are beneficial to a range of species, the most suitable size for Great Crested Newts is considered to be between 450m2 to 500m2. Ideal pond criteria is set out in this Habitat Suitability Index. Great Crested Newts have suffered significant declines and as a result are listed as species of principle importance under legislation offering them a high degree of protection as a European protected species. Creating ponds to support this species would also support a wide range of species. Support Great Crested Newts by managing habitats to meet relevant requirements with organisations who can support this or following habitat guidance. See this example pond at Bicester Garrison.	Nature Space pond-creation priority locations.	Great Crested Newt (Triturus cristatus), Common Toad (Bufo Bufo)	

Birds

Species by Common Name (ordered A – Z)	Potential measure (the action needed to help the relevant species to recover). Potential measures are in bold with additional detail about the species added below.	Particularly important locations for the action(s)	Which species are intended to benefit most?	Habitat
Bittern  Link to map	**Create or manage large reedbeds in wetland habitats to recover Bittern populations.** Within wetlands, create, extend, and manage large reedbeds (ideally of 20 hectares or more) for Bitterns. Re-wet reedbeds that are at risk from drying out and manage the reed structure to achieve diversity within the reedbed. Aim for no more than 30 per cent being older than 7 years and no more than 5 per cent of the area being scrub. Manage the reedbed through cyclical cutting of different sections of reed over time and regularly remove willow. Bitterns breed in the UK's largest and least disturbed reedbeds which are typically within a mosaic of wetland habitats. Habitat loss and disturbance has been a major challenge for the success of these birds and Bittern numbers previously declined to the point where this bird became extinct from the UK. However, they returned and are now present in the UK again with some populations showing recent signs of recovery as a result of large-scale reedbed creation and targeted habitat management techniques. Bitterns are found in Oxfordshire but breeding is currently restricted to one locality (Otmoor). They are a bird which is expected to improve in number and breeding success if more large reedbed complexes can be created with the right habitat management.	Otmoor, Lower Windrush Valley	**Birds** Eurasian Bittern (Botaurus stellaris), Marsh Harrier, (Circus aeruginosus)	

	The numbers above (20 hectares, 30 per cent, and 5 per cent) are based on ideal guidelines but management should be tailored to what is working for Bitterns in Oxfordshire. You can re-wet reedbeds that are at risk of drying out either by raising the water-level, or by lowering the ground level.			
Breeding waders  Link to map	**Create (and maintain) areas of grassland with extensive, shallow, water during breeding months including reeds and greater pond sedges for nesting. Manage habitats with grazing (ideally) and exclude and manage predators.** This guide describes how to manage grazing land for waders. Also see this RSPB land management sheet for Snipe. Typical ideal breeding wader sites have moist soils that hold surface water on approximately 10 – 30 per cent of the site from April/May with water levels reducing in June and covering only a small area of the site in July – August. Seasonal grazing on these sites helps to create an optimal sward. Avoid agricultural activities or activities of high disturbance on breeding sites during breeding season and consider reducing the shooting of any species considered to be 'game' species within this group to support populations to recover. Alongside those more specific measures, this LNRS will support these species and others by recommending that Oxfordshire improve existing wetland sites and create new wetland mosaic habitats. Within Oxfordshire, we are lucky to have 485 hectares of Otmoor, an expansive floodplain grazing marsh area which is a reliable hotspot and home for many species including wading birds where particular care is taken to manage this area of Oxfordshire for these birds.	Otmoor, Lower Windrush Valley	**Breeding wader birds:** Common Snipe (Gallinago gallinago), Common Redshank (Tringa tetanus), Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) **Other birds** Common crane (Grus grus)	

	This national asset means that Oxfordshire is a particularly important location within the UK for breeding waders and other species.			
Curlews  Link to map	**Manage nesting fields for Curlews and protect their nests from predation using predator control, electric fencing and/or other techniques which increase Curlew breeding success to hatch, rear, and fledge chicks**. Curlew breeding populations in the UK are recorded as having declined by 48 per cent between 1995-2020 and Curlews are one of Britain's most endangered birds. They rely on grassland habitats (particularly lowland wet grassland and hay meadows) but many of these habitats have been lost through land use change and drainage of land. Alongside extensive creation and expansion of well-managed grasslands, especially lowland wet grassland, predator control techniques need to be implemented to prevent the loss of nesting adults, eggs, and chicks to predators (predators can be both mammals and birds). Temporary electric fencing is one tool with a good success rate in Oxfordshire that can prevent mammal predation but other techniques across the wider landscape are important to prevent other forms of predation on these birds to enable them to recover their populations. Many people, including Oxfordshire's farmers, nature recovery organisations, and volunteers are already supporting curlew recovery efforts and should continue to be supported to take these actions.	Otmoor, Upper Thames Curlew Recovery Project areas, upper Cherwell areas.	Eurasian Curlew (Numenius Arquata)	

Farmland birds  Link to map	**Support farmland birds in fields, field margins, and hedges by providing nesting sites, chick rearing food, adult food, and overwinter food for the target bird species.** A good population of farmland birds are present in Oxfordshire, with strong populations noted in farmland across the county, particularly in the Cotswolds National Landscape and the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. Since more than 70 per cent of Oxfordshire's land is used for agriculture, it is of key importance to focus on supporting those species which can benefit from good sustainable farmland management to achieve population recovery and Oxfordshire's farmland birds are a great example of species which, have been recovering and can continue to do so in future with support like that already ongoing by Farmland Bird Aid projects in Oxfordshire. All three elements (chick food, adult food, and nesting space) need to be appropriate to the species and available in the specific area to suitably support these birds. This can be achieved by providing plants, seeds, and habitat areas that meet the needs of both the adult farmland birds and their chicks, within the same location. The different species have the following, specific needs: **Hedge-nesting birds** Hedges, trees or scrub are needed for nesting. Also offer these additional food sources for adult hedge-nesting birds; seeds, chickweed, cereals or spring-sown crops. Offer these additional food sources for the chicks of hedge-nesting birds; insects, larvae, worms (often provided by having nearby areas of field margins/buffer strips/grassland/pasture). **Linnet –** require a plentiful supply of seeds all year and a thick hedgerow, scrub, gorse or bramble for nesting. Advice for farmers here.	All across the county's farmland, with a specific 4-mile stretch of the River Thames already under management for the Yellow Wagtail Partnership.	**Farmland birds**: Corn bunting (Emberiza calandra), Grey Partridge (Perdix perdix), Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus), Linnet (Linaria cannabina), Skylark (Alauda arvensis arvensis), Tree sparrow (Passer montanus), Yellowhammer (Emberiza citrinella), Yellow wagtail (Motacilla flava flavissima)	

	Tree Sparrows – also need overwintering stubble to find food, and good nearby scrub, thick and tall hedgerows, and/or young woodland cover for nesting. Advice for farmers here. **Yellowhammers** – also need thick hedges or scrub (cut late in the year), often alongside ditch vegetation or margins at the foot of the hedge. Advice for farmers here. **Ground nesting birds** Offer suitable, species-specific nesting sites and also offer these additional food sources for adult ground nesting birds; seeds, chickweed, cereals, overwinter stubble, or spring-sown crops. Offer the following additional food sources for the chicks of ground nesting birds; insects, larvae, worms (needs field margins or buffer strips or grassland or pasture). **Corn Buntings** – need patches of double-drilled crop that is not harvested, to nest. Advice for farmers here. **Skylarks** - need skylark plots (unsown squares in the field) of bare earth to nest. Advice for farmers here. **Lapwings** – need lapwing plots (large stony areas) to nest in, near pasture. Do not plant trees or hedges here. Advice for farmers here. **Grey Partridge** – also needs safe nesting cover in hedge bottoms, grass margins, and dead tussocky grass left from the previous year (RSPB). Adults require a food source of seeds and shoots throughout the year (typically found in winter stubble, harvested root crops, newly sown crops, and arable weeds in the crop margins).			

	Also, to enable species recovery, chicks require access to a range of insects close to their nesting sites like beetles, ants, caterpillars, aphids mostly found in crop margins. Advice for farmers here. **Yellow wagtails** – also need an open, sparse sward to nest in on the fringes of wetland habitats with arable crops nearby. They are expected to respond particularly well in Oxfordshire if habitat management can meet their needs, and local projects are already working to achieve this. Advice for farmers here. At some sites, recovery may also require additional lethal control of foxes, carrion crows, and mink in conjunction with the actions above.			
Montagu's Harrier  Link to map	**Locate and protect the nesting sites of breeding Montagu's Harriers on farmland fields. Landowners and local organisations can work together to monitor nesting birds and secure their breeding success.** Montagu's Harriers visit the UK in early summer and only very few (8 pairs) breed in the UK each year. Oxfordshire has 137 records of Montagu's Harrier in in the past 30 years and Oxfordshire is one of the counties where this species is known to be found breeding. Typically the birds breed on the ground in arable fields of maturing crops. This bird feeds on small mammals, birds, and other small animals. When nesting birds are observed, contact local organisations which support bird conservation for support and advice.		Montagu's Harrier (Circus pygargus)	

Nightingale  Link to map	**Manage woodlands and scrub for nightingales. Coppice on rotation and encourage dense layers of shrub in woodlands with scrub at the edges.** Introduce coppicing to woodlands and manage it so that all stages of the coppice lifecycle are always present in the woodland. To do this, coppice coupes (groups of trees) that are cut on rotation. Within woodlands, encourage dense layers of shrub to develop (including bramble) and control deer where necessary to prevent them from eating the shrub layer. On woodland edges allow dense scrub and shrubs to develop to offer feeding and nesting habitat and create woodland rides and glades that have space for a scrub zone. Re-wet woodlands to improve invertebrate presence and food supply for these birds. Connect existing suitable habitats with tall, thick hedges. Nightingales fly from West Africa to the UK in April for about 3 months to breed before flying back. Numbers of breeding birds are thought to have reduced by over 90 per cent since the 1960s. In Oxfordshire, breeding Nightingales had been lost from the county for 2-3 decades but around 2020 after dedicated habitat work by MOD Bicester, nightingales returned once again, to breed in Oxfordshire. Habitat actions should be focused towards areas where Nightingale records emerge in Oxfordshire and Nightingales are also expected to benefit from countywide creation of large scrub and woodland mosaic habitats. Nightingales prefer to nest in the medium growth stage of coppiced trees (aged 4 – 10 years since they were coppiced). It takes about 7 years for scrub to be sufficiently dense for nightingale breeding. View conservation advice guide here.	Southeast of Bicester, between Bicester and Brill	Common Nightingale (Luscinia megarhynchos)	

Stone Curlew  Link to map	**Create and manage protected, undisturbed plots to encourage Stone Curlews to nest. Create and manage areas of open, sparsely vegetated grassland with stony ground, grazed short (typically by rabbits or sheep).** In suitable arable fields, create specially prepared plots of open, stony ground with buffer zones that are managed to protect nesting birds and chicks from predation, machinery, and disturbance. These plots offer suitable, less disturbed nesting spaces and can be supported by organisations who can also ring and monitor the birds. Stone Curlew numbers have been in decline in the UK until the 1980s where dedicated conservation efforts more than doubled the breeding numbers and these birds are increasingly present in the UK when habitats are managed to meet their needs. These birds do appear to favour locations where suitable habitat plots are created and managed for them. Typically, they fly from Spain and Northern Africa to the UK in early summer to breed here on open, stony ground (typically farmland) and farmers can work with organisations to organise this, see an example here. The success of these birds relies on suitable support being available to enable farmers to recover Stone Curlew populations. See information about Defra incentives here and recent, successful RSPB projects with farmers here.		Stone-Curlew (Burhinus oedicnemus)	

Swifts and house martins  	**Provide new nesting spaces that are suitable for Common Swifts and House Martins and do not disturb, remove nests, or try to limit these birds from nesting**. Common swift numbers are estimated to have declined by 60 per cent between 1995 – 2020. Similarly the House Martin is present throughout the county but numbers notably declined by 37 per cent between 1995-2020. Each year, these birds migrate from Africa to the UK for summer to breed and Oxfordshire is a particular national stronghold for these birds with projects that you can get involved across the county (e.g. Oxford, Cherwell, and Harwell). Both species offer real opportunities for people to support and enjoy nature on (or above) their doorsteps. They nest in and around houses, buildings, and structures but many nest sites have been lost to building renovations. Buildings act as a habitat for a variety of species but the nest sites of Swifts and House Martins are often lost during the renovation or redevelopment of existing buildings and other structures like bridges. The loss of these nesting sites has contributed to a decline in the populations of both species but these birds are expected to be able to recover significant numbers if additional nesting spaces are provided (boxes, swift bricks, spaces in buildings and structures), and if existing nesting sites are retained for these birds. Existing nest sites for building-dependent species such as swifts and house martins (endangered red-listed species) should be protected as far as possible. These species are known to return annually to their traditional nest sites and mitigation should be provided if these nest sites cannot be protected.	Swifts; across Oxfordshire, including Oxford City, all the towns in the county, and a majority of villages as well (Harwell, Bodicote, Shilton and Tetsworth for example). House Martins; less widespread but still breed throughout the county.	Common Swift (Apus apus), House Martin (Delichon urbicum).	

	New development and extensions provide an opportunity to includes measures such as swift bricks. Swift bricks are a universal nest brick that can support a variety of small bird species (like house sparrows and starlings) and should be installed in new developments including extensions, in accordance with best-practice guidance such as BS 42021, NHBC NF89 Biodiversity in new housing developments: creating wildlife-friendly communities, or CIEEM which require at least one swift brick per home on average for each development. Artificial nest cups for house martins may be proposed instead of swift bricks where recommended (e.g. by an ecologist). In addition to nesting spaces, they require good foraging habitats, particularly along rivers, to capture insects. Habitat improvement is being addressed in the LNRS through actions recommended on the LNRS Statement of Biodiversity Priorities.			
Tawny Owl 	**Provide nesting holes and/or boxes for Tawny Owls.** Tawny owls and other owl species have experienced declines across England and whilst they require habitat improvements. Whilst they would benefit from general habitat improvements, especially to woodlands, it is also believed that their range and numbers could be significantly supported by offering more, suitable nesting boxes/holes. Tawny owls can live for over 20 years and often return to their territories and nest holes/boxes throughout their life. This could be in areas where these owls are present or could be present including; woodlands, large urban parks, and suburban or rural gardens (see further information here).		Tawny Owl (Strix aluco)	

	Learn how to build or position boxes for Tawny owls (here) In addition to nest boxes, these species are expected to benefit from the wider creation of a more connected set of habitats, especially woodlands, and have been noted to avoid major roads. This means that the creation of new infrastructure could further fragment Tawny Owl habitats and should be carefully considered within decision making. The creation or provision of green bridges could be an opportunity to better connect habitats across major infrastructure (new or existing) which may benefit this species (and others).			
Turtle Dove 	**In appropriate areas on, or near to farmland, create and manage scrub with trees and habitats that support Turtle Doves.** The UK numbers of breeding Turtle Doves has dropped by 99 per cent between 1967 and 2020 which shows how perilous the situation is for Turtle Doves in the UK. This species used to be common across farmland and certain farmland practices could greatly benefit the Turtle Doves which fly to the UK from Africa to breed in summer. See how you can help Turtle Doves here. Turtle Dove advice for land managers can be found here. Turtle Doves typically need 3 key things within close proximity (RSPB recommend within 300m) of each other. These are: 1. Lots of small seeds to be provided as a food source - either as seeds or by planting strips of plants which are left to go to seed. 2. Thick scrub, hedgerows, and trees to be created or managed as nesting sites	Otmoor	Turtle Dove (Streptopelia turtur)	

	3. Nearby accessible freshwater like ponds or streams to be created or enhanced offering shallow edges.			
Willow tit 	**Support Willow Tits by linking up wet woodland, dense scrub, and hedgerow habitats along river corridors with lots of deadwood and stumps.** Retain and create a successive supply of deadwood, such as tall stumps, within and around wet woodland and scrub. Create structural diversity and promote dense scrub growth near Willow Tit nesting sites through selective felling or the reintroduction of coppicing within damp woodlands. Restore wet woodlands by reversing drainage where suitable. To improve the stability of Willow Tit populations, link up suitable habitats by creating or retaining scrub lined river corridors and mature hedgerows. Willow Tits are found throughout the UK but are less common in the South East of England but they are present in Oxfordshire. The measures above should be considered in addition to the need for good woodland management and the creation of new wet woodlands. When creating tall deadwood stumps, the ideal trees are willow and alder with stumps at least 1.5 metres tall. Scrub growth around wet woodland should aim to achieve height of 2-4 metres and it may be necessary to control browsing animals to achieve this. Where coppicing is practiced, willow is preferable over alder. For more information, see the Willow Tit habitat guide.		Willow tit (Poecile montanus)	

Butterflies and moths

Species by Common Name (ordered A – Z)	Potential measure (the action needed to help the relevant species to recover). Potential measures are in bold with additional detail about the species added below.	Particularly important locations for the action(s)	Which species are intended to benefit most?	Habitat
Barberry Carpet Moth 	**Plant new Barberry plants in suitable locations, especially aiming to connect up of increase the size of existing areas of Common Barberry.** The Barberry Carpet Moth is a rare and declining species in the UK, and is a local priority since one of its largest remaining UK colonies is in Oxfordshire. The only other known sites are in Wiltshire, with single sites left in Dorset and Gloucestershire. Read more about bringing this species back here, see their habitat requirements here, and see this guide that explains what a recently funded project did to support this species.	West Oxfordshire where a small population is established	Barberry Carpet Moth (Pareulype berberata)	
Blackthorn butterflies  Link to map	**Retain, manage, plant, and connect up Blackthorn hedgerows, trees, and scrub for Hairstreak butterflies** Retain existing thickets of blackthorn (Prunus spinosa) and mature blackthorn within hedgerows. Plant new thickets and hedgerows containing blackthorn, especially where they connect to existing blackthorn hedgerows or stands of blackthorn trees or scrub. Carry out management and coppicing routines for these blackthorn hedgerows, trees, and scrub areas in a manner that suits the Black Hairstreak and Brown Hairstreak.	Oxford City. MOD Bicester. Hotspot record sites for Black Hairstreak. Otmoor for Brown Hairstreak	Black Hairstreak (Satyrium pruni), Brown Hairstreak (Thecla betulae)	

	Encourage blackthorn in and around woodlands where suitable, create wide rides, glades, and scrub edges in and around those woodlands. In the UK, most black hairstreak butterflies are only found in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire making them a priority species for Oxfordshire to support. The brown hairstreak is also present in Oxfordshire with a strong population in Otmoor that is spreading into Oxford city. The main threat to the success of these species is the damage, poor management, or removal of mature blackthorn habitats. These rare butterflies would benefit from long-term habitat restoration and creation to maintain and create sheltered (but unshaded) stands of blackthorn which are allowed to spread and grow to about 5 metres in height. These butterflies don't typically spread far from the blackthorn so the creation of connected blackthorn stands/hedges/trees is key to expanding their populations. Before winter hedge-cutting or coppicing, try to check blackthorn for eggs. These eggs are particularly vulnerable to hedge-trimming since they are laid on the youngest tips of blackthorn growth. Consider the importance of Ash trees and retain these trees as long as possible and safe to do so, particularly around known Brown Hairstreak locations. Male and female butterflies congregate on these tall ash trees to mate before then laying their eggs on blackthorn (read more here).			

Dark green Fritillary  Link to map	**Create or enhance suitable flower-rich grassland habitats with plentiful populations of violets and light patches of scrub for the Dark Green Fritillary.** These butterflies can benefit from a few grassland habitats which you can read about here. These include: 1. Chalk and limestone grassland. 2. Grassland with bracken 3. Damp grassland, flushes and moorland. In all cases, aim to create a plentiful population of violets growing amongst light scrub (if appropriate to the site). Manage scrub and woodland rides to promote violet abundance. The Dark Green Fritillary breeds in lightly scrubbed grassland. After a long period of decline in Oxon it has been spreading a little in recent years but remains very localised to suitable habitat. Habitat recovery could see it become more widespread here, see information about its lifecycle and habitat requirements here.		Dark green Fritillary (Speyeria aglaja)	
Duke of Burgundy butterfly  Link to map	**Create (or maintain existing areas of) scrubby calcareous grassland slopes which face East, North, or West and have strongly growing populations of cowslip and primrose.** The Duke of Burgundy butterfly has declined by over 50 per cent in recent decades in the UK and remains in only very small and restricted areas on scrubby chalk grasslands and clearings of ancient woodlands.	One tiny population known to remain in Oxfordshire with some records adjacent to West Berkshire and in West Oxfordshire.	Duke of Burgundy (Hamearis lucina)	

	In Oxfordshire, one small grassland population is known to remain but woodland populations of this butterfly have been extinct in the county since the 1990s. See habitat creation and management suggestions here. On grasslands, light grazing (not by sheep) can create open, sunny conditions which support this species. Within the grassland, aim for 10 per cent - 20 per cent of the area to be scrub of varying ages, types, and structures cut on rotation to avoid overshading the grassland. Allow new scrub areas to emerge. Cut or bruise dense bracken areas. In woodland near or on these slopes, enhance or create woodland rides and keep or create bare patches of ground. The butterflies typically breed in vegetation at woodland edges 2 – 5 years after the vegetation was last cut so rotational coppicing of trees at edges or rides over a 3 – 10 year cycle would support these butterflies.			
Liquorice Piercer Moth  Link to map	**Maintain and increase Wild Liquorice plants and their seed pods on suitable rough, unimproved calcareous grassland, lanes and scrub margins. Introduce suitable grazing regimes.** Time-limited, light cattle grazing is a beneficial regime to manage the foodplant (Wild Liquorice - Astralagus glycophyllos) for the Liquorice Piercer Moth and support seeds to set where cattle disturb the ground. Where grazing is not possible small-scale management should aim to reduce competing vegetation in and around wild liquorice. Ideally this should be undertaken in late autumn/winter on a	Chilswell	Liquorice Piercer (Grapholita pallifrontana)	

	rotation so that not all the site is managed in any one year. Remove arisings from the site (detailed guidance here). Read about a project site being managed for wild liquorice, and other species here. This Liquorice Piercer Moth is very local to sites in a few southern counties in England and their numbers are declining. However, there are a number of strong colonies in Oxfordshire, particularly in the Chilswell area. The caterpillar of this moth feeds only on the seedpods of the wild Liquorice plant during July, August and September. As this species has an annual lifecycle, it requires the foodplant to flower and set seed on an annual basis to survive.			
Moths of Dyer's Greenweed	**Manage meadows to increase populations of Dyer's Greenweed for moths by preventing scrub and grasses outcompeting this plant.** Manage meadows (particularly older, uncut calcareous meadows and rough pastures) to increase Dyer's Greenweed plant populations to benefit the Greenweed Flatbody moth. Grazing and cutting should be managed flexibly according to habitat requirements to support the moths that rely on this plant for survival. This moth is now rare after significant recent declines in its populations but it is present in and around Bicester and Otmoor MOD meaning that Oxfordshire is still home to a strong population which is regularly monitored by Butterfly Conservation and it may be present at other sites in the area (Arncott MOD, Wendlebury Meads).	Otmoor, MOD Bicester, Cotswolds, Chilterns, Banbury.	**Plant:** Dyer's Greenweed (Genista tinctoria) **Moth**: Greenweed flatbody (Agonopterix atomella),moth (Mirificarma lentigosella)	

	Carry out surveys and monitoring in suitable locations to monitor and report moth sightings at sites with Dyer's Greenweed.			
Silver-spotted skipper  Link to map	**Create and manage south-facing calcareous grassland, grazed to extremely short turf with Sheep's Fescue growing, to benefit the Silver Spotted Skipper.** The Silver Spotted Skipper is only found in chalk downs in southern England but has good potential to expand its range over the coming years. However, they need sustained habitat management to maintain short turf conditions. Sometimes this short turf can be achieved through rabbit grazing but, in the absence of sufficient rabbit grazing, recommendations are to implement a rotational grazing regime with sheep or cattle in a manner that doesn't overgraze the foodplant (sheep's fescue). See this guide for more information. In Oxfordshire, there is one critically endangered small population remaining where management can be targeted. Additionally, if suitable conditions are created elsewhere in the county, consider translocating the Silver-spotted skipper into those suitable sites since natural colonisation is unlikely.	Aston Rowant NNR	Silver-spotted skipper (Hesperia comma)	
Small blue butterfly 	**Create and manage wide field margins and sheltered grasslands to contain Kidney Vetch (Anthyllis vulneraria) on low nutrient soils which get disturbed.** The Small Blue is England's smallest resident butterfly and requires habitat management to recover their numbers in Oxfordshire.		Small blue (Cupido minimus)	

Link to map	Oxfordshire is reported to have local populations which are declining but this species is expected to be able to recover if suitable habitats are created and maintained. See this guide about creating bare ground for butterflies.			
Striped Lychnis moth  Link to map	**Plant (and manage) Dark Mullein on grassland in and around the Chilterns to support the Striped Lychnis Moth.** The Striped Lychnis Moth has been declining since the 1970s in Britain but has a stronghold across the Chilterns National Landscape and appears to be doing well here. The caterpillars of this moth feed on the plant Dark Mullein (Verbascum nigrum) and some cases have been reported on White Mullein (Verbascum lychnitis) and ornamental mulleins in gardens. The priority action is to plant and establish Dark Mullein plants on open, sunny grassland habitats like downland, field margins, verges and even in gardens within the Chilterns. This can be done from seed or from plug plants as needed. Dark Mullein establishes most successfully where there has been ground disturbance but persists for up to 7 years (possibly more) in open grassland. The crucial thing is that the grassland must not be mown during the egg-laying and larval periods, which are typically June to August. Management will be needed to limit scrub and to maintain the verges/grassland habitats/gardens that contain Dark Mullein to stay open and sunny to remain successful for Striped Lychnis Moths.	Open, sunny, grasslands (and gardens) in the Chilterns National Landscape	Striped Lychnis moth (Shargacucullia lychnitis)	

	There is a recent report of Moth records here by the Butterfly Conservation (Upper Thames Branch). This action builds on previous projects to spread and manage Dark Mullein which you can read about here.			
White Admiral 	**Manage woodlands for White Admiral butterflies achieving partial shade with honeysuckle, brambles, and areas of bare ground.** Local White Admiral populations have declined and some have been lost in the past 30 years but the creation of suitable woodland conditions is expected to support populations to re-establish. See this guide to see what actions to take in existing woodlands and how to create new woodlands where the new habitat could mature into a suitable woodland to support these butterflies to spread in future. Create and manage woodlands to achieve partially-shaded conditions (not dark) with honey suckle growing in sheltered conditions for White Admirals to lay eggs on. Manage and enhance woodland rides and glades to have zones with bare ground present and allow brambles to grow and flower in large patches to offer nectar. Consider management through coppicing woodlands on 12 – 30-year rotations, retaining trees which support honeysuckle. Control browsing by deer to promote coppice regrowth and seek to create and connect open areas within the woodland.		White Admiral (Limenitis camilla)	

White-letter Hairstreak 	**Retain Elm trees and plant or grow new disease-resistant Elms especially within 2km of existing Elm woodlands.** The White-Letter Hairstreak still remains in small populations where elms are present including large, isolated elm trees and hedgerows, scrub, and woodland rides or edges which contain elm. Many butterflies have been lost over recent decades during the period where many Elms were lost to Dutch Elm Disease. Elm is now a relatively rare tree species and these butterflies need targeted action around remaining or newly planted Elm sites in Oxfordshire to expand and/or connect butterfly populations. Do not fell mature, healthy Elm trees as a precaution against Dutch Elm disease. Allow Elm suckers to grow where they appear. In areas where scrub or woods show evidence of Dutch Elm disease, introduce coppicing on a 10-year cycle. Manage hedgerow shelterbelts that contain elm and avoid cutting edges where new elm suckers appear. Enhance rides and glades and create extensive ride and glade networks within woodlands. Connect habitats with hedgerows containing Wych Elm (Ulmus glabra) as a hedging plant and disease-resistant elms as hedgerow trees.	Elm sites in Oxfordshire	**Butterfly:** White-letter hairstreak (Satyrium w-album) **Lichen:** Orange fruited elm lichen (Caloplaca luteoalba)	
Wood White Butterfly	**Manage woodlands for the Wood White butterfly and then consider reintroductions of the butterfly to suitable woodlands.** The Wood White species is reported to no longer be present in Oxfordshire and it is not well understood why. The species is still	Woodlands in Northeast Oxfordshire close to Buckinghamshire populations	Wood white butterfly (Leptidea sinapis)	

	present on the Buckinghamshire side of the Oxfordshire's North-Eastern border meaning that Wood White populations could be recoverable and re-established if woodlands can be managed to achieve suitable conditions. See a management guide here. Reintroduce the Wood White butterfly to suitable woodlands and manage woodland ride sides to provide shelter and a tapered edge between tracks and maturing timber. Consider management through coppice techniques on rotations of fewer than 12 years and create connections between open areas in woodlands. Supplemental seeding of primary larval foodplants may be necessary eg. Bitter-vetch (Lathyrus linifolius), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (Lotus corniculatus), Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil (Lotus pedunculatus), Meadow Vetchling (Lathyrus pratensis) and Tufted Vetch (Vicia cracca).			

Fish, crustaceans and molluscs

Species by Common Name (ordered A – Z)	Potential measure (the action needed to help the relevant species to recover). Potential measures are in bold with additional detail about the species added below.	Particularly important locations for the action(s)	Which species are intended to benefit most?	Habitat
Desmoulin's Whorl Snail  Link to map	**Manage sites that have, or could have, Desmoulin's Whorl Snail to maintain an appropriate vegetation structure.** The Desmoulin's Whorl Snail is a tiny snail with a very limited international and national range. The Oxfordshire populations represent a key proportion of the national records and bespoke management is required to support this species. They are typically found in tall wetland grasses, sedges, and reeds in fens, swamps, and marshes that border rivers and lakes. Where this snail is already present, it is important not to significantly change the habitat management at the sites. Instead, the priority aim is to safeguard and maintain the existing vegetation structure through the continuation of previous low-intervention management practices to prevent loss of this species. They rely on tall wetland grasses, sedges and reeds in consistently damp or wet ground (not dry and not deeply flooded). Aim to retain consistent, high, groundwater levels at the site to provide humid conditions. Also keep the site open and sunny by preventing scrub growth and limit or prevent livestock grazing, mowing, and cutting since heavy trampling or loss of vegetation would eradicate the snail populations.	Cothill, Cholsey Marsh.	Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (Vertigo moulinsiana)	

	If possible, consider extending this management out from sites where the snail is present out to adjacent locations to expand the footprint of habitat to support this species. For more detail, see this guide from Natural England about managing habitats for this species.			
Fish 	**Create and maintain fish passes or remove structures within rivers to enable fish to migrate and reproduce.** Remove physical structures that blockade the river (if the blockade is currently redundant and serves no essential purpose). For structures which cannot be removed, provide bespoke fish passes at these structures along rivers to enable fish to migrate and move between river sections and to access spawning ground (to lay eggs to reproduce). Fish passages are essential in addition to the more general restoration along more areas of modified river channels to reduce excess siltation by e.g. narrowing over-wide channels and replacing gravel beds, which will provide habitat diversity and improve spawning habitat for a greater diversity of fish species. Eels are a migratory species which spawn at sea but grow on in freshwaters and are experiencing a major global decline in numbers including within Oxfordshire rivers in the past 30 years. Local declines are also noted for Brown Trout and Grayling. Alongside overall improvement to river quality and river habitat, all fish also need to be able to move through river systems to access good habitat for breeding and growing, but the legacy of the numerous	Across the county's rivers.	Brown trout (Salmo trutta), European Eel (Anguilla Anguilla), Grayling (Thymallus thymallus)	

	structures built on rivers for milling, navigation and amenity has created numerous barriers to fish movement. Creating fish passes (multi-species passes for trout and coarse fish, and eel passes for eels) would help fish to move between sections of river to access places to reproduce and leave their eggs. Contact the Environment Agency's Fisheries and Biodiversity teams who can advise on key locations to provide fish passages and river restoration. Oxfordshire's local catchment partnerships are also a valuable point of contact.			
Mountain Bulin snail  Link to map	**Develop a dense, undisturbed litter layer in woodlands, particularly ancient beech woods, and manage them to achieve partial shade.** Manage suitable woodlands to achieve shaded conditions particularly in ancient beech native woodland. Light thinning or selective felling may be appropriate when regeneration of trees or the shrub layer is required. Minimise the disturbance of the ground, leaflitter, and wet areas within woodland as much as possible. Control grazing to minimise disturbance, some light grazing may be suitable to control coarse vegetation but can also be achieved through small-scale mechanical means. Maintain graded woodland margins with site-native trees on external wood-edges. Where appropriate, introduce management through rotational coppice in small coupes, on rotations of more than 12 years which can be highly beneficial to developing the dense litter layer required. Land snails like the Mountain Bulin Snail are highly sensitive to local disturbance.	Cotswolds and Chilterns	Mountain Bulin (Ena montana)	

	Good woodland management is important whilst following the actions above and generally, longer coppice rotations seem to be more beneficial to invertebrate communities living in the woodland litter.			
White clawed crayfish 	**Conserve remaining White Clawed Crayfish populations by managing the river habitat and improving water quality. Also look for suitable sites to expand their range.** The UK is thought to support a quarter of the world's population of White Clawed Crayfish - the UK's only native crayfish species. It is under threat due to the spread of American Signal Crayfish (an invasive species) and the disease they carry which quickly exterminates native white clawed crayfish populations. White Clawed Crayfish numbers dropped dramatically in recent years. In Oxfordshire, this species remains in 1 or 2 watercourses as isolated populations. Without action and support, it is expected that this species will be lost from Oxfordshire and, potentially, from the UK. If future, effective techniques emerge that can exclude American Signal Crayfish, this will be an important action to take but there are no clear methods to achieve this at present. Oxfordshire should try to conserve the very restricted remaining populations of white-clawed crayfish in the county by ensuring sensitive watercourse management, retention of refuge features for crayfish (cobbles, tree roots), and maintaining and improving water quality. Oxfordshire should use targeted surveys (potentially using eDNA techniques) on suitable watercourses to monitor whether there are/could be any other remaining populations of white clawed crayfish in the county.	Chalk and limestone streams in Oxfordshire.	White-clawed crayfish (Austropotamobius pallipes)	

	Suitable watercourses are those without American signal crayfish and which have barriers to colonisation by American signal crayfish. Some survey methods for white-clawed crayfish require a protected species licence. Any remaining Oxfordshire populations of white clawed crayfish that are deemed to be 'at-risk' could be carefully considered for relocation. Consider introducing or translocating White Clawed Crayfish into suitable 'offline' sites (waterbodies which are not connected to a river) which are identified as suitable sites away from the risk of competitive American signal crayfish (such safe sites are known as Ark sites). See habitat management guidance for White Clawed Crayfish here and details about Ark sites and mineral extraction guidance for this species here.			

Fungi and lichens

Species by Common Name (ordered A – Z)	Potential measure (the action needed to help the relevant species to recover). Potential measures are in bold with additional detail about the species added below.	Particularly important locations for the action(s)	Which species are intended to benefit most?	Habitat
Fungi and fungi-associated plants found with woodland  Link to map	**Ensure the long-term continuity of suitable tree species with careful management to support rare woodland fungi and plants.** Retain trees where these plants and fungi are found. Ensure the long-term continuity of suitable tree species in these locations (saplings through to veterans) through planting or encouraging regeneration. In hotspot areas of these species protect soils by avoiding felling or coppicing trees and avoid fires, fertilisers, and using heavy machinery. Avoid mowing during peak fruiting/flowering periods and control vegetation competing with the target species. Control deer and limit scrub and bramble encroachment. Consider fencing off populations of these species where necessary. To increase the population of these species, create new areas of suitable tree species adjacent to the sites where these species are currently found. These plants and fungi may be found in a range of habitats including woodlands, parkland, hedgerows. Oxfordshire is a particular stronghold for these species found amongst the ancient and veteran trees which have been retained and well-managed (sites like Blenheim, Aston Rowant, and Headington).	Various records exist around the county including for fungi at Blenheim, Aston Rowant & Headington.	**Flowering plants:** Bird's-nest Orchid (Neottia nidus-avis), Narrow-lipped Helleborine (Epipactis leptochila), Yellow Bird's-Nest (Hypopitys monotropa) and its subspecies (Hypopitys monotropa subsp. Hypophegea), White Helleborine (Cephalanthera damasonium), Ghost orchid (Epipogium aphyllum). **Fungi:** (Boletus aereus), Devil's	

	These ancient and veteran trees have long-established soils that still support populations of these now rare species and expansion needs to start from sites where these species are present.		bolete (Boletus satanus),	
Lichens (on veteran trees)  Link to map	**Retain veteran trees which host rare lichens and manage woodlands and trees to increase future lichen populations.** Selectively thin trees around veteran trees that host lichens to open overstocked woods and create structural variety. In lichen hotspots, control the regeneration of young trees to maintain an open wood structure through actions such as reintroducing grazing where historically lost, paying consideration to grazing pressure from wild herbivores. Consider creating glades around the woodland that vary in age and size. Reduce local air pollution levels to as low as possible, including reducing intensive agricultural practices locally to enable lichens to survive. This action is important alongside broader good woodland management (including the control of invasive species like rhododendron and to create and retain deadwood). Look for opportunities to reconnect existing populations of lichens through pasture, tree, woodland, or hedgerow creation. Lichens are an excellent indicator of good quality, clean air so measures taken to support this species are also measures which can improve air quality for people and the wider environment (e.g. reducing local air pollution levels). To best support these lichens, Forestry Commission advise creating glades through approximately a third of the woodland area.	Usnea articulata (only in Nettlebed common)	**Lichens;** (Bacidia incompta), (Buellia hyperbolica), (Lecanora quercicola), (Lecanora sublivescens), (Usnea articulata)	

Insects and spiders

Species by Common Name (ordered A – Z)	Potential measure (the action needed to help the relevant species to recover). Potential measures are in bold with additional detail about the species added below.	Particularly important locations for the action(s)	Which species are intended to benefit most?	Habitat
Beetle of Autumn Gentian  Link to map	**Manage existing populations of Autumn gentian and where suitable, create new areas of Autumn Gentian, allowing the range and population of this beetle and plant to expand.** This beetle reproduces by producing larvae in the roots of Autumn Gentian (Gentianella amarella), a late flowering plant which favours dry, chalk grassland. The plant itself is relatively common across southern England but the populations of this beetle are rare and populations do exist in Oxfordshire including Aston Rowant NNR.	Aston Rowant NNR	**Beetle**: (Smicronyx reichi) **Flowering plant**: Autumn Gentian (Gentianella amarella)	
Cigarello Gall-fly Link to map	**Manage and cut reedbed on long rotation and prevent scrub and trees from invading to support the Cigarello Gall-fly.** After being absent from records in Oxfordshire for at least 30 years, the Cigarello Gall-fly was recently found and recorded in Oxfordshire's Chilswell Valley. They need targeted and tailored habitat management of reedbeds to support the species to survive.	Chilswell Valley	Cigarello gall-fly (Lipara similis)	

Clubbed general soldierfly  Link to map	**Ensure that alkaline tufa spring-fed fens in Oxfordshire have a flow of clean calcareous spring flow into the fen and graze, or cut and rake vegetation to keep open, short, sunny pools.** The only records of this soldierfly in England are in Oxfordshire meaning we have a key role in preventing the loss of this species through targeted habitat management including ensuring that clean aquifer water continues to feed the habitats which are found to support these species. If population size and health allow, consider reintroductions of the soldierfly to suitable fen sites.	Cothill fen SSSI and Dry Sandford pit SSSI, potential for reintroduction to suitable fen sites like Lye Valley	Clubbed general soldierfly (Stratiomys chamaeleon)	
Dung specialists and dung beetles  Link to map	**Graze pastures with unmedicated animals to supply unmedicated dung to support rare dung specialist species and dung beetles.** Ensure the continuation of this unmedicated grazing and management on sites where unmedicated animal grazing has been long-established and introduce it to adjacent sites. Additionally, introduce this grazing management to new sites across the county. This action particularly applies to horses and cattle not treated with anthelmintics, to produce dung that enables rare species to survive and spread including the Hornet Robberfly and dung beetles like the Violet D'Or beetle. A paper about Hornet Robberflies and habitat management to support them can be found here with a detailed resource here. See information here about helping 'Dung Beetles for Farmers'. Many beetles like dung beetles are threatened by the loss of permanent pasture (being disturbed or converted to another use), the		Hornet Robberfly (Asilus crabroniformis), and dung beetles including the Violet Dor Beetle (Geotrupes mutator).	

	cessation or change in routine of grazing animals, a lack or change of dung supply, and the use of parasite medications (endectocides) as a routine treatment for livestock (Natural England report) found here. Many medications are used to keep livestock healthy. However, there is rising evidence about the negative impact of Avermectins on wildlife and the environment. The toxins build up in the dung, soil, and water with negative effects on plants and soil invertebrates like dung beetles. The dung itself also contains significant amounts of the toxin which impacts dung-dependant species. However, there are non-chemical and reduced-chemical options available to farmers, read more here.			
Ellipteroides alboscutellatus	**Increase the presence of the moss (palustriella commutate) in tufa springs with open woodland. Moss growth could be encouraged by managing woodland to achieve consistent, partially shaded seepages along tufa springs.** This fly relies on the presence of this moss for survival and the fly itself is a very rare species with fewer than 20 records in England at the time of writing with a recent record in Worton Wood, Oxfordshire. If the woodland is suitable for coppicing, this could be introduced to achieve partial shade conditions.	Worton Wood	True fly (Ellipteroides alboscutellatus)	

Lousewort flea beetle Link to map	**Conserve, manage and enhance suitable areas to increase populations of Marsh Lousewort.** Marsh Lousewort is a rare plant which can be found in alkaline fens. The Lousewort Flea Beetle requires this plant to be able to breed. In Oxfordshire this beetle is only known to be present in Cothill Fen SSSI. See information about the plant here.	Cothill fen SSSI	Lousewort flea beetle (Longitarsus holsaticus)	
Meadow ant hoverfly 	**Manage grasslands that are good quality, warm, sunny, and open to encourage and retain yellow meadow anthills (mounds). Graze to a short sward using suitable species like sheep.** This hoverfly lives in the ant nests (mounds) of 'Lasius flavus' (yellow ants) which need good quality grassland. In sites that already have the yellow ant mounds, mange the site through grazing and avoid damaging the anthill (mounds) with machinery. In suitable grassland reversion projects, consider the reintroduction of yellow ants if they have not, or are not likely to, naturally colonise the area.	Aston Rowant NNR, Barracks lane meadow.	Meadow ant hoverfly (Microdon devius)	

Noble Chafer  Link to map	**Manage and create orchards with deadwood to support Noble Chafer beetles.** A rare metallic-green beetle which can be found in traditional orchards. Support Noble Chafer populations by keeping mature, large, dead, dying, and decaying wood within traditional orchards where this species is present or could become present. Avoid removing or burning deadwood from these areas and keep mature, suitable tree species in and around the orchard. Introduce Chafer boxes to create temporary habitat for Noble Chafers whilst an orchard establishes and/or sufficient deadwood is supplied. Plan to grow a future succession of trees that will become mature. For orchard creation, consider using early-maturing varieties of fruit trees. See this set of facts, survey tips, and management advice specific to Noble Chafers and orchards. There are six records of Noble Chafers in Oxfordshire in the past 30 years showing that this is a species right on the brink of being lost from the county (and the country). The Noble Chafer relies on dead and dying wood for it's young (larvae) to survive in, particularly on orchard trees. The larvae feed on deadwood for up to three years before the adults emerge as a beetles for six weeks in summer to reproduce. Adult beetles are known to choose the nectar of hogweed and meadowsweet which can be encouraged or grown around the edge of orchards to provide nectar sources to attract or support noble chafers beetles. Use techniques to retain, increase, and prompt new deadwood each year in orchards where noble chafers are known to be present or could be present in future (e.g. through translocation).	Very restricted to traditional orchards and gardens with mature and declining fruit trees.	Noble chafer (Gnorimus nobilis)	

	Ensure the longevity and presence of large, mature, veteran, and dying trees within the orchard and alongside orchard trees consider planting nearby oak and beech which can also support Noble Chafers.			
Snail killing fly  Link to map	**Continue extensive grazing management (or cutting and raking) over suitable large areas to keep wetlands short and open throughout the year. Retain or create pools in open wetlands to host snails.** This fly is found in very few locations in England, one of which is Oxfordshire's Port Meadow. It is of key importance to extensively graze these open wetlands and to create areas on the site which can host snails (which this fly relies on to survive). Other species are also expected to benefit from this open wetland with nutrient rich mud and pools.	Port Meadow	Snail killing fly (Sciomyza dryomyzina), Marsh Dock (Rumex palustris)	
Southern Damselfly 	**Create unpolluted, shallow streams to support Southern Damselflies.** Manage sites where Southern Damselflies are known to be present or could become present to create unpolluted, base-rich shallow streams with a constant moderate flow rate of water and relatively high-water temperatures. Maintain open banksides with unshaded streams. Endangered in England and at risk of extinction globally, Southern Damselflies remain in the UK in approximately ten areas including one location in Oxfordshire, Dry Sandford Pit. This species requires channels with a permanent flow of water which does not dry out or freeze. They occur in heathland streams, water meadow ditches on chalk habitats, and fen habitat.	Dry Sandford Pit	Southern Damselfly (Coenagrion mercuriale)	

	See the management handbook for Southern Damselfly for further, detailed action.			
Spider (Tuberta maerens)	**Create new areas of connected coppice with standard trees including oaks (Quercus robur) especially in and around Brasenose Wood, Oxfordshire**. This spider is reported to be highly specialised to managed habitats and its range is greatly limited to Oxfordshire, Dorset, Berkshire and Wiltshire. Whilst the exact, ideal management actions aren't fully clear, the greatest abundance of this species was associated with oak trees (Quercus robur) in a coppice-with-standards woodland 12 years after coppicing. The spiders were particularly found on the South and West facing areas of the tree trunks.	Brasenose Wood	Spider (Tuberta maerens)	

Mammals

Species by Common Name (ordered A – Z)	Potential measure (the action needed to help the relevant species to recover). Potential measures are in bold with additional detail about the species added below.	Particularly important locations for the action(s)	Which species are intended to benefit most?	Habitat
Bats  Link to map	**Design, create, and enhance wildlife corridors to support bats (in both urban and rural areas).** Survey areas for bats in urban and rural areas to identify bat corridors. Bats use corridors through the natural environment to move (commute), feed (forage), and get to their roosts. Often, they use tree-lined corridors, hedgerows, woodland, and trees in gardens and greenspaces to move through both rural and urban areas. Ponds, rivers, and watercourses also help to attract insects that bats feed on and can be a key part of the foraging corridors. Minimise loss or damage to existing bat corridors, and enhance existing wildlife corridors and features that support bats. Where possible, create new corridors, habitats, and features in suitable locations that better support bats to forage, commute, or roost. New corridors could aim to connect to existing hedgerows, woodlands, lines of trees, trees in gardens and greenspaces. New corridors can act as stepping stones to help mobile species move through urban and rural areas However, these species are known to be negatively impacted by lighting. Read more about the impacts of lighting and what you can do	Horspath Tunnel		

	to help bats here. Care should be taken to minimise or shield lights to benefit bats (and other species) in rural and urban areas. Get in touch with Bat Conservation to get help with bat-friendly gardens, monitoring bats, and more. For local advice, information, and support, get in touch with Oxfordshire Bat Group. When designing changes to the environment to create or enhance urban areas and buildings – see this detailed guide, by Bat Conservation to create an urban environment that can support bats and biodiversity.			
Bats (woodland specialists)  Link to map	**Manage woodlands for bats. Typically, retain deadwood and mature trees with dark, humid conditions with well-connected foraging/commuting corridors nearby.** There are 18 bat species in the UK, 14 of which were recorded in Oxfordshire between 2019 – 2023. In 2024, a very rare, almost extinct species of bat was also found in Oxfordshire's woodlands – Bechstein's bat. This bat, and the others listed (right) are strongly associated with woodlands and need particular types of woodland management to support them. See this link by Bat Conservation Trust to see the bat woodland specialists. Survey bats in rural areas and identify woodlands where bats are present or roosting and report sightings to the Environmental Records Centre TVERC. Maintain the woodland and surrounding area to support any bat species that are already present (see the needs of different species here).	Bernwood, Tackley Woods, Begbrooke Woods		

	Generally, in woodlands aim to retain mature, dead, damaged, and dying standing trees, especially trees with cracks, loose bark, ivy, and holes (or hollows). Maintain dark, humid conditions around these trees through management such as growing out understory layers, creating woodland ponds or blocking or slowing the flow of drainage ditches. Create foraging corridors across the county (particularly if there are known bat roosts nearby) by planting trees, hedgerow, or woodland. For detailed information about bat actions in woodlands, see this guide.			
Beaver 	**Reintroduce beavers into suitable locations where they are given space and time to naturally restore river diversity and wetland ecosystems.** Beavers are a native UK species but they have been extinct from England for several centuries. In recent decades, some were allowed to come to England in enclosures but there have been no confirmed beavers in Oxfordshire for approximately 400 years. However, as of 2025, wild releases became legal in England and Natural England will now consider applications for the wild release of beavers. They will require sufficient evidence of the suitability of the location and the reintroductions are subject to national policy and licensing. The focus of reintroductions should be to promote biodiversity as well as wider benefits that beavers can bring. For example, beavers can create resilient wetland habitats which can store and hold water. These wider benefits include mitigating damage during flood events and drought events because they can create resilient wetlands that store and hold water benefitting both people and biodiversity.			

	Beaver habitats have also been shown to improve water quality in areas where they live. Since beavers are now starting to be released into the wild, a plan for their management will be important to ensure that they live well, maximise benefits, and limit conflicts with people.			
Hazel dormouse  Link to map	**Create, manage, and enhance connected corridors of coppice, woodland, and hedgerows to support Hazel Dormice.** Hazel dormice are unable to spread far from their current locations or from reintroduction sites without directly connecting habitats. Within 1km of sites where Hazel Dormice have been recorded or could become present, create and/or enhance a suitable network of connecting habitats e.g. coppice, woodland, and/or thick hedgerows (these should connect to the original site where the Hazel Dormouse was recorded). Retain trees which have cracks, crevices, and deadwood and retain woody species like blackthorn and hazel in sunny, open areas. Ensure that there are arboreal connections across woodland rides at least every 50-100m and erect dormouse boxes and/or tubes to encourage nesting opportunities. Retain woodland understories in winter and avoid clear felling in known dormouse locations. Consider managing woodland through traditional coppice of non-adjacent coupes. of sites where Hazel Dormice have been recorded or could become present, create and/or enhance a suitable network of connecting habitats e.g. coppice, woodland, and/or thick hedgerows (these should connect to the original site where the Hazel Dormouse was recorded).			

	Retain trees which have cracks, crevices, and deadwood and retain woody species like blackthorn and hazel in sunny, open areas. Ensure that there are arboreal connections across woodland rides at least every 50-100m and erect dormouse boxes and/or tubes to encourage nesting opportunities. Retain woodland understories in winter and avoid clear felling in known dormouse locations. Consider managing woodland through traditional coppice of non-adjacent coupes. Hazel Dormouse populations are estimated to have fallen by 52 per cent since 1995 and are a species that are at risk of extinction in the UK. It requires the above specific measures as well as good woodland management techniques (see this management guide) to improve the structure and diversity of woodlands. Within conifer plantations, maintain the margins of deciduous trees and shrubs beside rides, glades and edges. For more detailed woodland management information, please see the English Nature management handbook for dormice conservation.			
Hedgehog  Link to map	**Manage gardens, parks, urban environments, and new developments for hedgehogs.** In gardens, parks, urban greenspaces, and new developments, reduce or stop the use of slug pellets and pesticides, create 13cm x 13cm holes through fences and walls to create 'hedgehog highways' to help hedgehogs move through gardens and greenspaces to forage and mate. Create or install 'hedgehog houses' that provide undisturbed, safe space for them.	Hedgehog roadkill hotspots, new developments		

	Sweep fallen leaves into permanent leaf stores where they may take shelter, and manage grass in gardens and parks to create a mosaic of long grass, short turf, open soil, and tussocks where they may search for food like beetles, caterpillars and earthworms. Hedgehog numbers have declined greatly. They used to be a common sight in both rural and urban areas. In addition to the more urban actions above, the rural hedgehog populations are expected to benefit from broader, general habitat improvements including the creation and good management of hedges, scrub, woodlands, deadwood, and grasslands as well as increasing regenerative farming practices. Wider actions to support hedgehogs can be read about here which would also support a range of other species.			

Otter  Link to map	**Prevent otters from drowning in traps by ensuring that any fish and crayfish traps being used are legally compliant and have properly-fixed otter guards.** Otters are still considered 'near threatened' with extinction globally, and their population numbers are impacted by human-caused mortality (e.g. being caught in traps). Although the use of nets and traps is a regulated activity by the Environment Agency, it is important that the numerous fishing clubs and syndicates ensure that all use of such traps on their waters are compliant with the law to avoid otter mortalities.	Countywide		
	In locations where there are regular otter roadkills, consider adapting infrastructure to improve their chances of survival as they move across land and watercourses. Otter populations have been recovering in Oxfordshire in recent decades but their populations can be vulnerable to the impacts of human-caused mortality (e.g. roadkill). Developers, local authorities and National Highways are best placed to implement measures (such as the provision of ledges and underpasses and the use of barrier fencing) to reduce the risk of otter roadkill at hotspots, and the Environment Agency can advise on where the several Oxfordshire hotspots are. In addition to the actions above, Otters and other species require safe and secure breeding and resting sites, which can be provided by the protection and general improvements to riverside habitats which are already measures that the LNRS is promoting. There is information for landowners and woodland owners for otter habitat management. Developments and planners should also use available information to support otters.	Otter roadkill hotspots (information can be requested from the Environment Agency)		

Water vole 	**Manage (or create) riverside banks, ditches, and watercourses for Water Voles.** This action can be to support existing Water voles, or to create suitable habitat for new water voles to colonise. Manage riverside banks, ditches, and watercourses to create or maintain areas of sunny shallow water margins with marginal and bankside vegetation and avoid excess or extensive overshadowing of the water by scrub or trees (especially if water vole colonies are already present). Avoid trampling or intensive grazing along the watercourse edge which can damage water vole burrows. Ensure that American Mink are being controlled with the aim to achieve their exclusion where water voles are present. Water voles have experienced drastic declines in the UK. Their numbers dropped by almost 90 per cent between 1989 - 1998 but water voles can still be found in the banks and waters of Oxfordshire's fens, rivers, streams, and ditches. They are most commonly found in areas of slower flowing water with abundant vegetation and steep sided banks (for burrowing into) that have small ledges at their base. Effort should be made to improve habitats where the remaining populations could be joined up with each other. Alongside improved bank and ditch management, it is key to control the (invasive species) American mink which predate on water voles in an unsustainable manner and cause local extinctions which have driven the decline of this species. Water vole recovery is primarily based on whether the efforts to control American Mink are successful. Mink were introduced to the country and are the primary cause of the decline of water voles. Water vole projects, like that of BBOWT, bring	Areas that bridge a gap between existing populations		

	together habitat restoration and mink management and have played a major role in safeguarding Oxfordshire populations. Improved monitoring and trap-alarm systems now provide an opportunity to create a mink-free Oxfordshire if sufficient resource and support can be found. To support Water Voles, see management factsheets, handbooks, conservation handbooks for water voles, advice for landowners, and advice for planning decisions.			

Plants, flowers and trees

Species by Common Name (ordered A – Z)	Potential measure (the action needed to help the relevant species to recover). Potential measures are in bold with additional detail about the species added below.	Particularly important locations for the action(s)	Which species are intended to benefit most?	Habitat
Black poplar trees 	**Plant or enable Black Poplars to grow in Oxfordshire and retain dead and dying poplars where they have been growing. Retain deadwood where possible.** Black poplar trees used to be commonplace across England but are now few and far between. The black poplar is considered to be Britain's rarest tree species associated with wet woodland and forested floodplain. One cause of the decline for this wetland tree was the extensive draining of agricultural land across the country. Now that there are so few black poplars left, it is unlikely that they can pollinate each other due to the distance between the trees. Careful propagation and planting should be undertaken to grow male and female black poplars close to each other where their seeds can land on damp ground. In this way, population numbers may start to recover. Oxfordshire used to have strong populations of this tree since it grows particularly well in wetlands, floodplains, and near ditches. The tree itself supports a wide range of other rare species. Efforts to plant new black poplars could be targeted near to the remaining black poplar trees in Oxfordshire as well as other wetland sites in the county that are suitable to support the growth of new black poplars. See a Black Poplar action plan here. Avoid removing or burning the deadwood of any remaining black	River Thame catchment	**Fly:** True fly (Solva marginata)  **Tree:** Black Poplar (Populus nigra)	

	poplars where practicable and possible (accounting for public safety and access). This deadwood itself offers a very rare habitat to other species which are at risk of extinction like the true fly (*Solva marginata*) which breeds under the bark of live, dead, and dying poplars. It requires dead, dying, and rotting poplar trees to be kept in the environment, not removed or burned. For this species it would be particularly beneficial to plant new suitable poplar species in locations near to mature, dead, and dying poplars to ensure a local new source of aging poplars. A local initiative to restore black poplar populations would greatly support the recovery of these trees. Examples include projects for native Black Poplars in Herefordshire and Dorset often offering free trees to expand the UK's populations.			
Creeping Marshwort  Link to map	**Maintain and create damp, nutrient-rich grassland on the margins of floodplain ponds which flood in winter. Maintain consistently short, sparse vegetation through regular, extensive grazing**. Local information about Creeping Marshwort can be found here with a description of the plant here. This plant grows in wet, heavily grazed, grassland that floods in winter. Suitable sites are typically by rivers however Creeping Marshwort is now very rare with the UK's main population found only in Oxfordshire. Plantlife and Freshwater Habitats Trust suggest that there are only 2 other smaller populations in the UK. On sites with Creeping Marshwort, it is essential to mimic or implement heavy year-round grazing by cows or horses. If, in Oxfordshire, the grazing pattern is lost, if the land use changes significantly, or if the habitats are damaged or under-managed, the species is at great risk of being lost from the UK.	Oxford Meadows SAC (Port Meadow), and a recent reintroductions to Willow Walk Meadow (Oxford), Lye Valley, North Hinksey, Mill Meadow, Henley, Cutteslowe (Cherwell floodplains).	Creeping marshwort (Helosciadium repens)	

	Oxfordshire's sites represent key, national populations of this endangered plant and maintaining a bespoke management regime is a necessary requirement to recover populations of this species. This is also true for sites where Creeping Marshwort is (re)introduced.			
Devil's bit scabious 	**Enhance existing areas of Devil's bit scabious and create new large areas in suitable, large habitat areas. In suitable sites, reintroduce Marsh Fritillary butterflies.** Propagate, plant, and establish Devil's-bit Scabious to create extensive patches of this plant (throughout the year, including winter) and introduce or maintain appropriate grazing or other suitable techniques that support this plant species. Where suitable, reintroduce Marsh Fritillary butterflies to areas which have very large populations of Devil's-bit Scabious. The Marsh Fritillary butterfly has become locally extinct due to habitat loss. It relies on well-managed, very large areas of grassland (e.g. wet meadows and calcareous grasslands) which contain Devil's-bit scabious and are appropriately grazed. Guidance suggests that good habitat should exceed 70 hectares with at least 20 per cent of the area containing three or more Devil's bit scabious plants per square metre. To support this butterfly, Devil's-bit Scabious needs to be retained on large sites including adequate areas retained throughout winter. Extensive grazing regimes are ideal to support this. Devil's-bit Scabious creates no seedbank which is why it requires regular, consistent management to maintain its populations and avoid losing both the species mentioned here.	Existing sites of Devil's bit Scabious Otmoor, Cothill Fen NNR, Lye Valley SSSI, Yarton Mead, Long Mead.	Devil's-Bit Scabious (Succisa pratensis), Marsh Fritillary (Euphydryas aurinia).  **Moths**: Narrow-Bordered Bee Hawk Moth (Hemaris Tityus), **Fungi** Devil's bit Wart, (Synchytrium succisae), Devil's bit anther smut, (Microbotryum succisae)	

Downy Woundwort  Link to map	**Undertake management to increase the presence of Downy Woundwort.** Support existing populations of Downy Woundwort and previously populated areas by managing woodland edges, rides, glades, roadside verges, and hedgerows to limit competitive vegetation growth and create suitable soil disturbance to help this species to spread. Clear scrub on sites where this species has previously grown. Perhaps England's most endangered native wildflower, this species of flowering plant has only been recorded in four sites in England since 1930, all in West Oxfordshire meaning that Oxfordshire has a particular responsibility to try to recover this species. It has been noted to grow along tracks, ancient pathways, and woodland and hedgerow edges on thin disturbed soil above oolitic limestone. In one of those four sites, the most recent survey found one plant. The species relies on its long-lived seed which can survive in the soil for many years. Therefore, the actions to help recover this species include causing soil disturbance to places where there may have previously been downy woundwort populations. Habitat management suggestions can be found here (p67) and here.	Burford and Charlbury. See Distribution map and page 62 of Wats17p59.pdf (bsbi.org.uk)	Downy Woundwort (Stachys germanica)	
Fen violet	**Maintain populations of, or (re)introduce, fen violets at suitable sites.** There are only three known sites where the Fen Violet remains in England. One is Otmoor in Oxfordshire (described here). There is a high threat of national extinction to this species and there is ongoing work by local people and Freshwater Habitats Trust to recover the populations of rare plants including Fen Violet.	Otmoor, and sites where this species has previously been present	Fen violet (Viola stagnina)	

 Link to map	Existing sites should be managed to the benefit of this species and to appropriately expose any historic seedbanks. Suitable fen or marsh sites should be considered for (re)introduction of this species to increase its distribution. Possible sites could include areas where the plant was historically present, or they may be new sites. Consider contacting Freshwater Habitats Trust and Oxfordshire Flora Group to request advice about this species including management or (re)introduction. Winter inundation with waters down in spring, flowering and setting seed before vegetation gets too tall for it in summer. Careful grazing management is key to enable it to succeed. Focusing on existing sites to then increase population sites and abundance outward from these sites (particularly around Otmoor).			

Greater Water-Parsnip  Link to map	**Propagate and translocate Greater Water Parsnip out to locations to restore its historic distribution in Oxfordshire.** Greater Water Parsnip was once abundant in Oxfordshire's rivers and floodplains. However the abundance of this plant has declined rapidly in the past 200 years as a result of water pollution (eutrophication), wetland drainage, and inappropriate ditch management. The plant requires enough disturbance and grazing to avoid the area scrubbing over but not so much that the plants are all eaten and the habitat trampled. Propagate this plant and support translocation efforts into suitable wetland and riparian sites with a suitable balance of management or grazing for this species. Get in touch with Freshwater Habitats Trust to find out more about what's best for this species. Suitable habitats for translocation are: fens, and emergent and fringing vegetation by rivers, streams, canals, ditches, lakes and ponds. This guide can give you more information about identifying the plant and understanding its range and habitat requirements.		Greater Water-parsnip (Sium latifolium)	

Juniper 	**Regenerate Juniper and manage sites to recover Juniper populations.** Regenerate and increase the presence of Juniper by creating scrapes down to bare soil to establish the seeds and then manage the area for Juniper (and associated species). Where necessary to benefit Juniper regeneration, exclude rabbits, deer, and sheep from these areas. Mature Juniper colonies have been dying out in lowland England and have not, by themselves been naturally regenerating any new young Juniper with any success in the past 60 years. Without Juniper regeneration projects this plant is expected to go extinct within the next 50 years from lowland England. Oxfordshire is one of a few counties which have key suitable areas of southern chalk grassland where Juniper could be re-established, and work is being undertaken to better understand and develop natural regeneration methods to prevent the loss of Juniper and dependent species form Oxfordshire. Bare earth, ruderal plants (plants which colonise bare ground), and invertebrates are a particularly important components of chalk and limestone grasslands which will also benefit from juniper scrapes. Species which are likely to benefit from Juniper projects include rock-rose, wild thyme, horseshoe and kidney vetch along with several species of blue and skipper butterfly.	Aston Upthorpe and Aston Rowant NNR	Juniper (Juniperus communis), Moth (Argyresthia praecocella)	

Limestone fern  Link to map	**Create new areas of bare limestone in woodlands, along rivers, in walls, built structures, and gardens.** The creation of limestone structures like dry stone walls, buildings, bridges can support this species as can techniques to expose patches of limestone soils and rock in areas of suitable habitat. The creation of bare patches should not aim to eradicate large areas of other existing habitats but should be conducted in a complementary manner to add biodiversity value to sites where this species could colonise the cracks or scree in limestone rock and exposed areas of limestone-rich soils. The creation of new areas of exposed limestone will be required over time to maintain a population of this species.	West Oxfordshire, the Cotswolds, North of Bicester, and East of Watlington.	Limestone Fern (Gymnocarpium robertianum)	
Long-Leaved Helleborine 	**Maintain permanent areas of suitable glades, rides, or open spaces within woodlands where long-leaved helleborine are present.** Create and/or enhance glades and open spaces (like wide rides) within suitable woodlands to create permanently light areas within the woodland. Retain a few trees or shrubs in open areas to avoid exposing these plants to too much light as they can be prone to drying out. Manage and control competing vegetation (particularly in the permanently open areas). Vegetation control with occasional soil disturbance in open areas can be achieved through time-limited grazing by suitable animals or other suitable methods. This helleborine is associated with ancient or mature calcareous woodlands where the plant has been found. This plant does not enjoy changing conditions and benefits from permanent open, sunny		Long-Leaved Helleborine (Cephalanthera longifolia)	

	areas in woodlands with enough shade to avoid drying out. Similarly, the land should be moist and not waterlogged or dried out. Typically, cattle or horses are used for grazing in a time-limited manner to thin competing vegetation and cause slight soil disturbance without compacting the soil or overgrazing. Avoid herbicides, pesticides, and fungicides.			
Meadow Clary  Link to map	**Maintain low soil nutrient levels, prevent scrub encroachment, and graze at key times to reduce coarse, dominant grasses in suitable sites where this species is present or has been present.** The removal of sward by hay cutting or grazing after plants have flowered and set seed is advised, in addition to maintaining a degree of disturbance to provide bare patches of soil for seedling recruitment. It would be important to maintain or introduce careful grazing regimes on grasslands and meadows where this species has been present, practice low-input sustainable farming methods to enhance and achieve greater areas of unimproved grassland. Meadow Clary declined rapidly when agricultural practices began to increase the fertility of grassland by ploughing, applying fertiliser, and re-seeding with 'more productive' grassland species. Now this plant is very restricted in its national range, down to about 20-30 known sites in the UK (mostly in the Cotswolds) of which about half are reported to be in Oxfordshire. As such, Oxfordshire has a particularly important role for the national recovery of this species. Do consider the climate predictions for Meadow Clary's range over time by the Met Office.	Cotswolds sites where the species is, or has been present.	Meadow Clary (Salvia pratensis)	

Military Orchid  Link to map	**Manage woodlands for Military Orchids and create open conditions in glades. Exclude and control deer and rabbits and clear moss cover as necessary around the orchids.** Open conditions can be achieved through selective felling to expand glades, controlled time-limited grazing, seasonal mowing, or raking vegetation to control encroaching scrub near existing orchid populations. Oxfordshire has 6 records of Military Orchids in the past 30 years. This orchid takes four years to grow from seed but can live for 15 years. Because they take such a long time to grow, management of sites where they already exist is of key importance to their survival in Oxfordshire.	Woodlands south of Lower Assendon and south of Christmas Common	Military orchid (Orchis militaris)	
Monkey Orchid  Link to map	**Manage chalk grassland to retain moisture and increase populations of the Monkey Orchid. Identify suitable sites (without Lady Orchids) to reintroduce and manage Monkey Orchids to expand their range and prevent extinction.** There are three known populations of Monkey Orchid in the UK and Oxfordshire has one of these remaining populations present at Hartslock nature reserve. Here the chalk grassland supports a range of rare species including one of the UK's three populations of Monkey Orchid. This orchid typically flowers earlier than others (around May) and care should be taken to manage the area according to its flowering period. A potential major risk to the Hartslock population is their hybridisation with Lady Orchids which are present at the same site.	Hartslock nature reserve	Monkey Orchid (Orchis simia)	

	Targeted reintroduction of Monkey orchids to suitable sites where Lady Orchids are absent offers a way to secure the future for this species.			

Reptiles

Species by Common Name (ordered A – Z)	Potential measure (the action needed to help the relevant species to recover). Potential measures are in bold with additional detail about the species added below.	Particularly important locations for the action(s)	Which species are intended to benefit most?	Habitat
Adder  Link to map	**Create new Adder habitats with mosaic areas of heathland, scrub, grassland, and woodland. Or manage and enhance existing mosaics to reintroduce adders.** Find detailed advice about managing habitat for adders here. Create or manage habitats that have a diverse vegetation structure (a mixture of different heights) with open, sunny areas for basking. Rides and glades at woodland edges can be important and the ground topography should be varied to create features for basking, shelter, and safe hibernation. Limit disturbance within these mosaic habitats and follow advice about game bird releases and management to limit impacts on flora and fauna. Adders used to be widespread in Oxfordshire before the year 2000 but recent evidence shows strong declines across northern Europe. Oxfordshire itself may have one remaining population of adders which were previously reintroduced back into the county. Small and fragmented populations are highly vulnerable to extinction. Major threats to adders include predation by game birds, disturbance and persecution by people. There is potential for expanding existing habitats where adders remain, and for carefully targeted re-introduction of adders into suitable locations following IUCN guidelines and working with authorities and local reptile organisations across borders to restore habitat connectivity with populations in neighbouring counties.	The final Oxfordshire adder population in the Chilterns. Most likely to be suitable in the Chilterns or Cotswolds.	Adder (Vipera berus)	

Common lizard  Link to map	**Carefully manage habitat near known lizard colonies to create open, sunny places in dry, exposed sites with areas of dense cover nearby where they can feed on spiders and insects.** Common lizards have been widespread across Oxfordshire but their current numbers and range are not as well-known besides some protected sites like Otmoor and Wychwood. Where they are known to be present, and where habitat management is appropriate, they are doing well. The greatest threats to their success include the fragmentation and disturbance of their habitats and predation by birds. If common lizards are lost from a site, there is little to no opportunity that they will naturally recolonise the location so additional survey and monitoring work is also needed to understand where populations are present locally.	Otmoor, Wychwood, Banbury County Park	Common lizard (Zootoca vivipara)	

You have now reached the end of Oxfordshire's LNRS Species Priorities List. Please report any sightings of these (and other) species to TVERC to help inform future biodiversity recovery work.

Summary

The list above contains **63 specific actions** which support **61 key species** e.g. ‘Monkey orchid’ (or groups of species e.g. ‘Bats’).

Whilst those actions are targeted towards 61 key species and species-groups, the actions are expected to benefit a total of 105 species which are considered to be threatened or near threatened with extinction. You can find each and all of these 105 species listed in the right-hand column of the above table.

In addition, these species-specific actions would also have knock-on wider benefits to a further, non-exhaustive list of species which cannot all be mentioned here. The column of ‘particularly important locations’ were noted to add context for readers but those locations should not limit people from taking actions in other places.

How will other threatened and near-threatened species be supported in the LNRS?

There are approximately 800 other threatened and near threatened species in Oxfordshire in addition to the listed above. You can view the full list of over 800 species on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy webpage.

Whilst those additional 800 species are also important species to recover, it is expected that they will benefit through the large-scale habitat improvement(s) which are listed on the LNRS’s Statement of Biodiversity.

These actions involve enhancing existing habitats, improving landscape-scale connectivity between habitats, and the creation of new habitats to help the population numbers of many of those species to recover and spread.

In some cases, some of the other 800 species require more evidence to better understand what actions they need to help them recover.

Acknowledgements

The LNRS would like to acknowledge the support given by the LNRS partners as well as species experts and county recorders (nationally and locally) who have helped to create this Species Priorities List.

Collecting the specific actions needed by nearly 900 threatened and near-threatened species is a significant undertaking and we have only been able to create this with the support from individuals and organisations who have collaborated with this project.

During the longlisting and shortlisting processes, Oxfordshire received support for the LNRS partner organisations (see logos below) as well as contact with over 70 species experts. Alongside the LNRS partner organisations we also heard responses from species representatives at:

- Banbury Ornithological Society
- Banbury Town Council
- Butterfly Conservation Upper Thames Group
- Centre for Hydrology and Ecology
- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission
- Natural England
- Oxfordshire Amphibian and Reptile Group
- Oxfordshire Bat Group
- Oxfordshire Ornithological Society (OOS)
- Plant Life
- RSPB
- RSPB Otmoor
- Species Recovery Trust
- The Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire (ANHSO)
- The Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire
- The River Thame Conservation Trust
- Over 20 further county recorders and individuals with expertise in habitat management for a variety of species.
- Representatives from each of the LNRS project partner organisations (see image)

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52. Stone Curlew: Alcaravão | Alcaravão Burhinus oedicnemus Eurasian Thick-kne… | Flickr
53. Striped Lychnis Moth: Striped lychnis caterpillar 2a - Shargacucullia lychnitis | Flickr
54. Swifts and House martins: Gierzwaluw - Apus apus | Gierzwaluw - Apus apus | Flickr and House Martin | An archive shot from the Romney Marsh, during… | Flickr and Tornseglare i holk | Fem dagar efter uppsättning sitter en t… | Flickr and House Martin (Delichon urbicum) | The photos contained in th… | Flickr
55. Turtle Dove: Turtle Dove (Streptopelia turtur) ... Sutton Bank , York… | Flickr
56. Water Vole: Water Vole | Seen at the British Wildlife Centre, Newchapel,… | Flickr
57. White Admiral: Väikelumik; Limenitis camilla; White Admiral | Tirbiku, Lään… | Flickr
58. White Clawed Crayfish: White-footed Crayfish (Austropotamobius pallipes) | Aquarium… | Flickr
59. White letter hairstreak: White-Letter Hairstreak | At Brockholes | HELEN M BUSHE | Flickr
60. Willow Tit: Willow Tit | Willow Tit - Parus montanus - Пухляк Russia, Mo… | Flickr
61. Wood White butterfly: Leptidea sinapis-reali 170717 116.jpg | Jürgen Mangelsdorf | Flickr

APPENDIX A

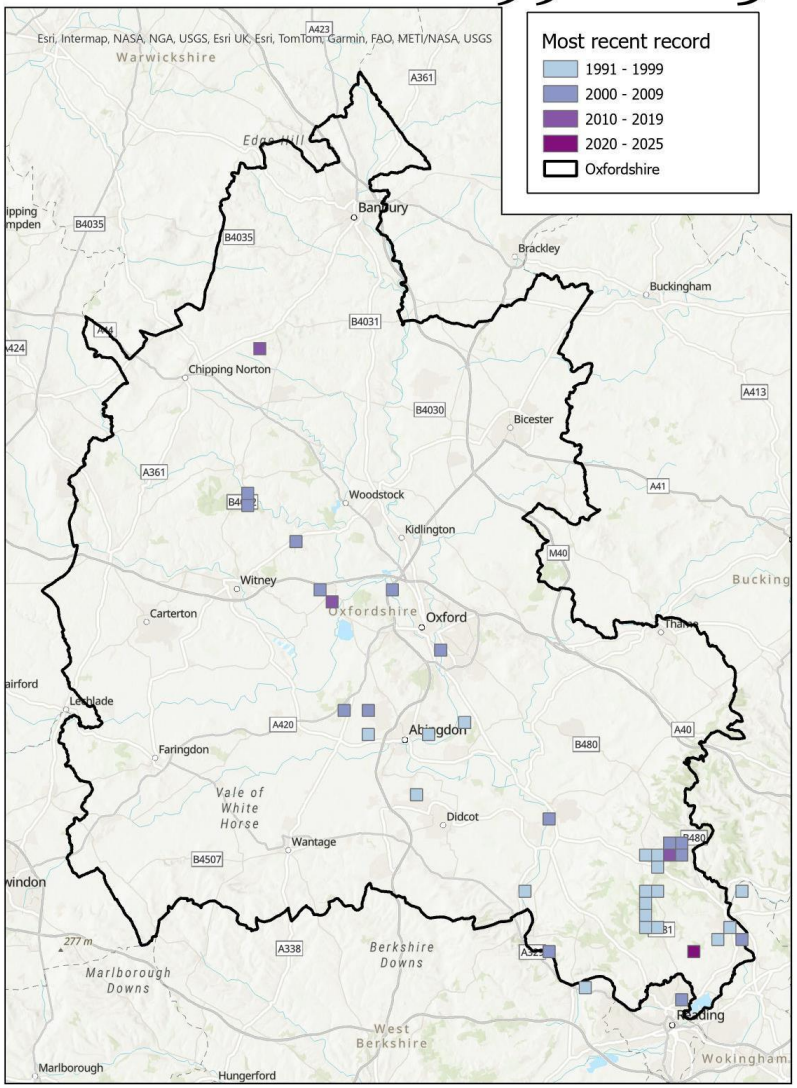
This list shows all the species from Oxfordshire's LNRS Species Priorities List in alphabetical order by their common or group name

- Adder
- Barberry Carpet Moth
- Bats
- Beaver
- Beetle of Autumn Gentian
- Bittern (and Marsh Harrier)
- Black Poplar trees
- Blackthorn butterflies
- Breeding waders
- Cigarello Gall-Fly
- Clubbed general soldierfly
- Common lizard
- Creeping Marshwort
- Curlew
- Dark Green Fritillary
- Desmoulin's Whorl Snail
- Devil's bit scabious (and Marsh fritillary)
- Downy Woundwort
- Duke of Burgundy Butterfly
- Dung specialists and dung beetles
- Ellipteroides alboscutellatus
- Farmland Birds
- Fen violet
- Fish
- Fungi and fungi-associated plants found with woodland
- Great Crested Newt
- Greater Water-Parsnip
- Hazel dormouse
- Hedgehog
- Juniper
- Lichens (on veteran trees)
- Limestone fern
- Liquorice Piercer Moth
- Lousewort flea beetle
- Long-Leaved Helleborine
- Meadow Ant Hoverfly
- Meadow Clary
- Military Orchid
- Monkey Orchid
- Montagu's Harrier
- Moths of Dyer's Greenweed
- Mountain Bulin snail
- Nightingale
- Noble chafer
- Otter
- Silver Spotted Skipper
- Small Blue butterfly
- Snail killing fly
- Southern Damselfly
- Spider (Tuberta maerens)
- Stone Curlew
- Striped Lychnis Moth
- Swifts and House martins
- Tawny Owl
- Turtle Dove
- Water Vole
- White Admiral
- White Clawed Crayfish
- White Letter Hairstreak
- Willow Tit
- Wood White butterfly

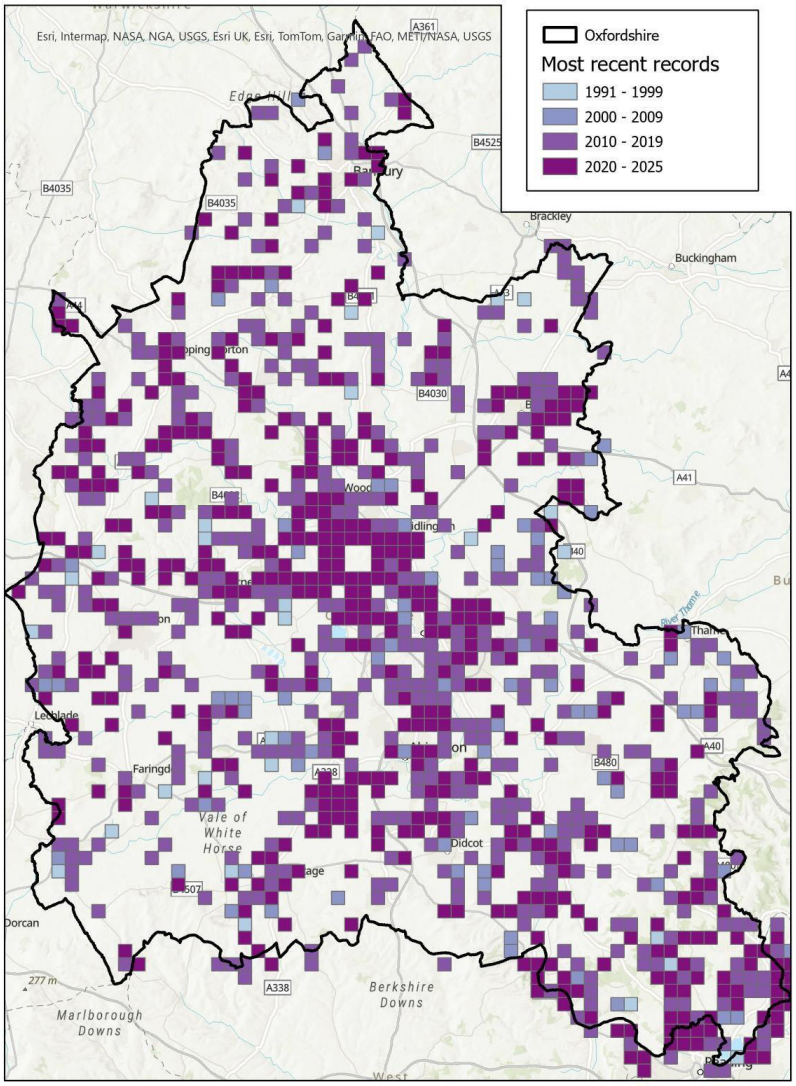
APPENDIX B

The full set of distribution maps for each and all the species on this Species Priority List. On the following pages you can see the maps that are linked to from the list of species above. The maps indicate where each species or group of species has previously been recorded in the county. It does not mean that actions to support species has to be taken only in those locations. Instead the purpose of these maps is to enable people to get a sense of whether the action is likely to be relevant in their area of the county. If these species are found in other areas of the county in future, the LNRS supports you to take the relevant species-specific actions in those locations too.

Adder records 1990-2025

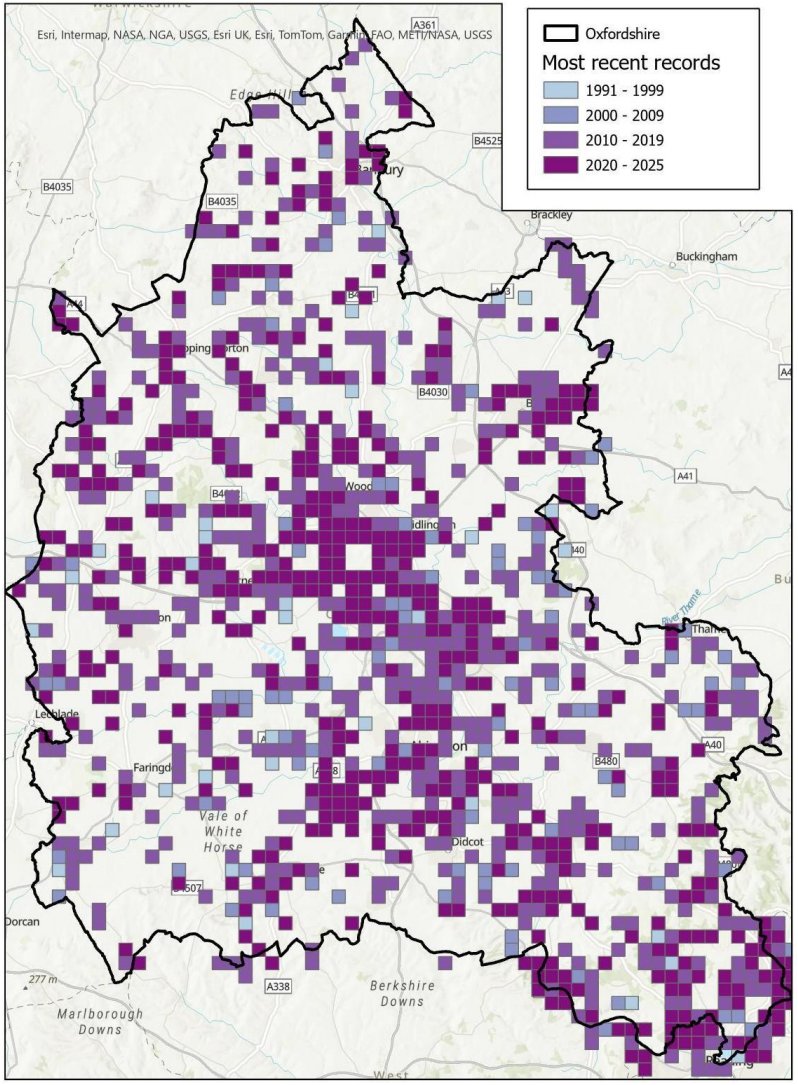


Bat (woodland specialists) records 1990-2025

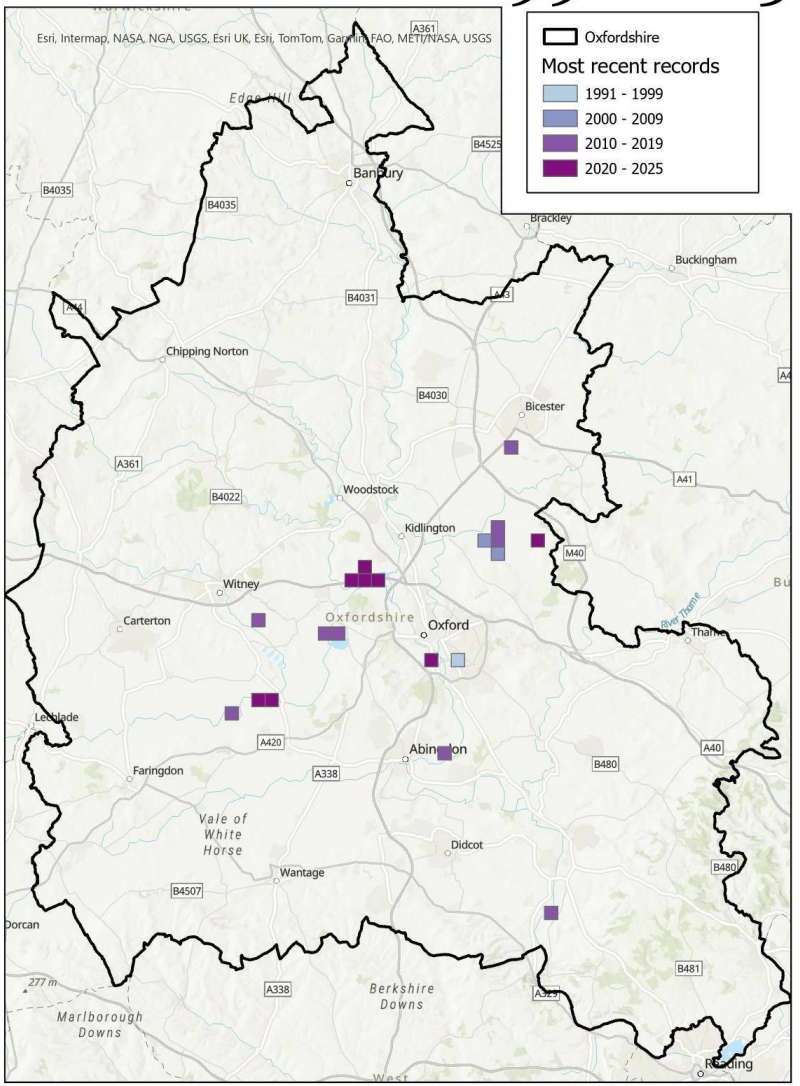


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Bats (general) records 1990-2025

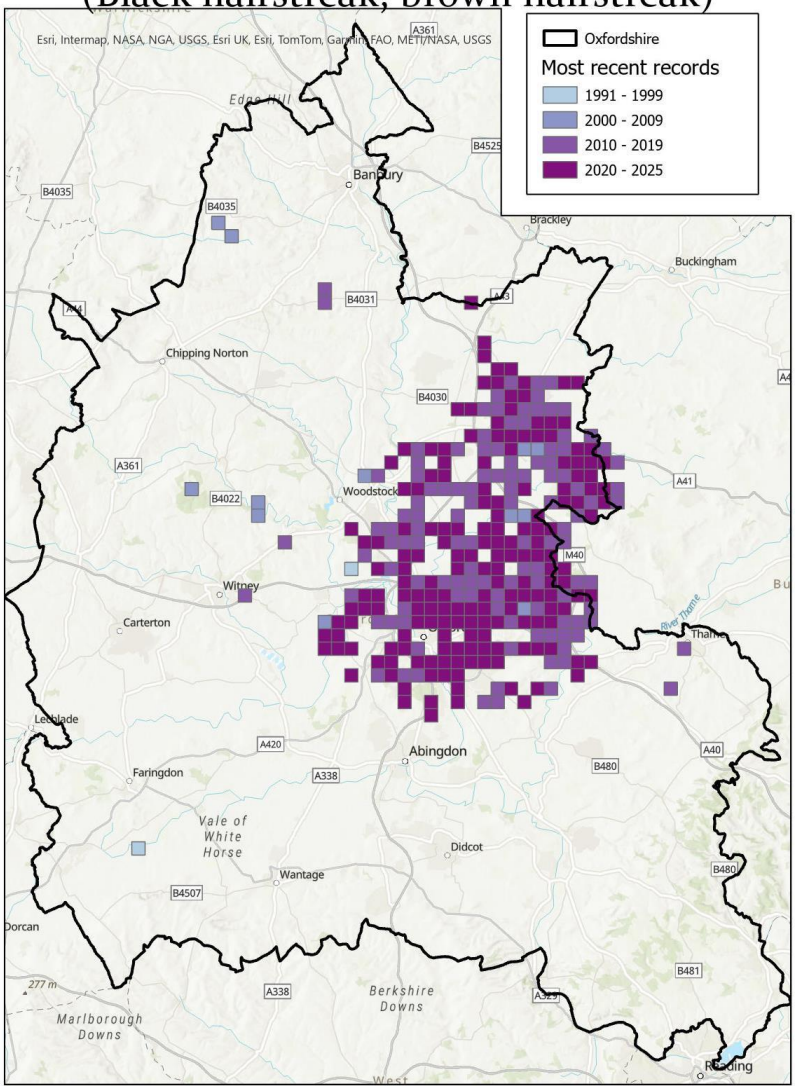


Bittern records 1990-2025

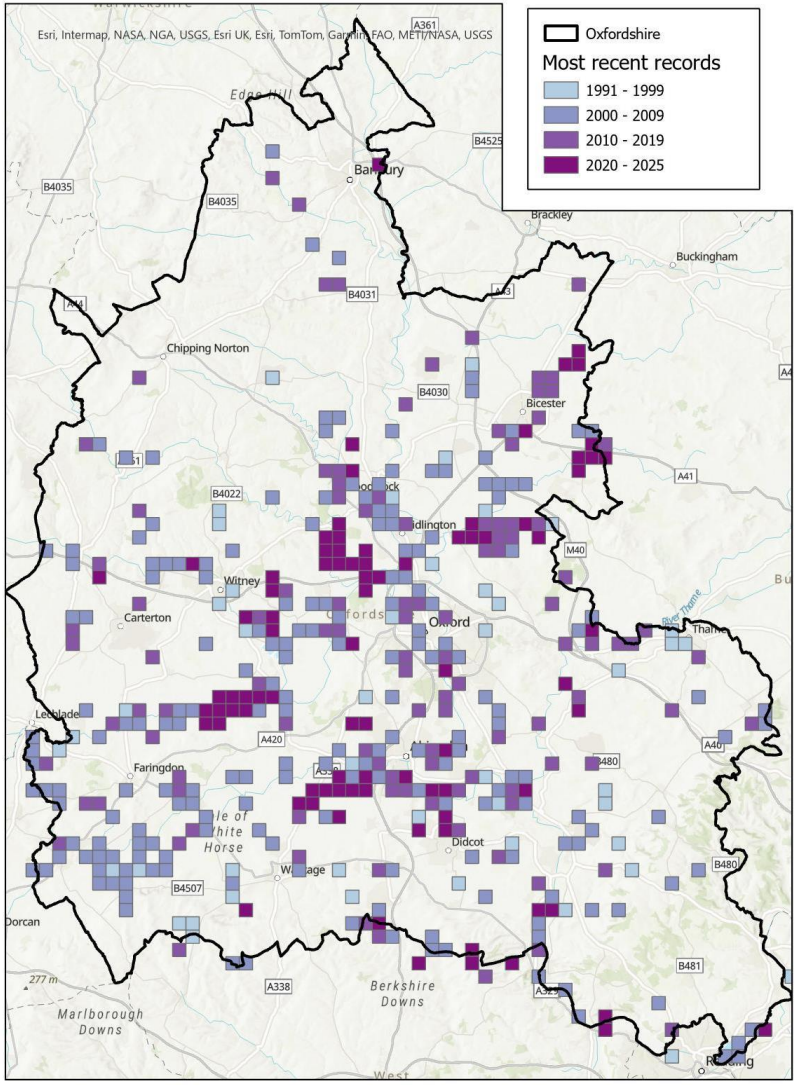


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Blackthorn butterflies records 1990-2025
(Black hairstreak, brown hairstreak)

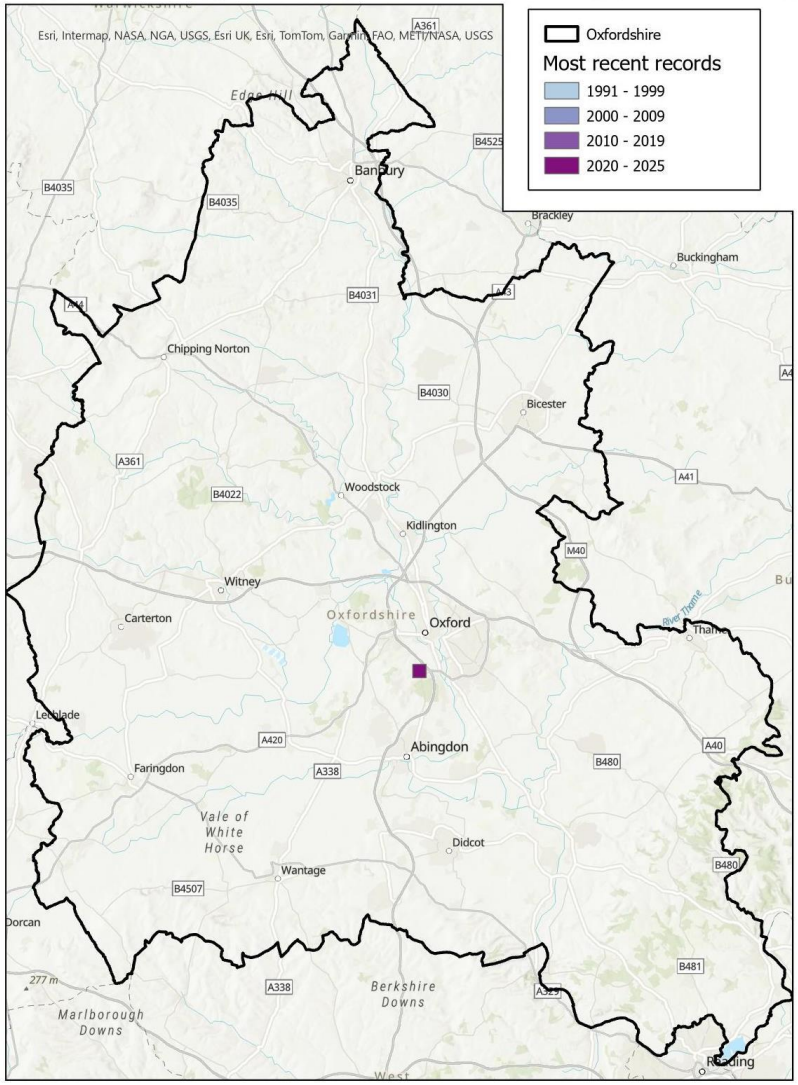


Breeding Waders records 1990-2025
(Lapwing, crane, snipe, redshank)

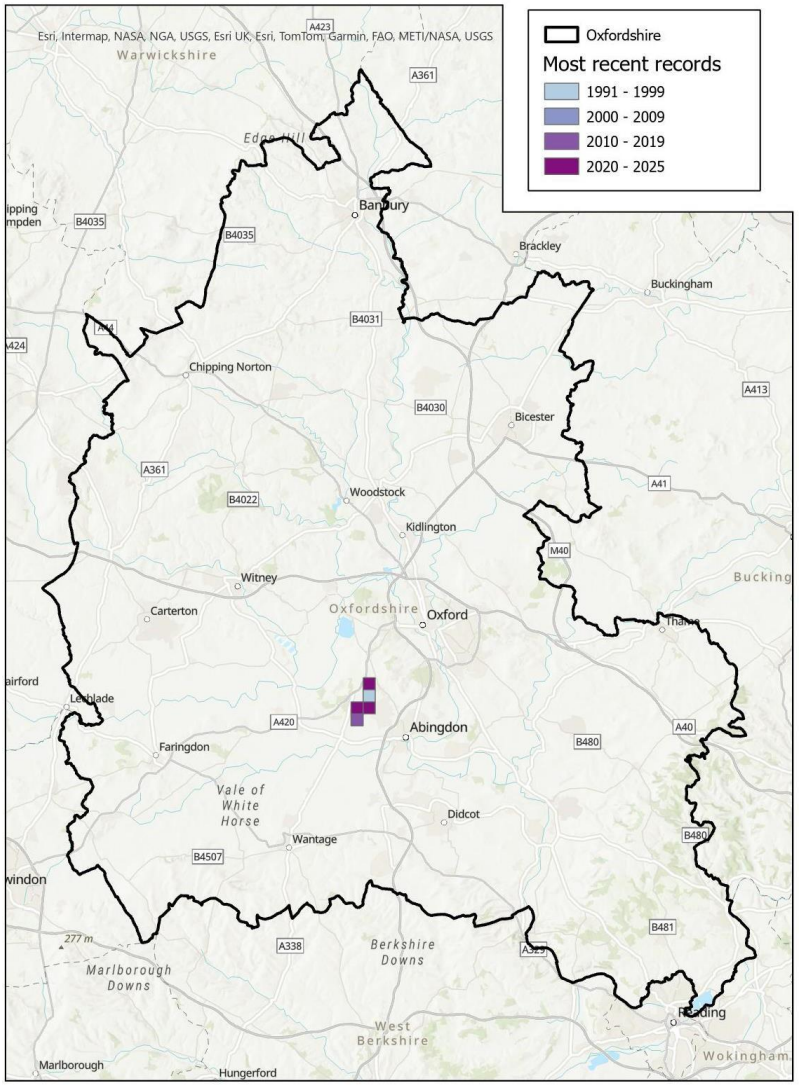


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Cigarillo gall-fly records 1990-2025

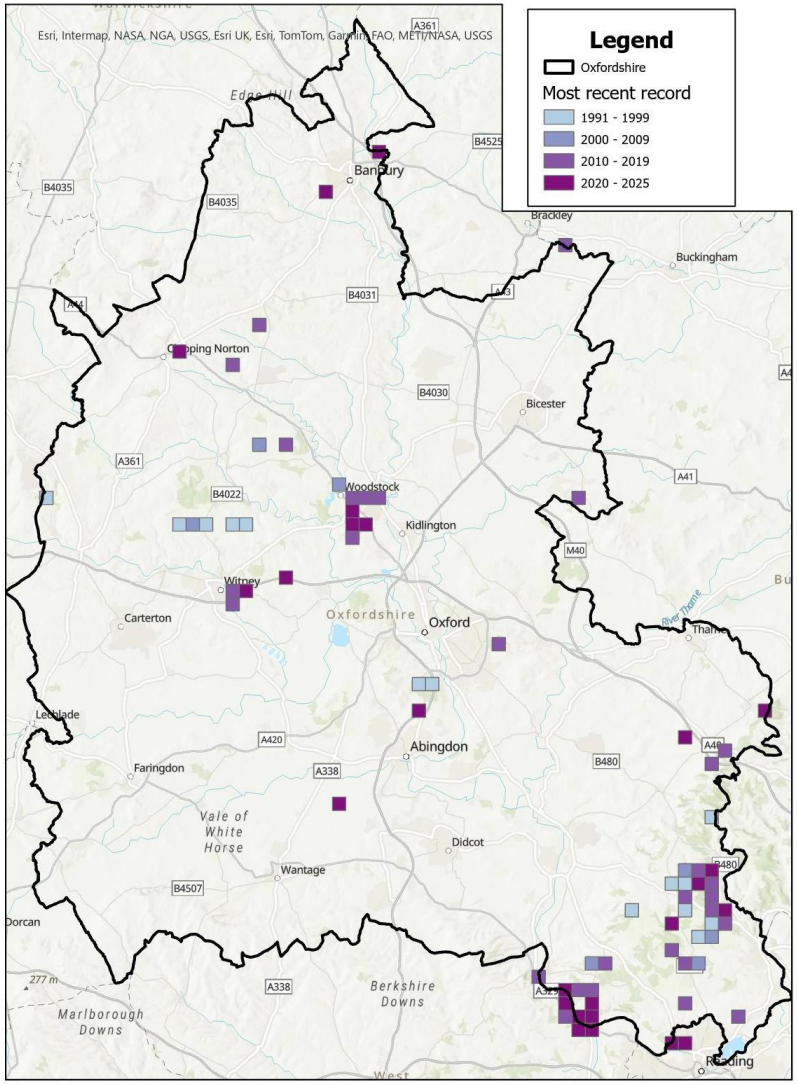


Clubbed general soldierfly records 1990-2025

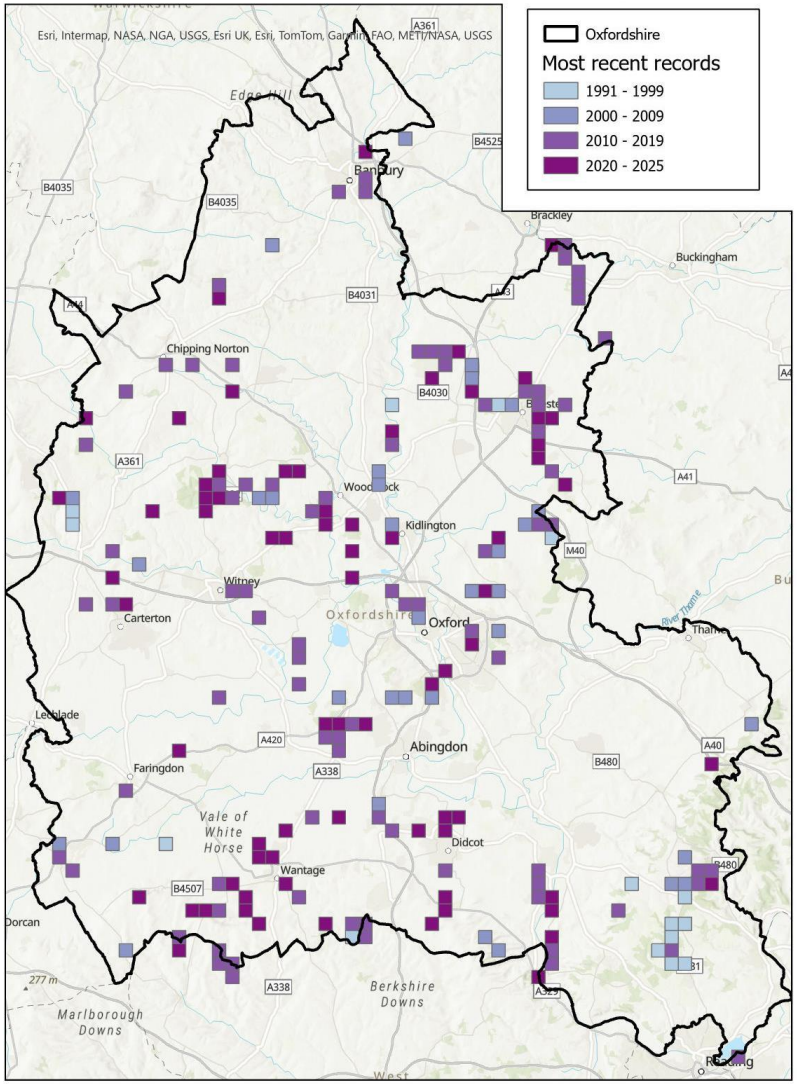


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre] to inform future work

Common dormouse records 1990-2025

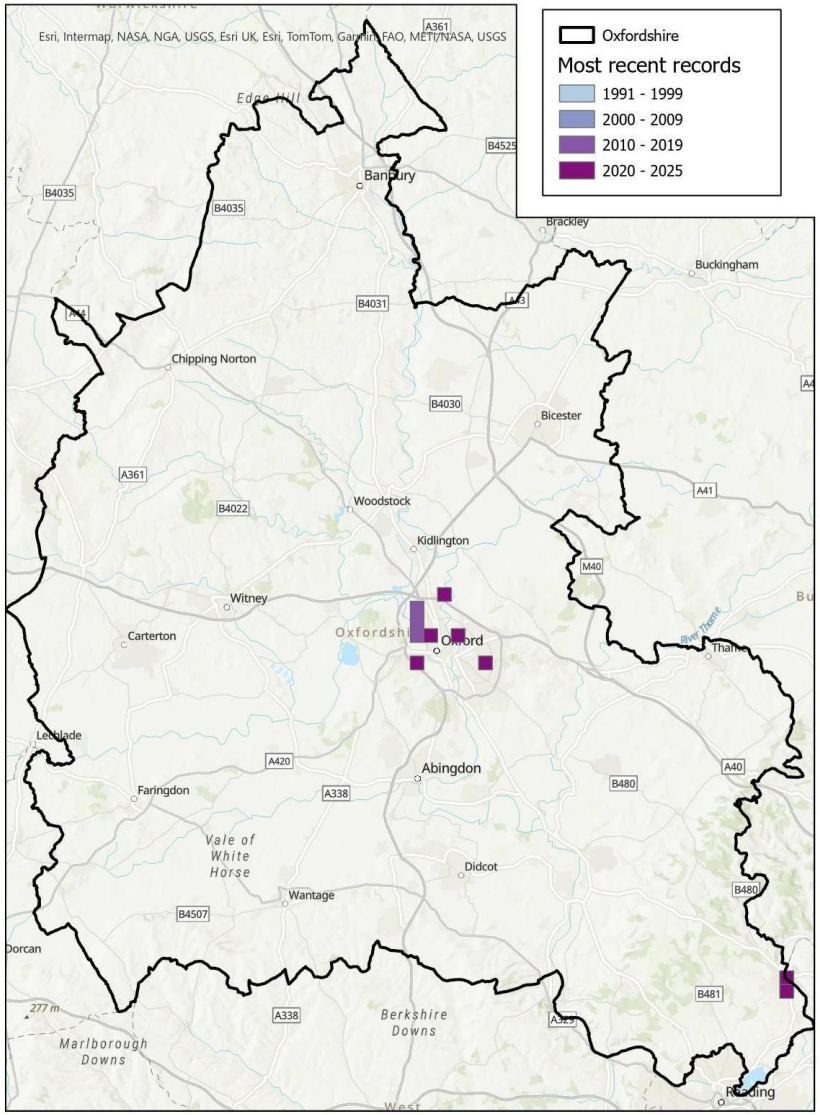


Common lizard records 1990-2025

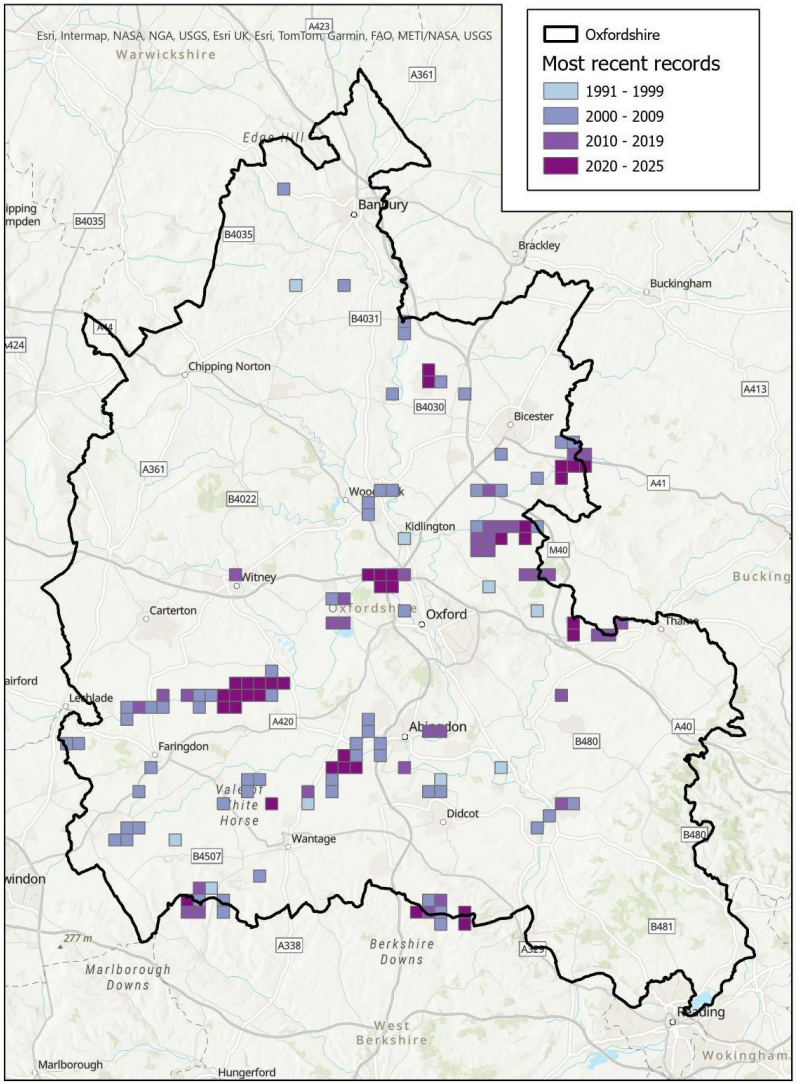


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre] to inform future work

Creeping Marshwort records 1990-2025

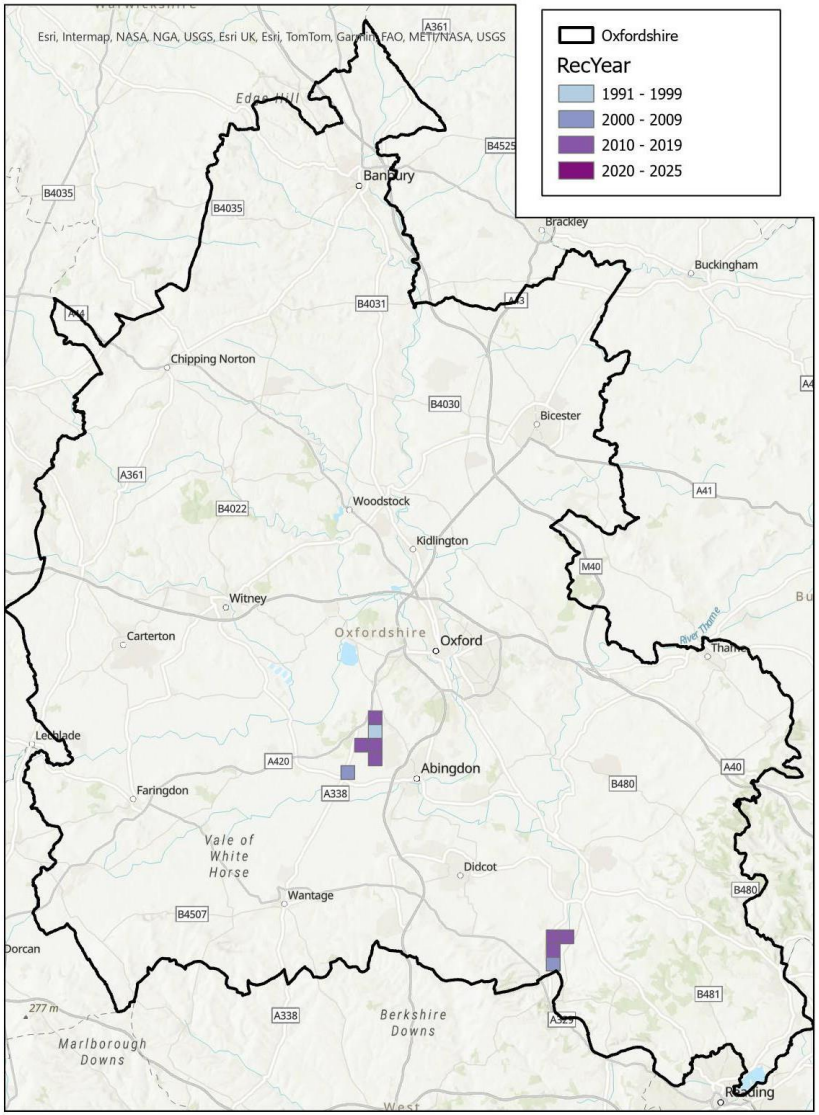


Curlew records 1990-2025

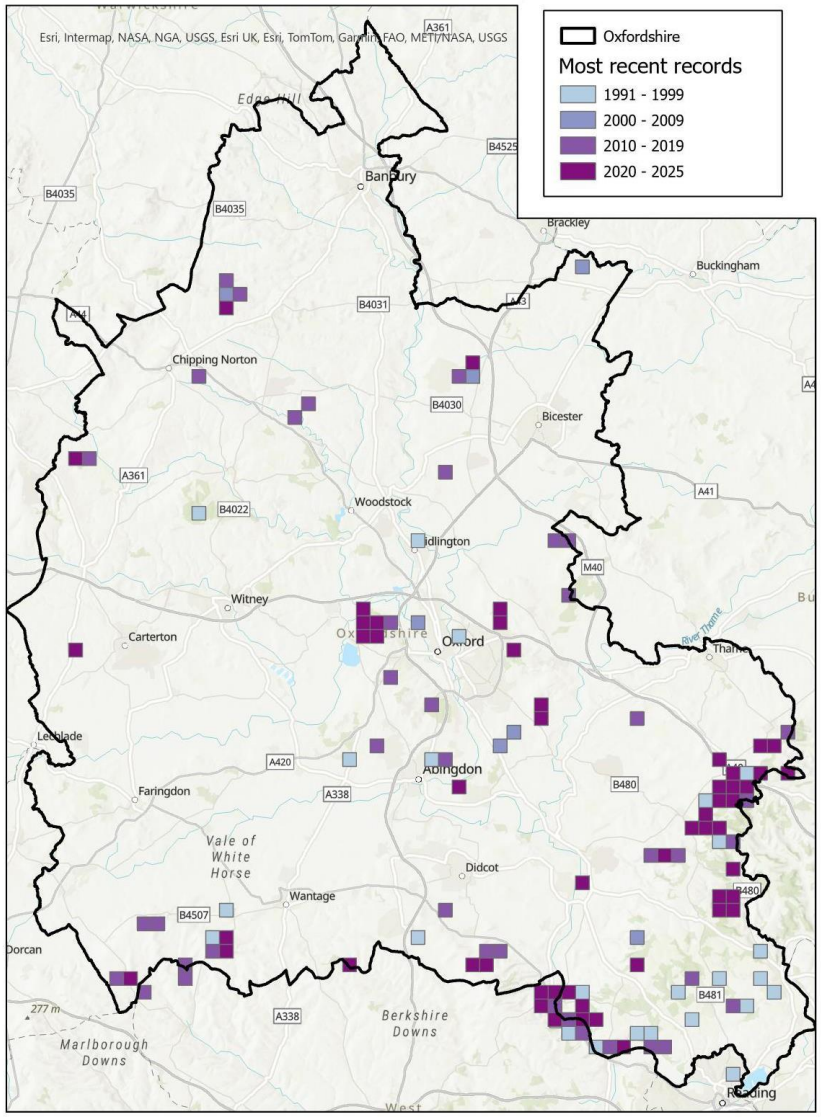


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Desmoulin's Whorl Snail records 1990-2025

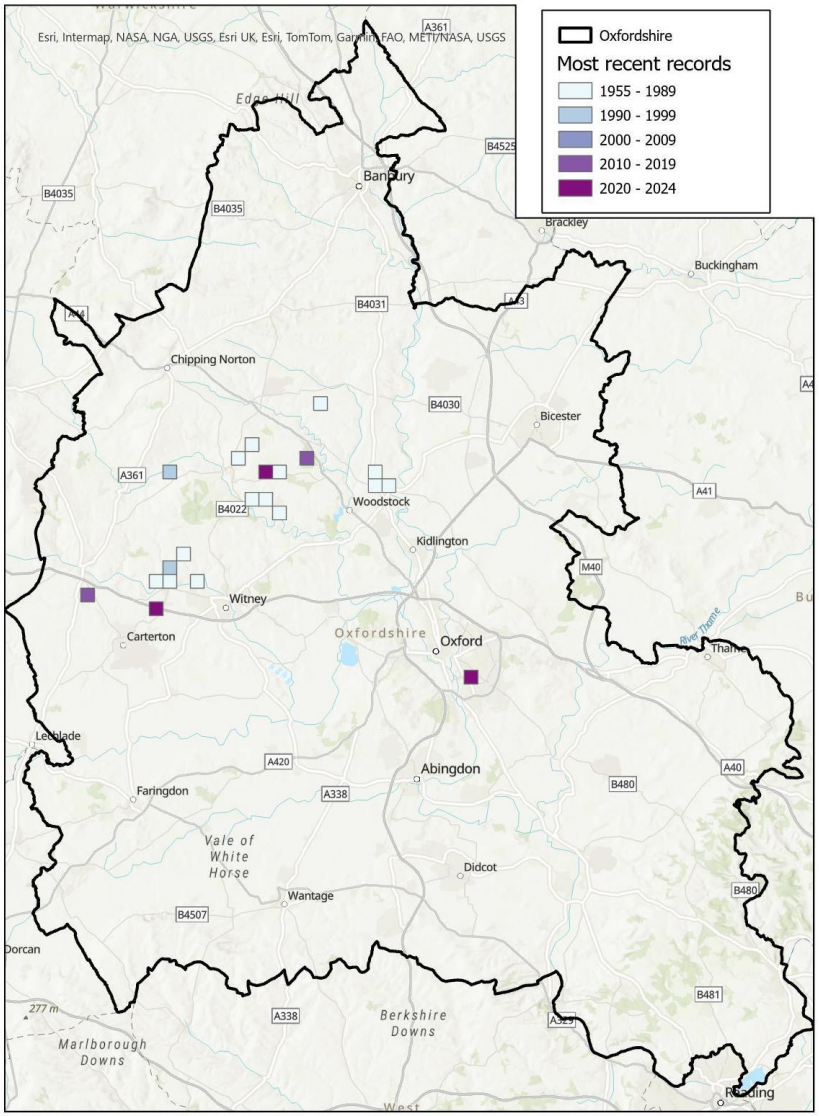


Dark Green Fritillary records 1990-2025

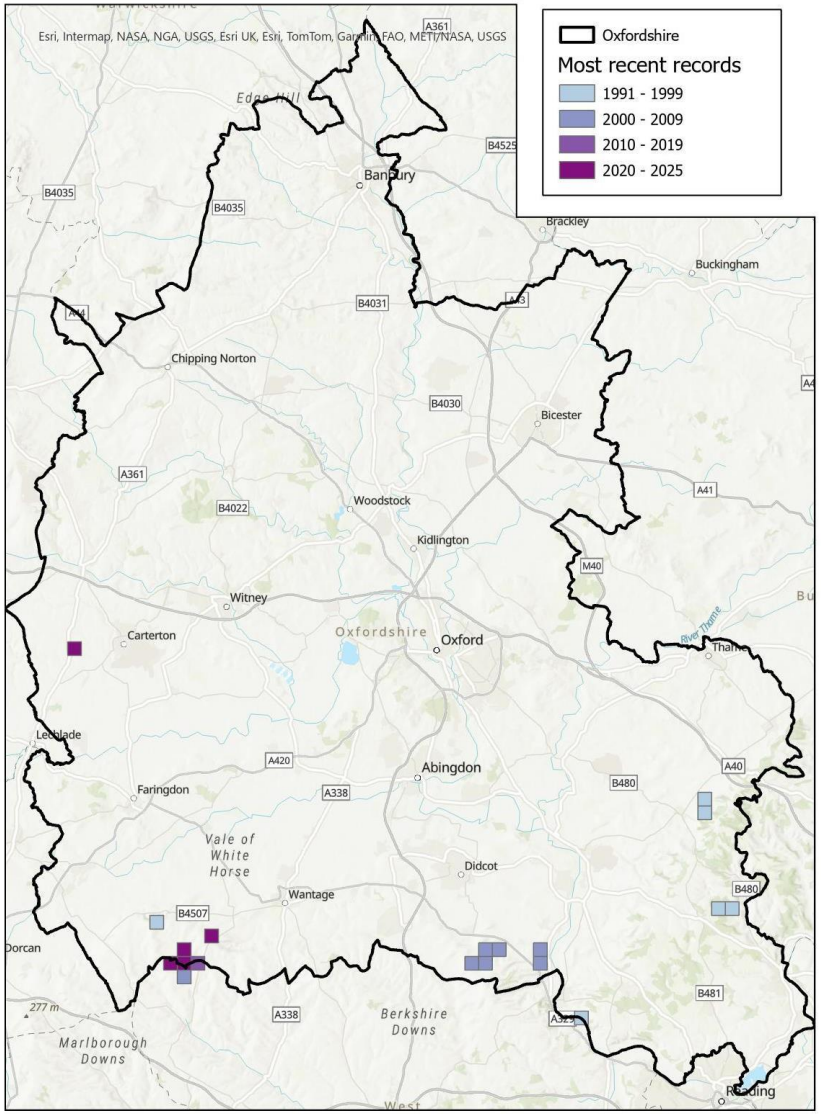


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Downy Woundwort records 1950-2025



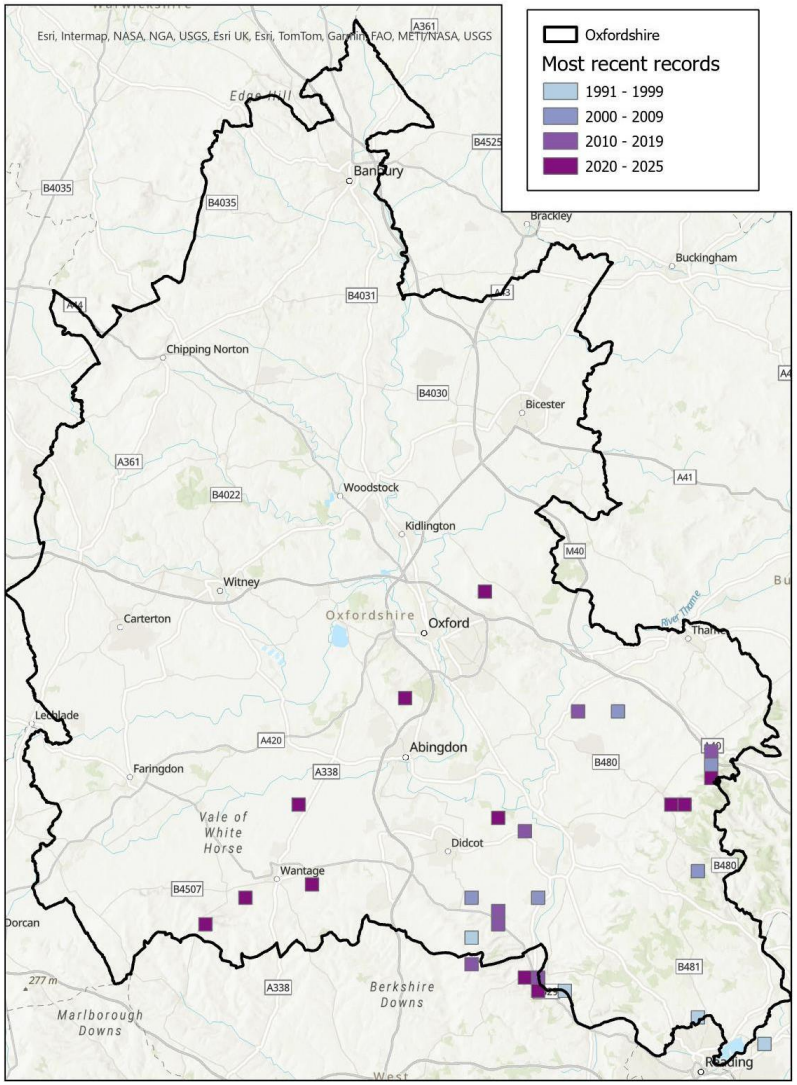
Duke of Burgundy records 1990-2025



Please report sightings of these species to Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre to inform future work

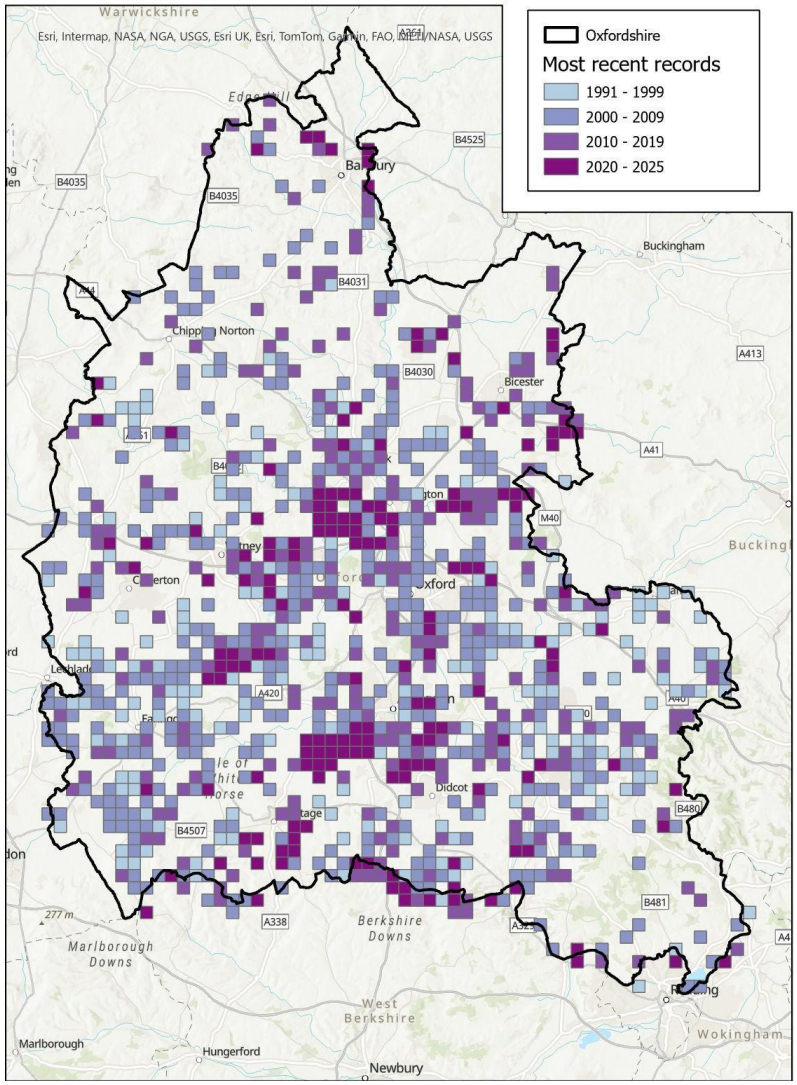
Dung specialists records 1990-2025

(Hornet robberfly, violet dor beetle)



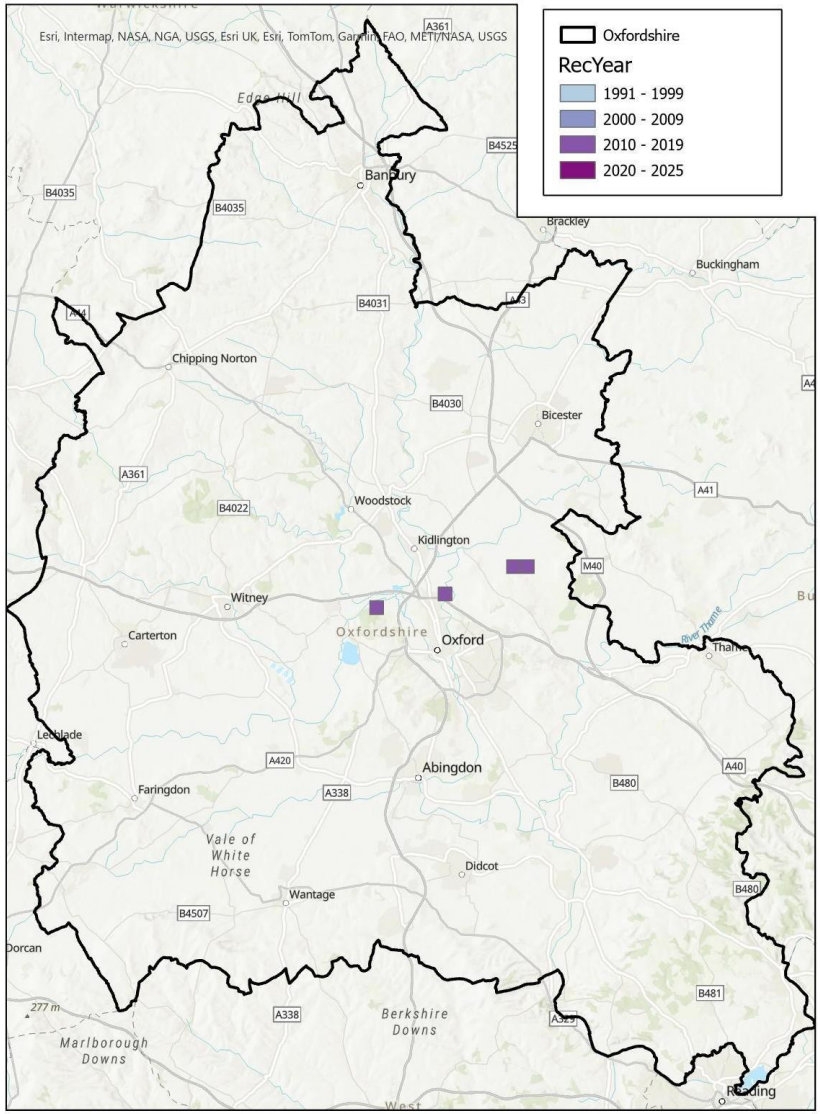
Farmland bird records 1990-2025

(Corn bunting, grey partridge, lapwing, linnet, tree sparrow, yellow wagtail, yellowhammer)

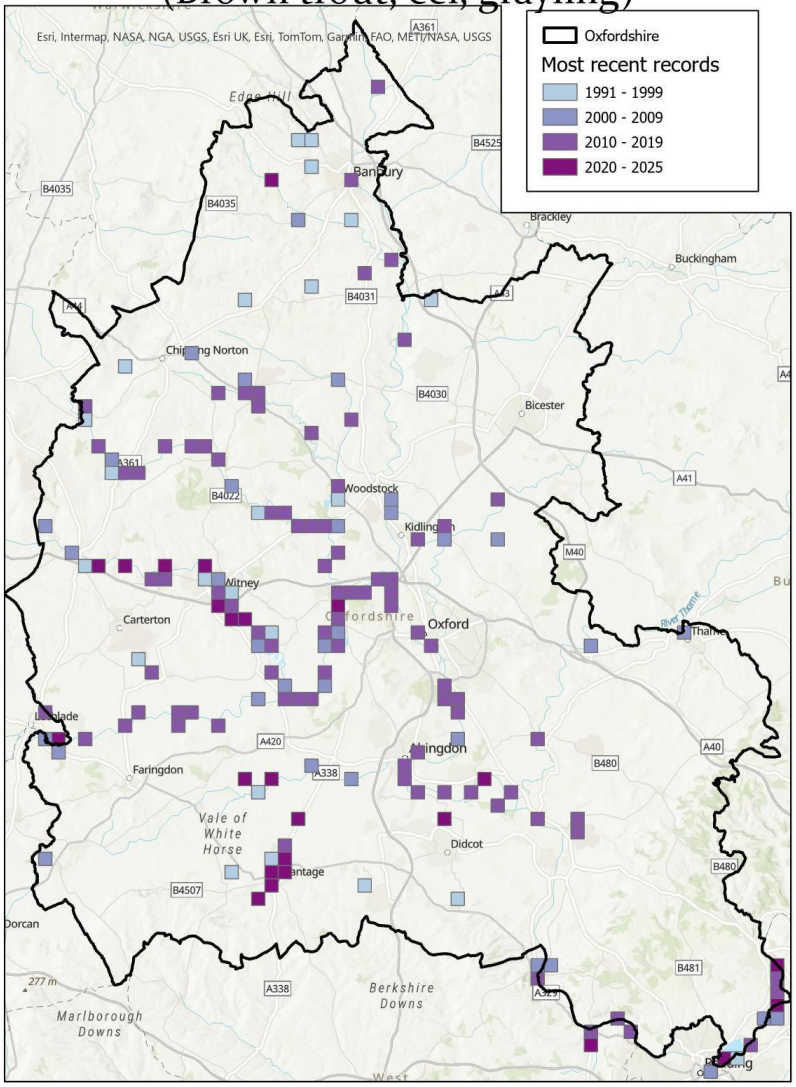


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Fen Violet records 1990-2025

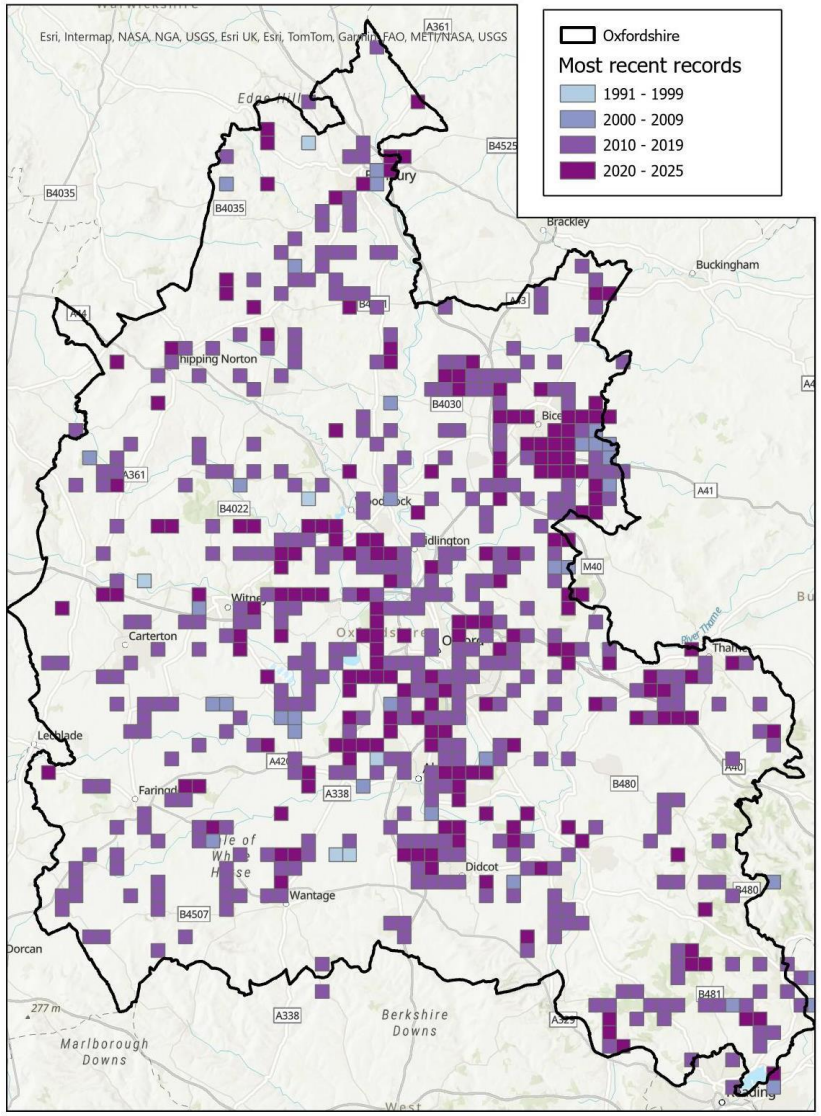


Fish records 1990-2025 (Brown trout, eel, grayling)

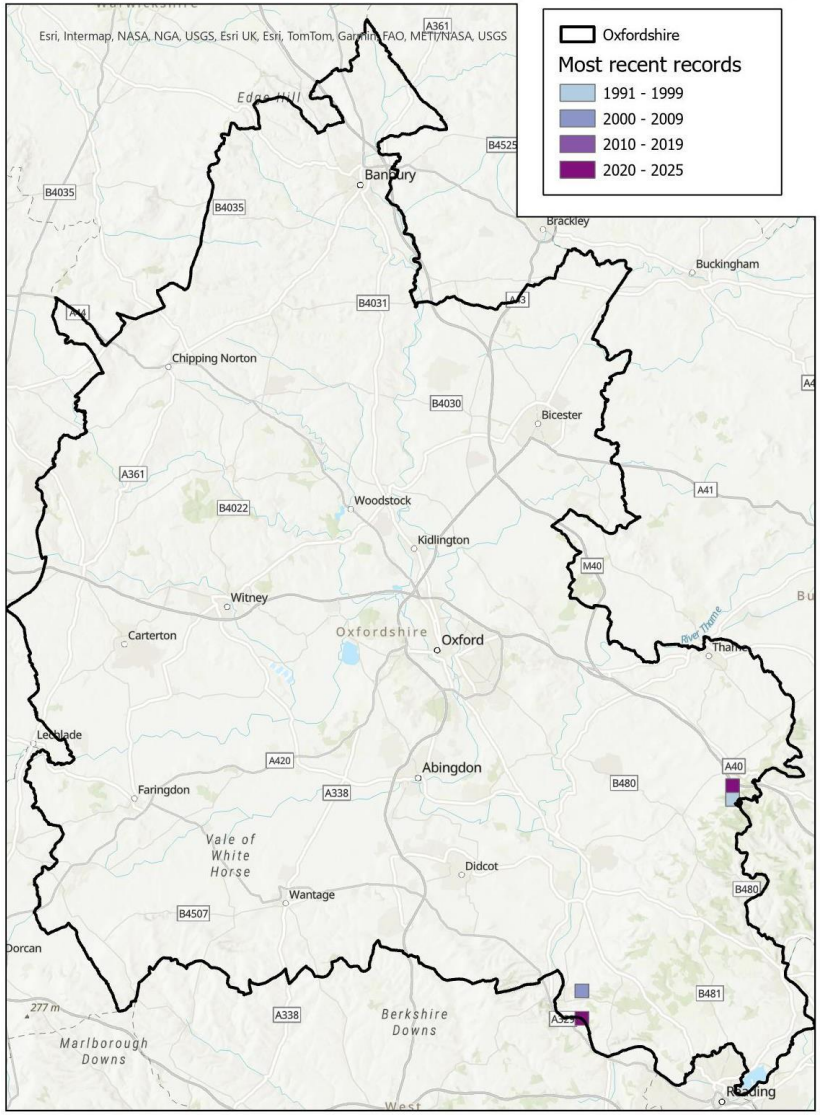


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre] to inform future work

Great crested newt records 1990-2025

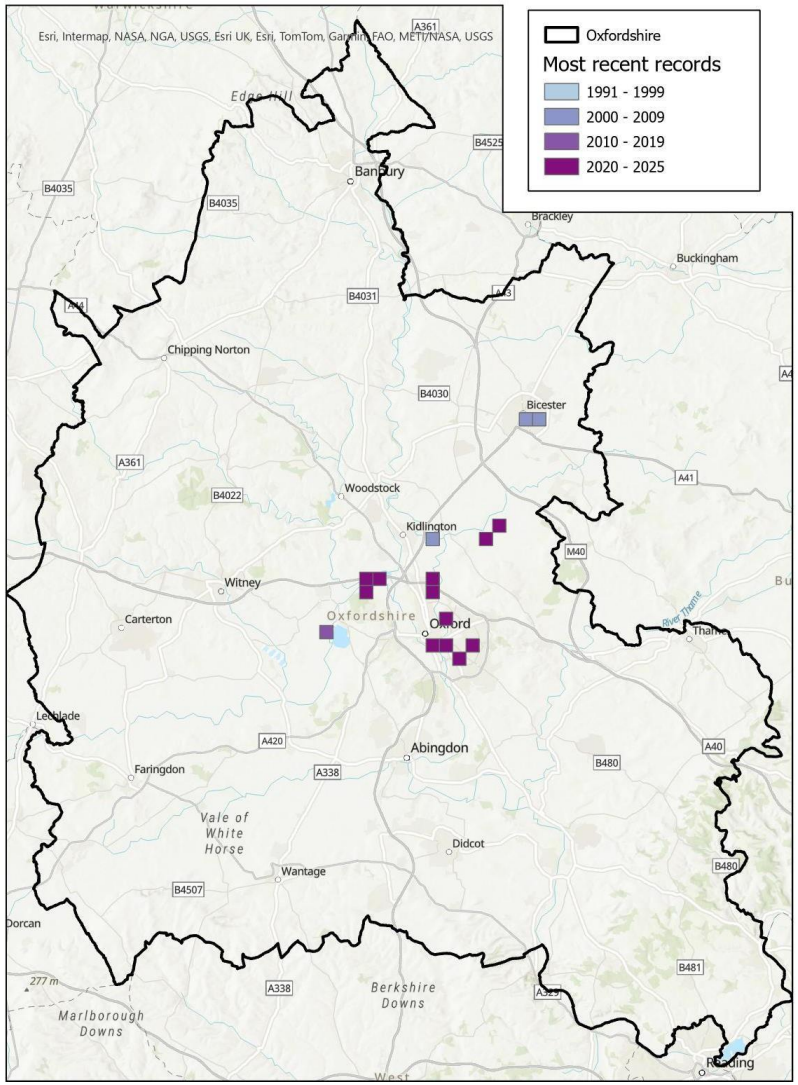


Gentian Beetle records 1990-2025

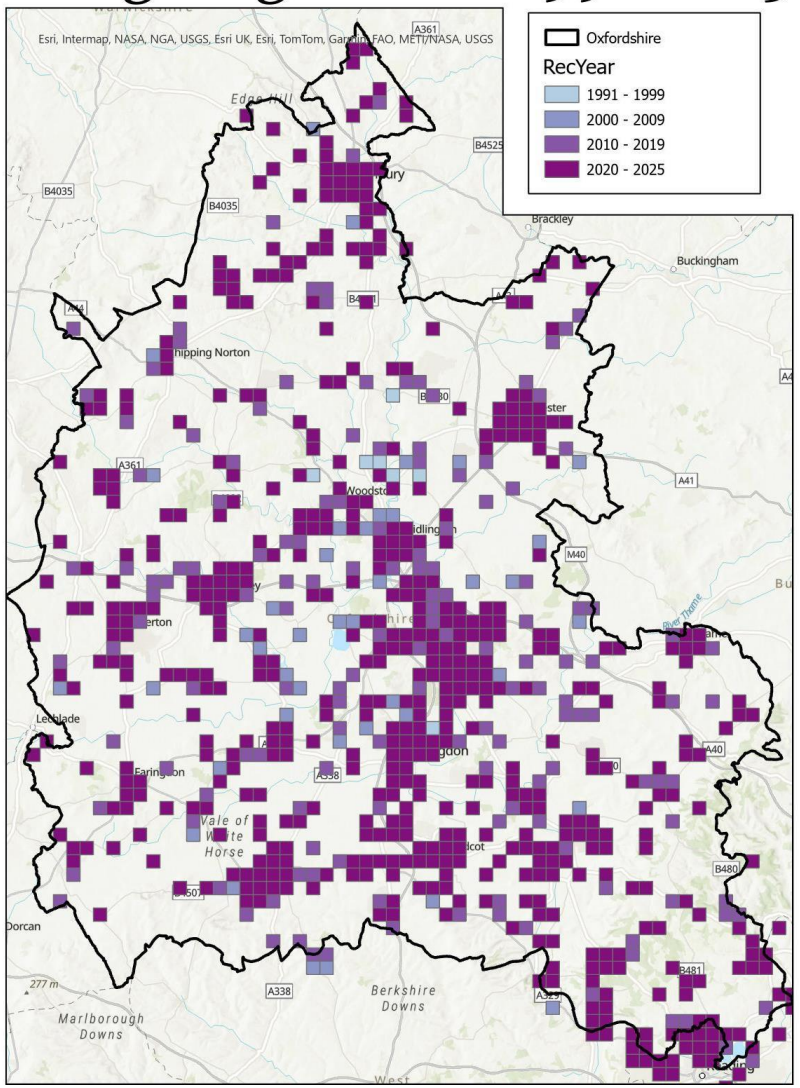


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Greater Water-Parsnip records 1990-2025

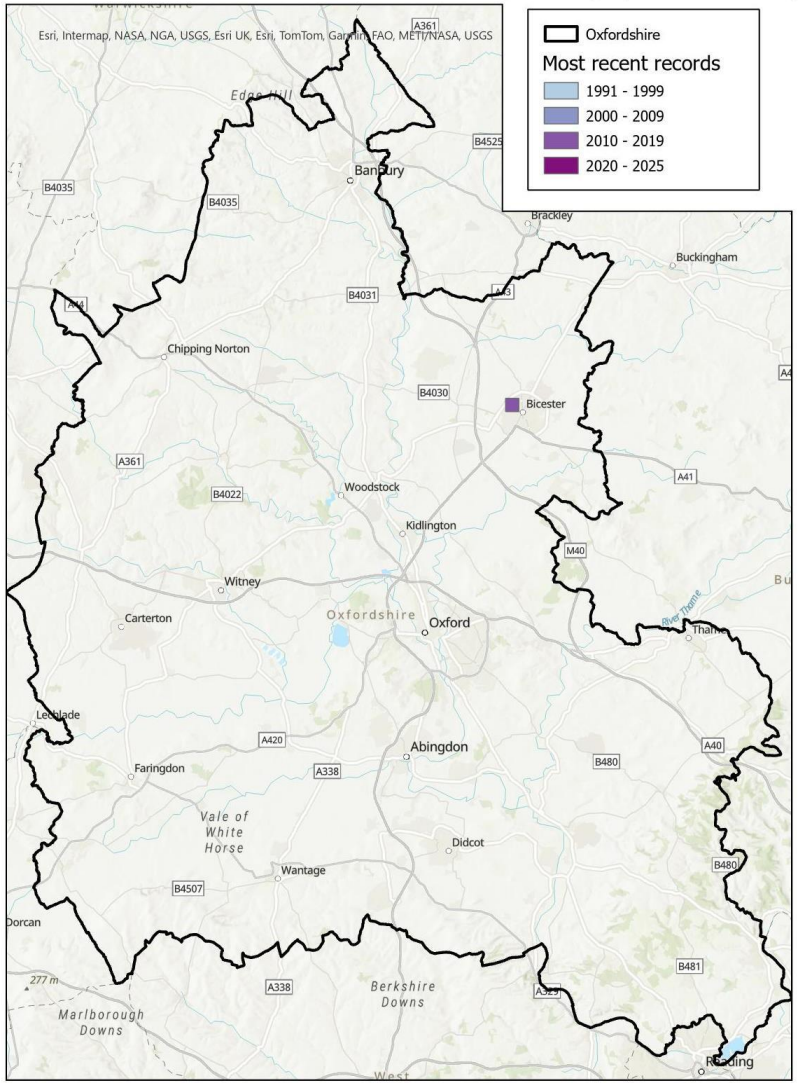


Hedgehog records 1990-2025

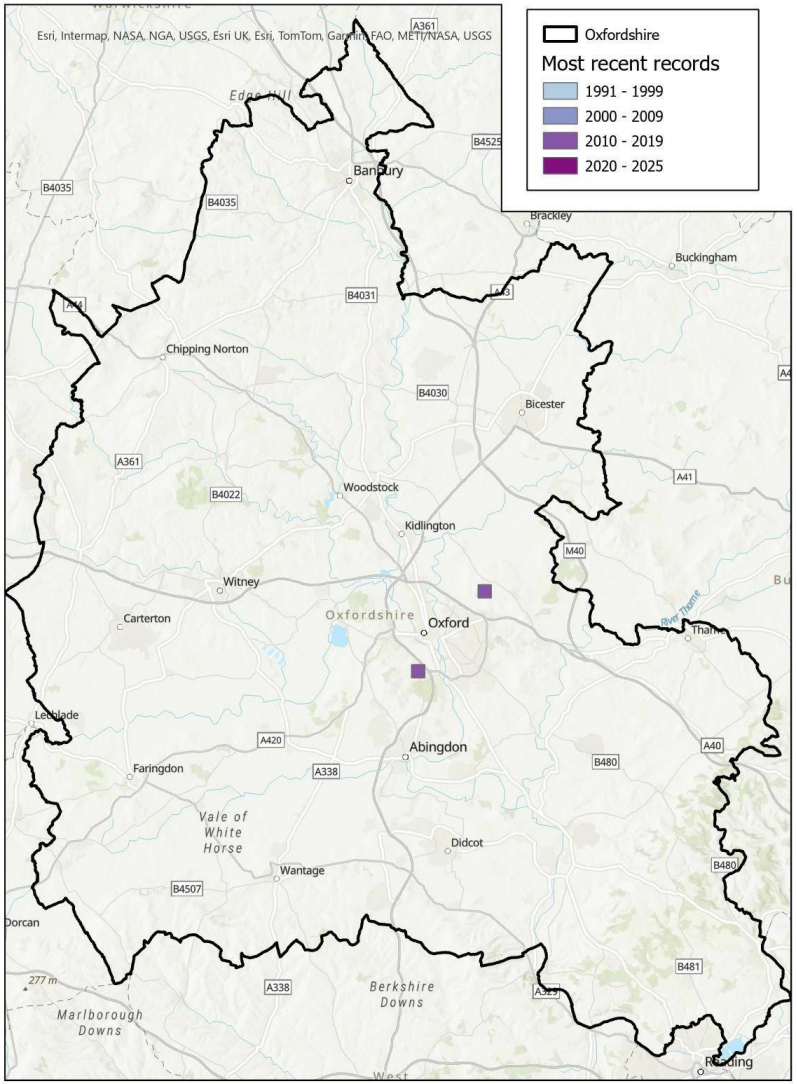


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre] to inform future work

Limestone fern records 1990-2025

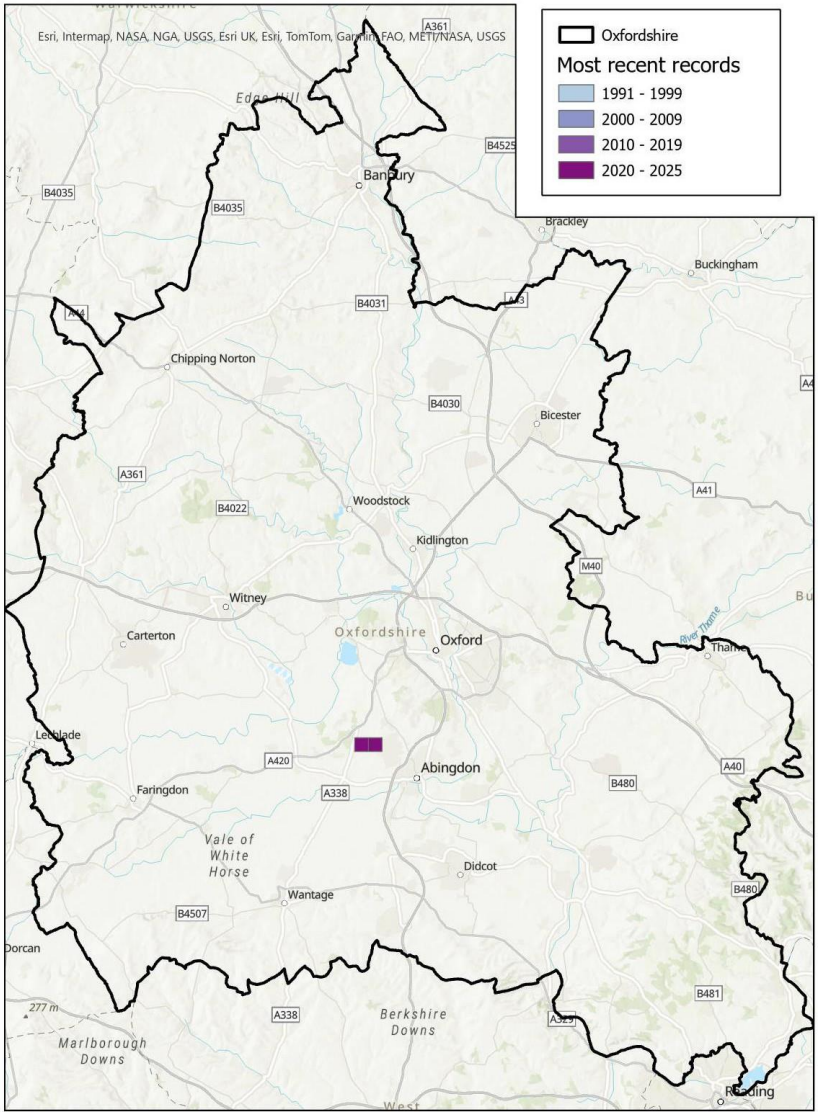


Liquorice piercer records 1990-2025

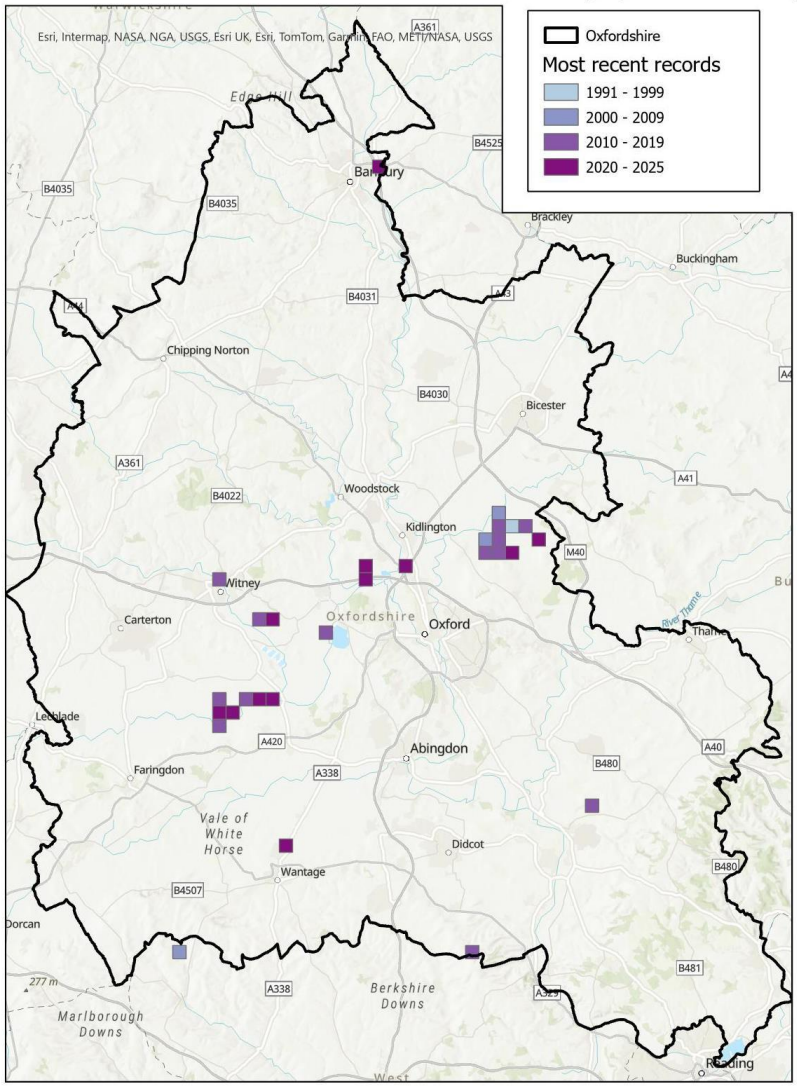


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre] to inform future work

Lousewort Flea Beetle records 1990-2025

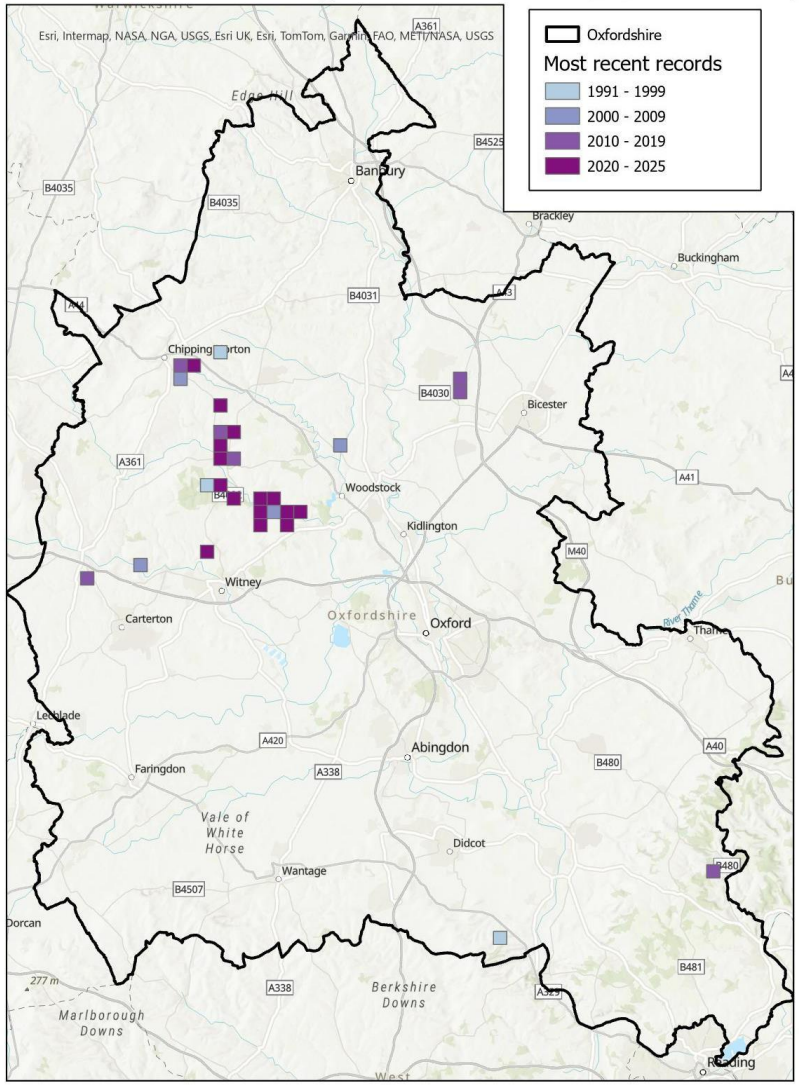


Marsh Harrier records 1990-2025

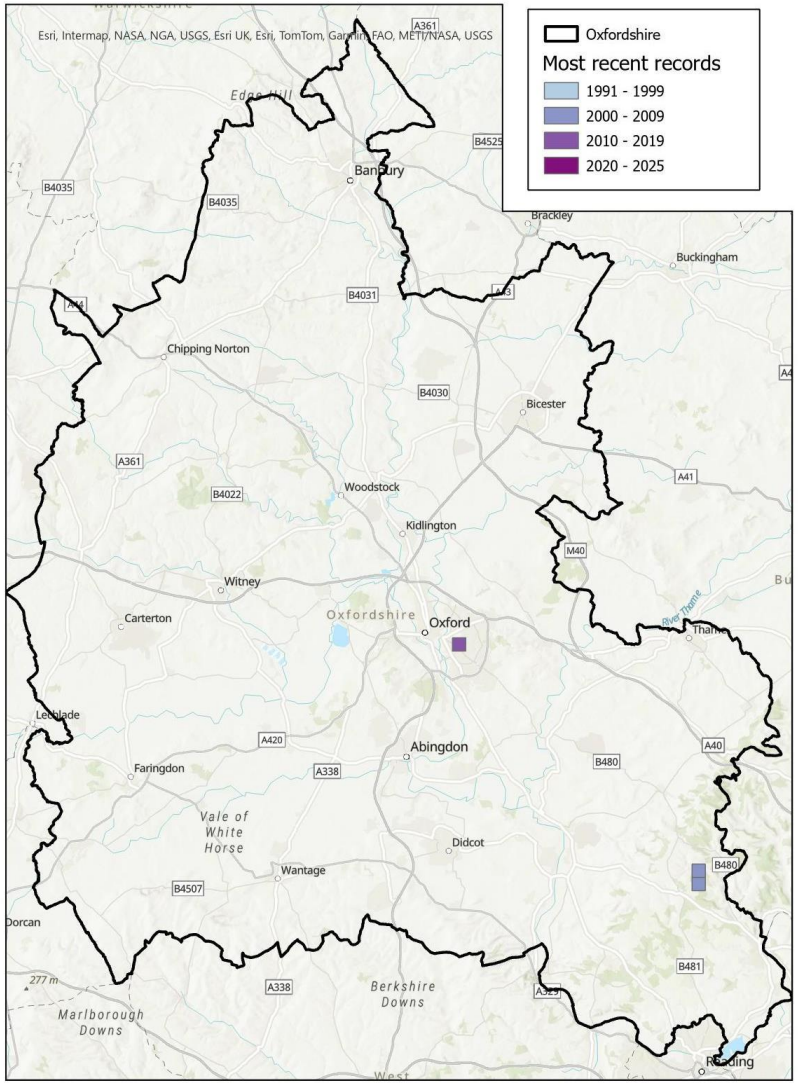


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Meadow Clary records 1990-2025

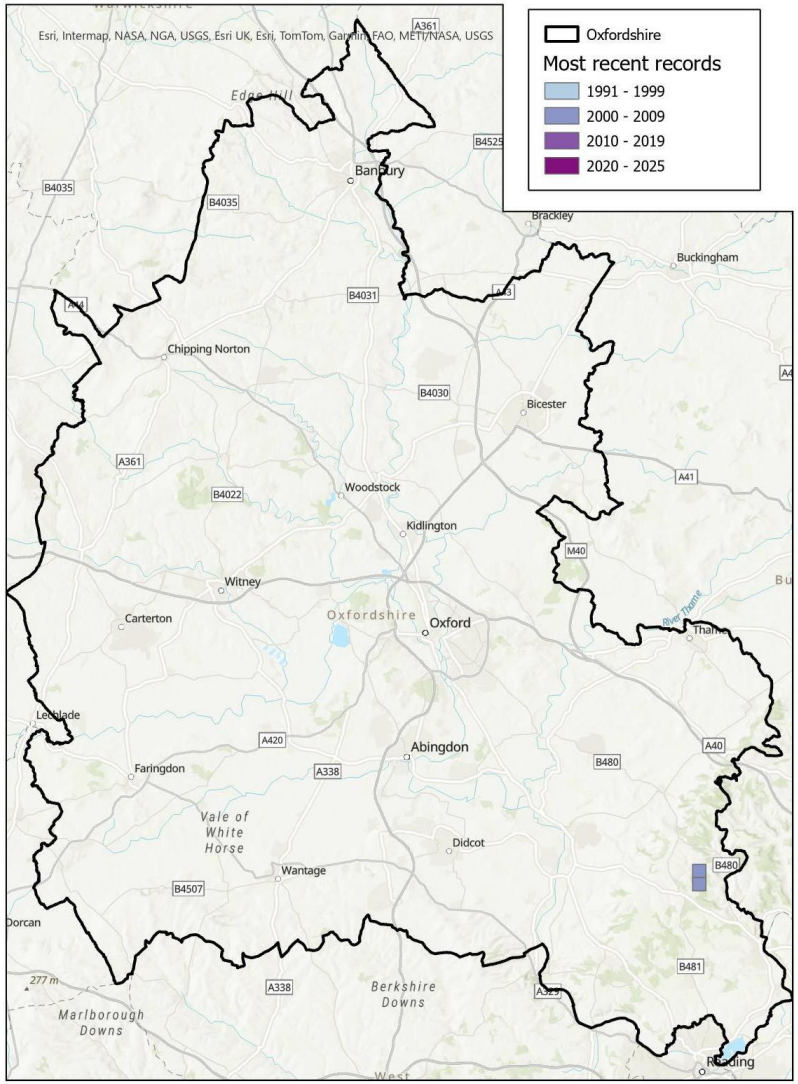


Microdon devius records 1990-2025

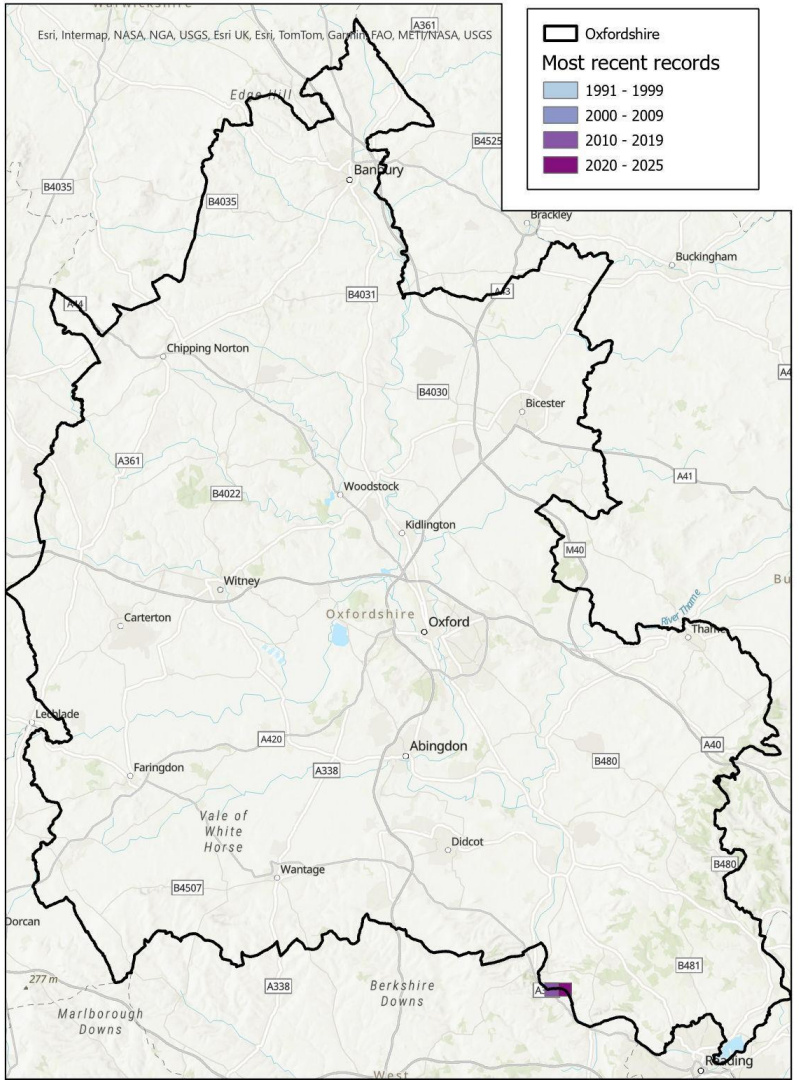


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Military Orchid records 1990-2025

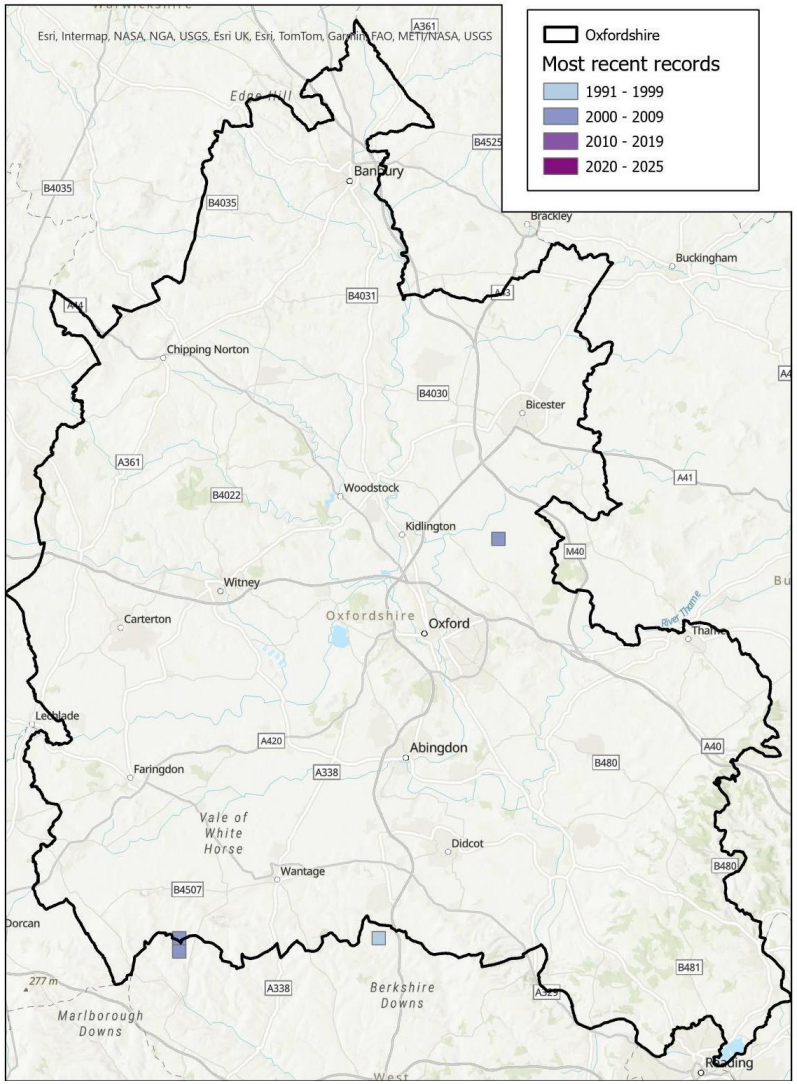


Monkey Orchid records 1990-2025

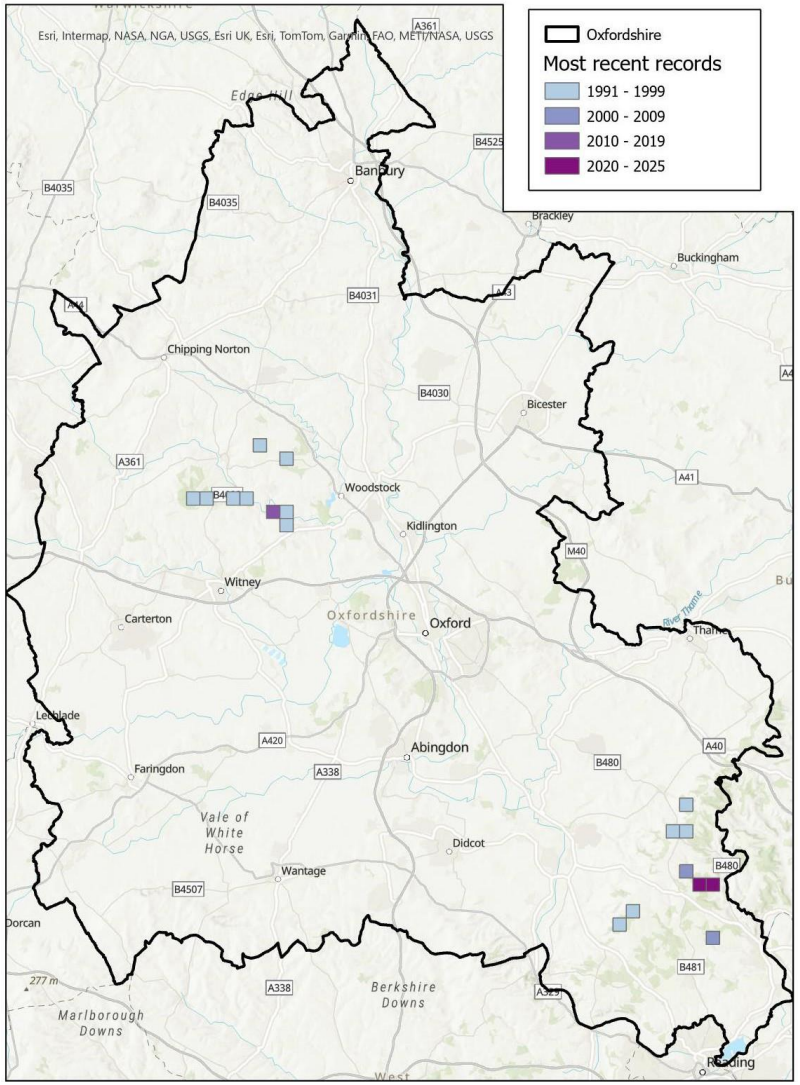


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Montagu's Harrier records 1990-2025

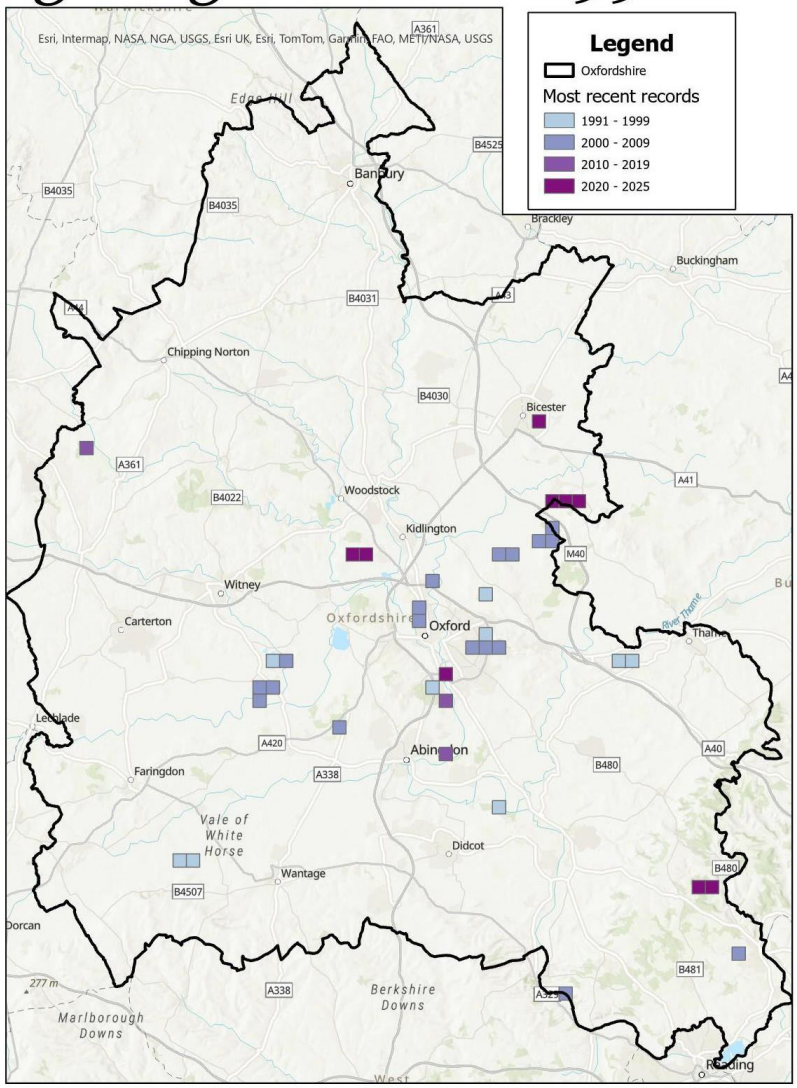


Mountain Bulin records 1990-2025

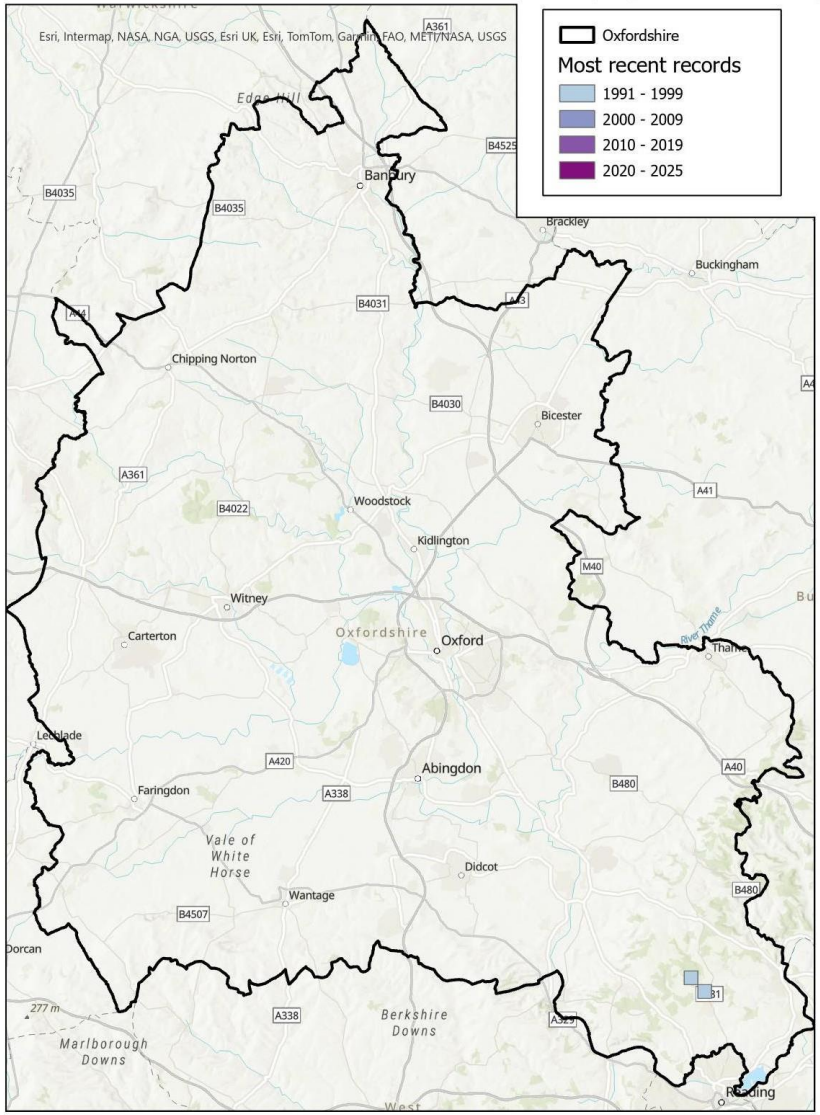


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre] to inform future work

Nightingale records 1990-2025

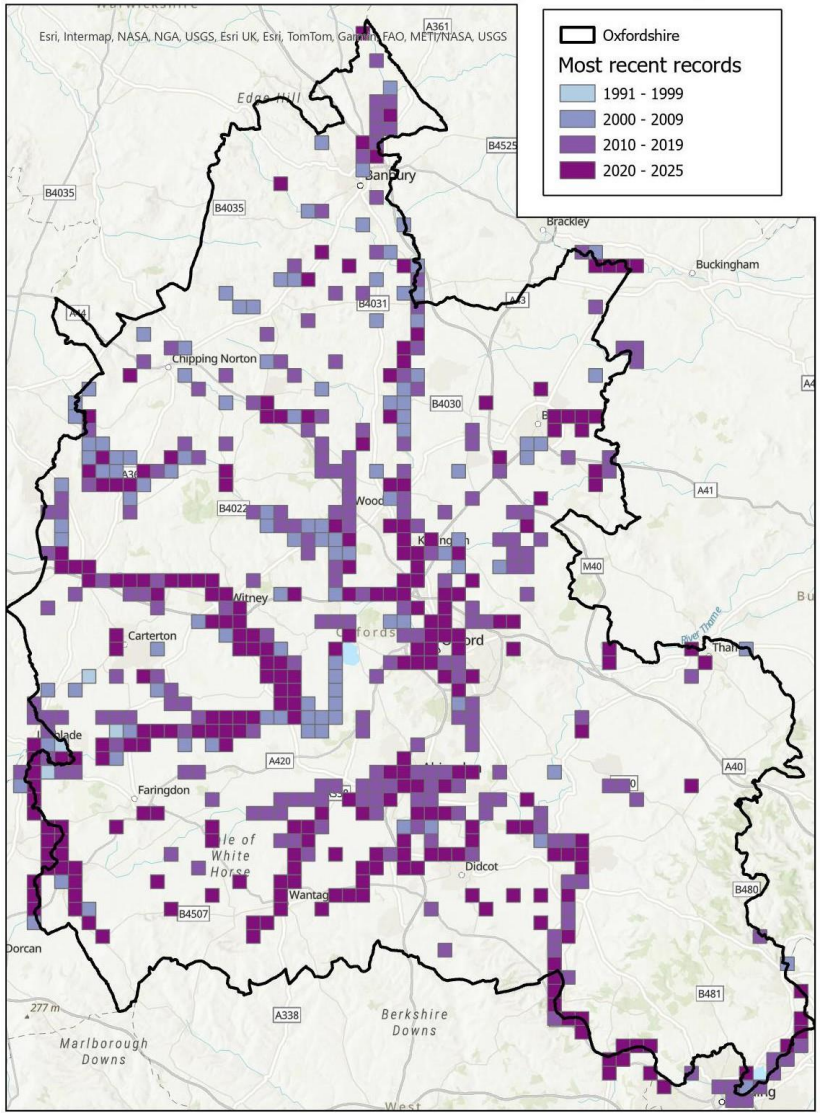


Noble chafer records 1990-2025

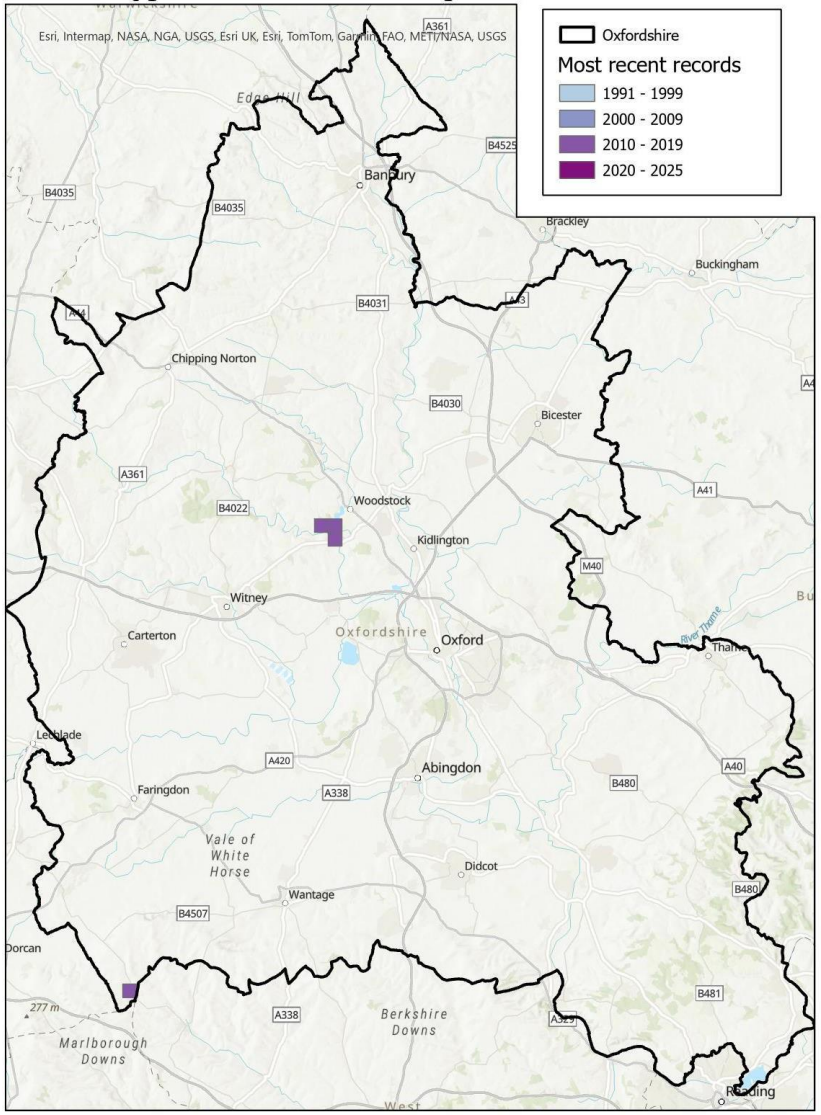


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Otter records 1990-2025

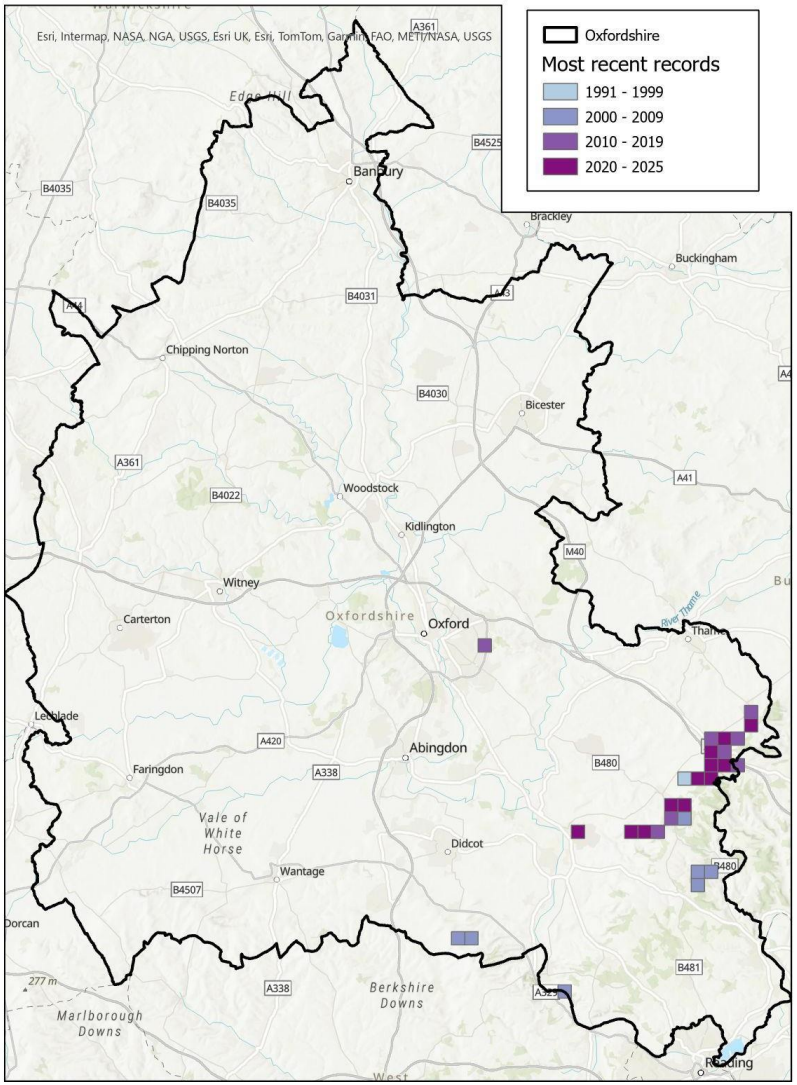


Parkland lichens records 1990-2025 (Bellicidia incompta, Buellia hyperbolica, Lecanora quercicola, L sublivescens)

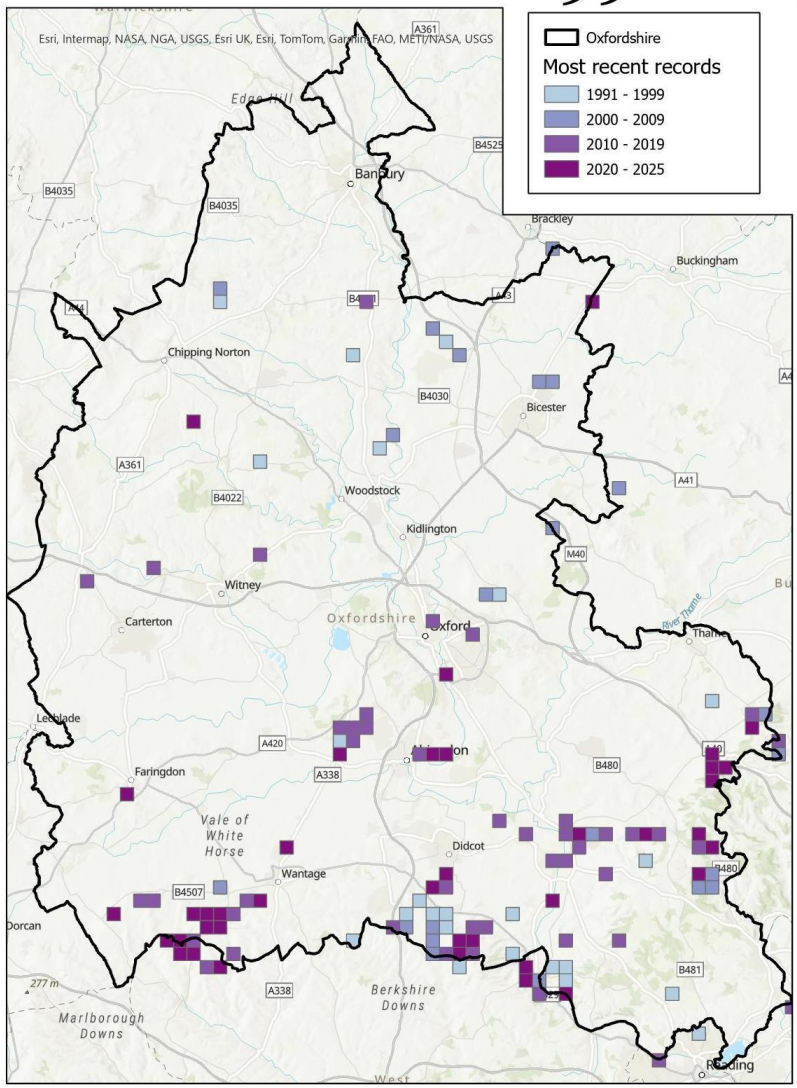


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Silver-spotted skipper records 1990-2025

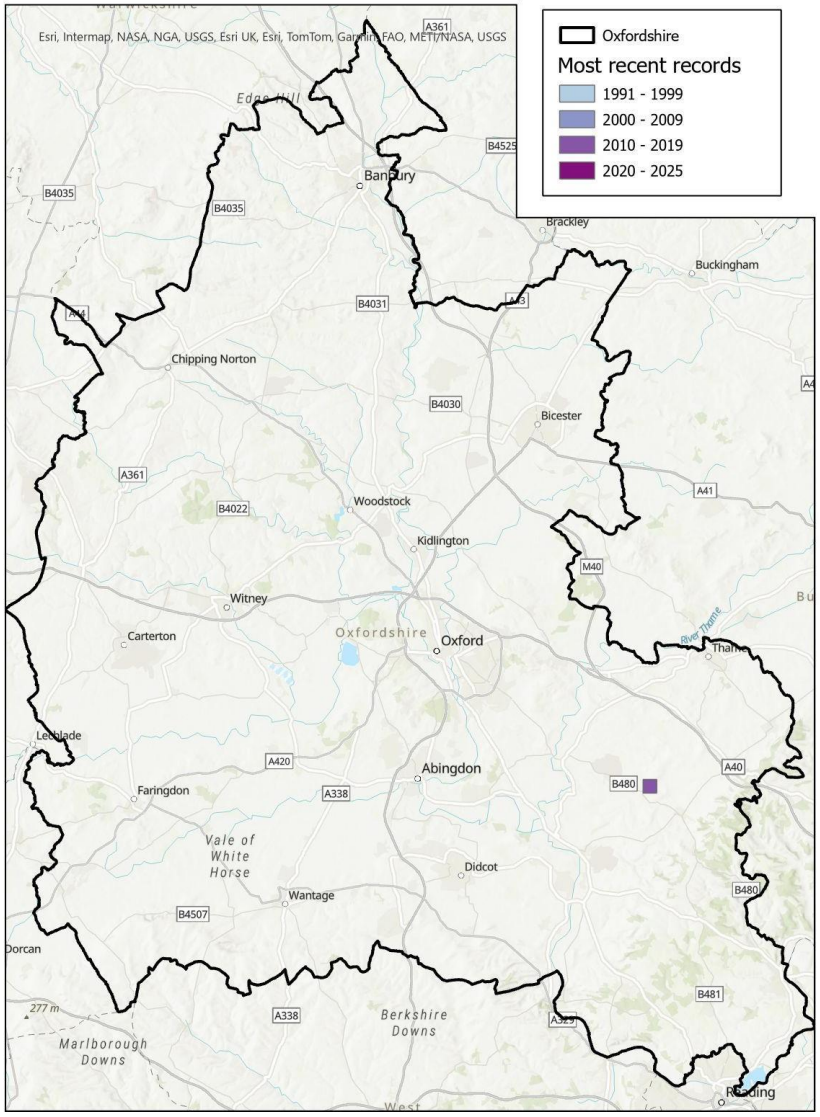


Small blue records 1990-2025

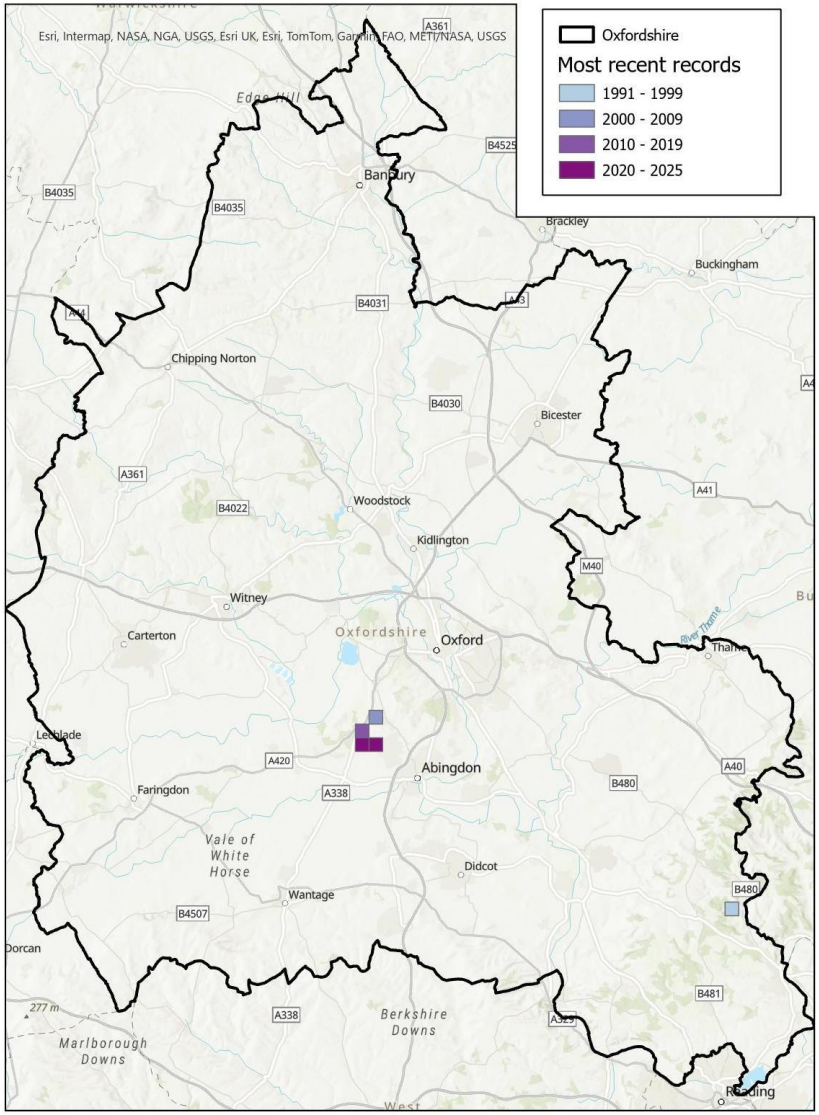


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Snail-killing fly records 1990-2025

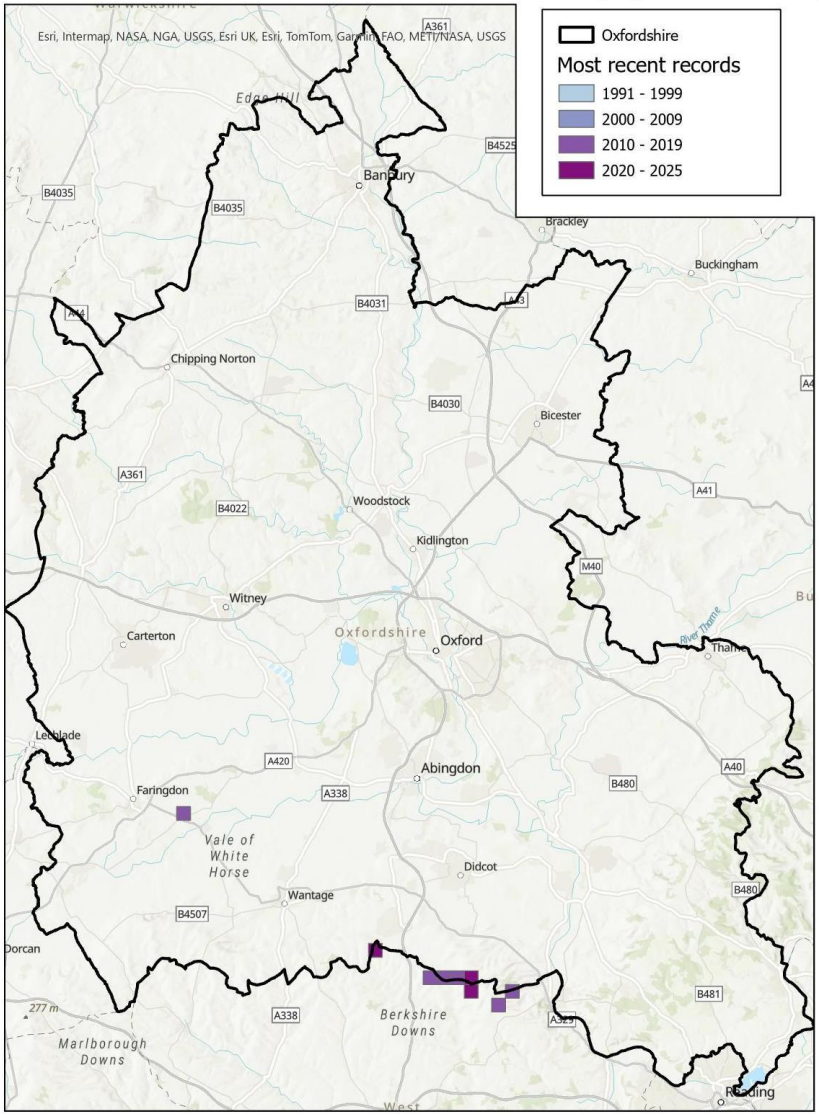


Southern damselfly records 1990-2025

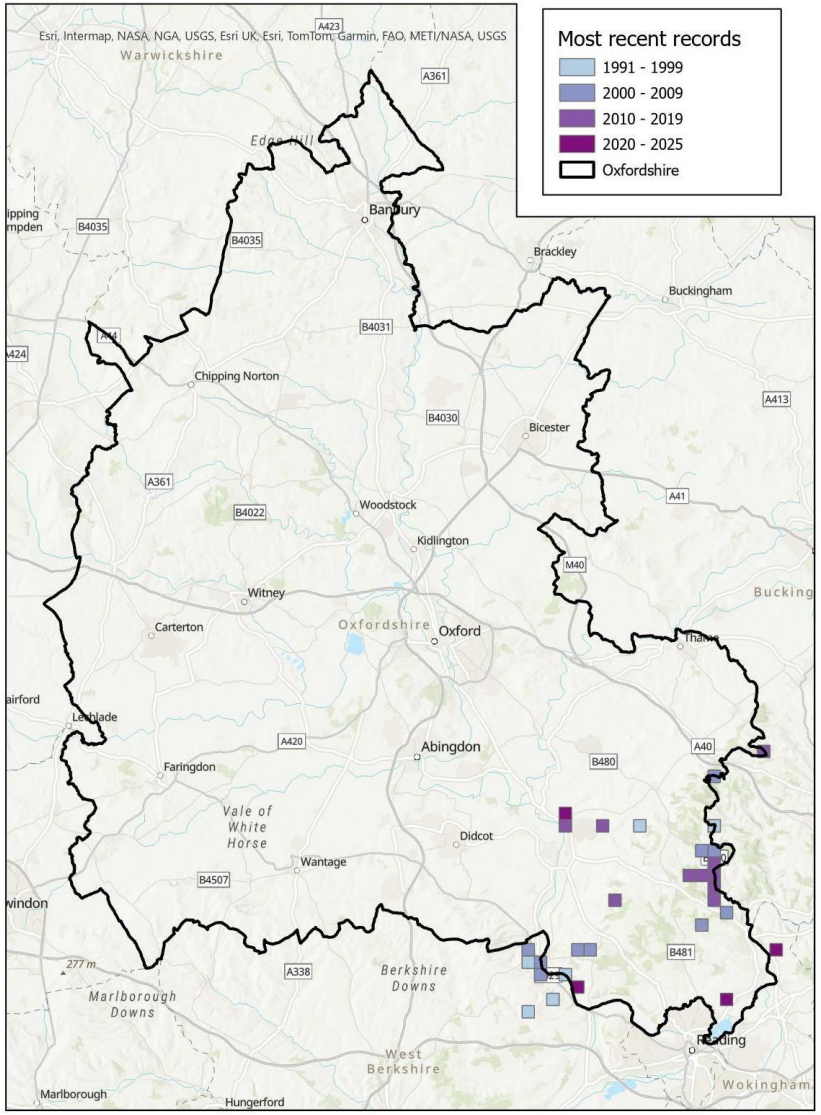


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Stone Curlew records 1990-2025

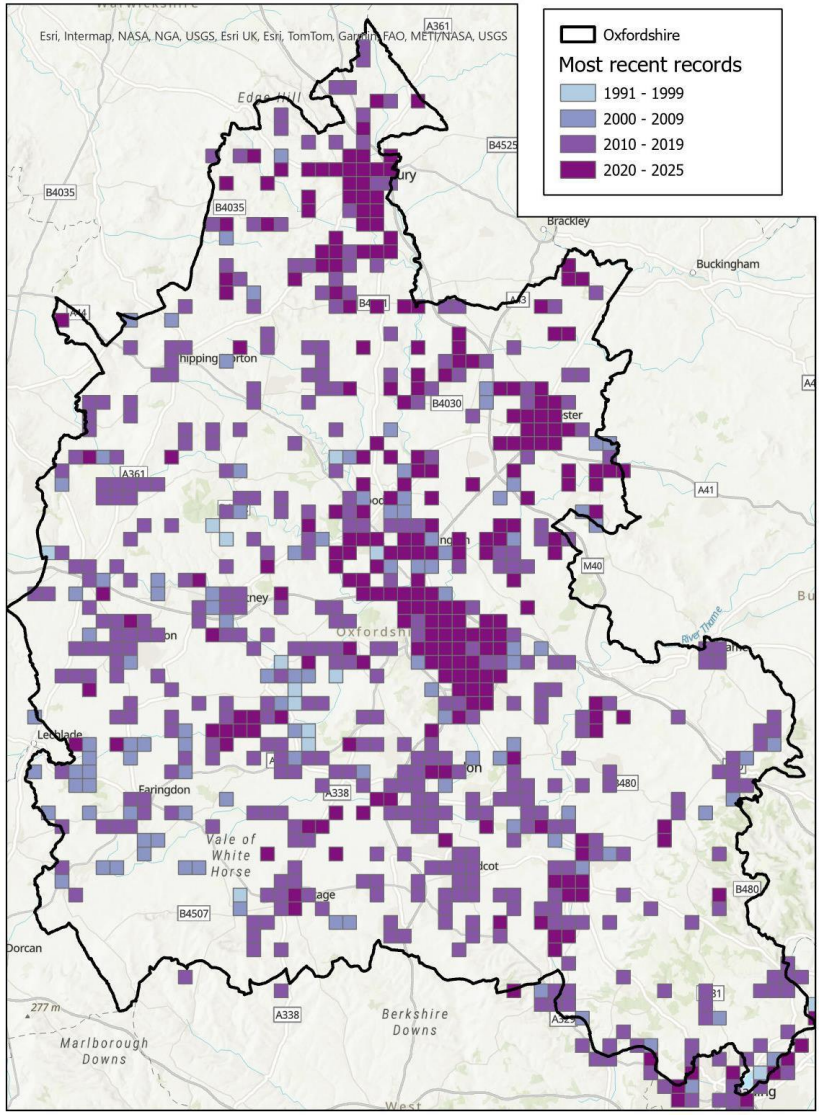


Striped Lychnis Moth records 1990-2025

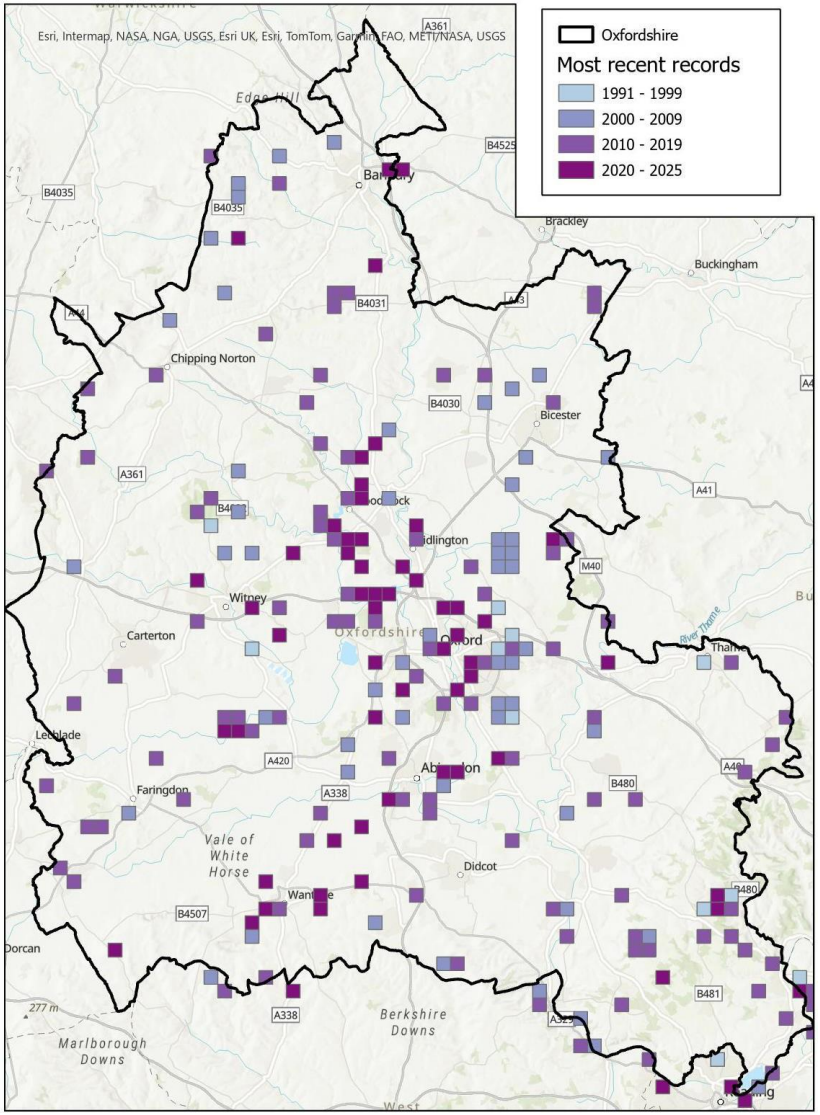


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Swift and house martin records 1990-2025

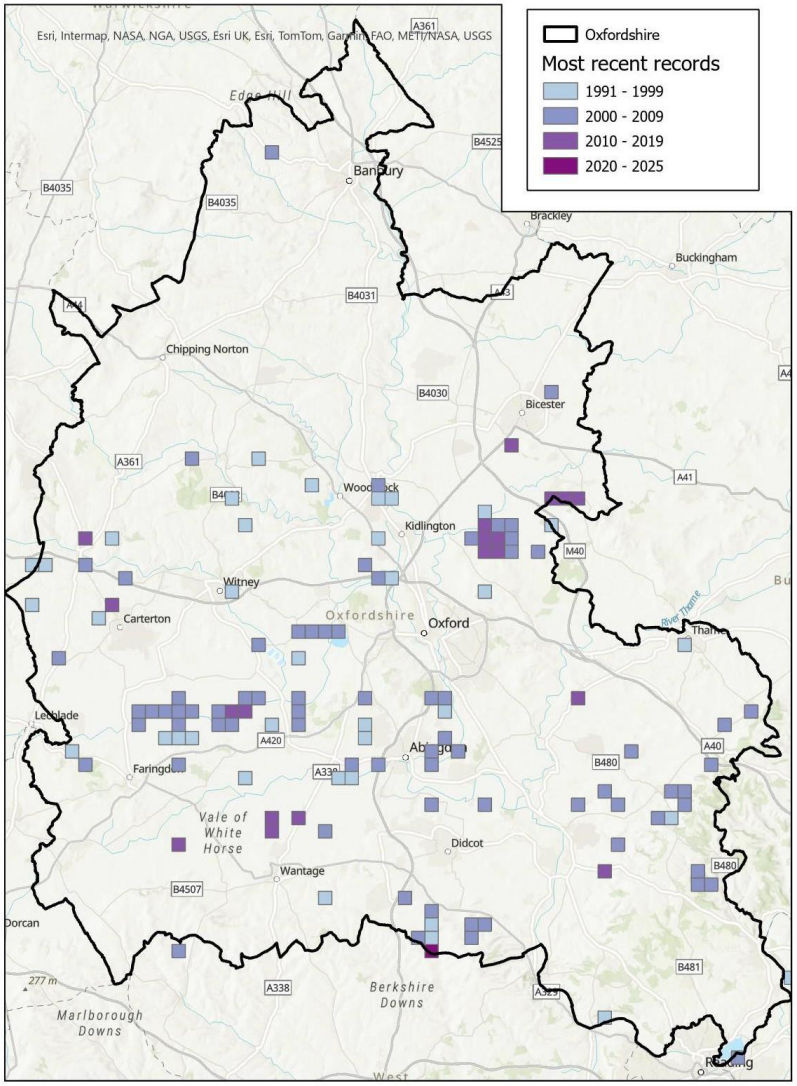


Tawny Owl records 1990-2025

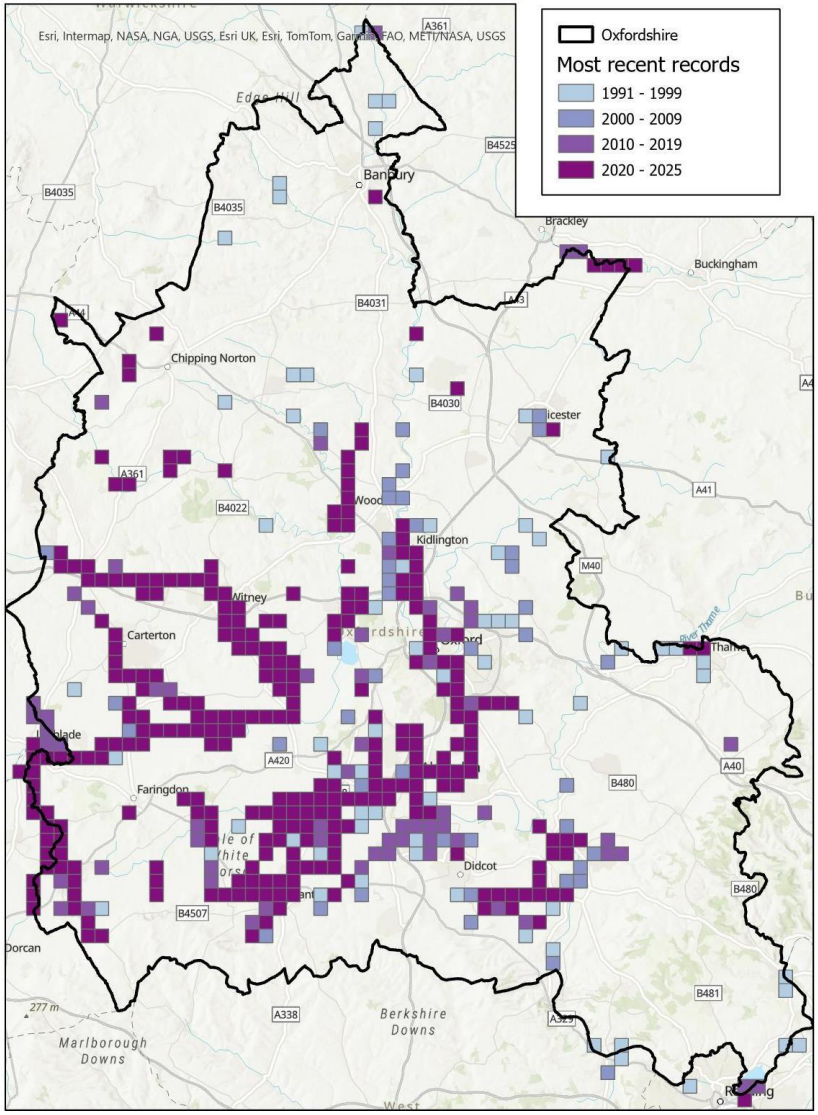


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Turtle Dove records 1990-2025

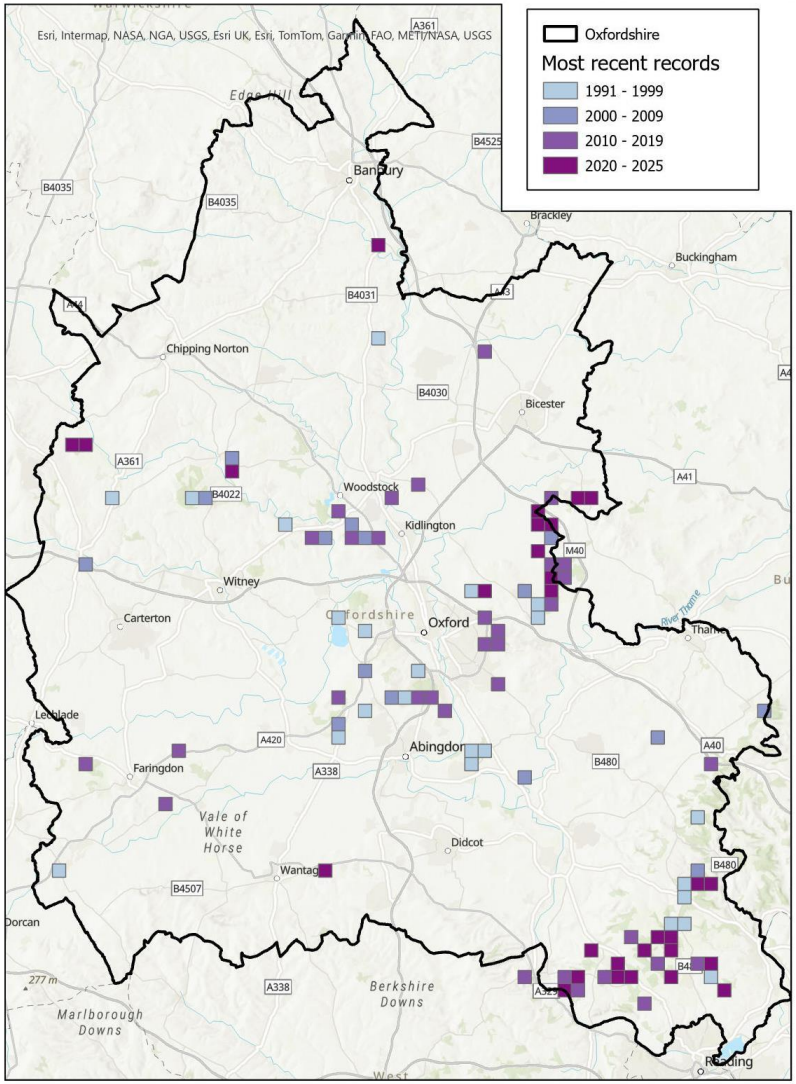


Water Vole records 1990-2025

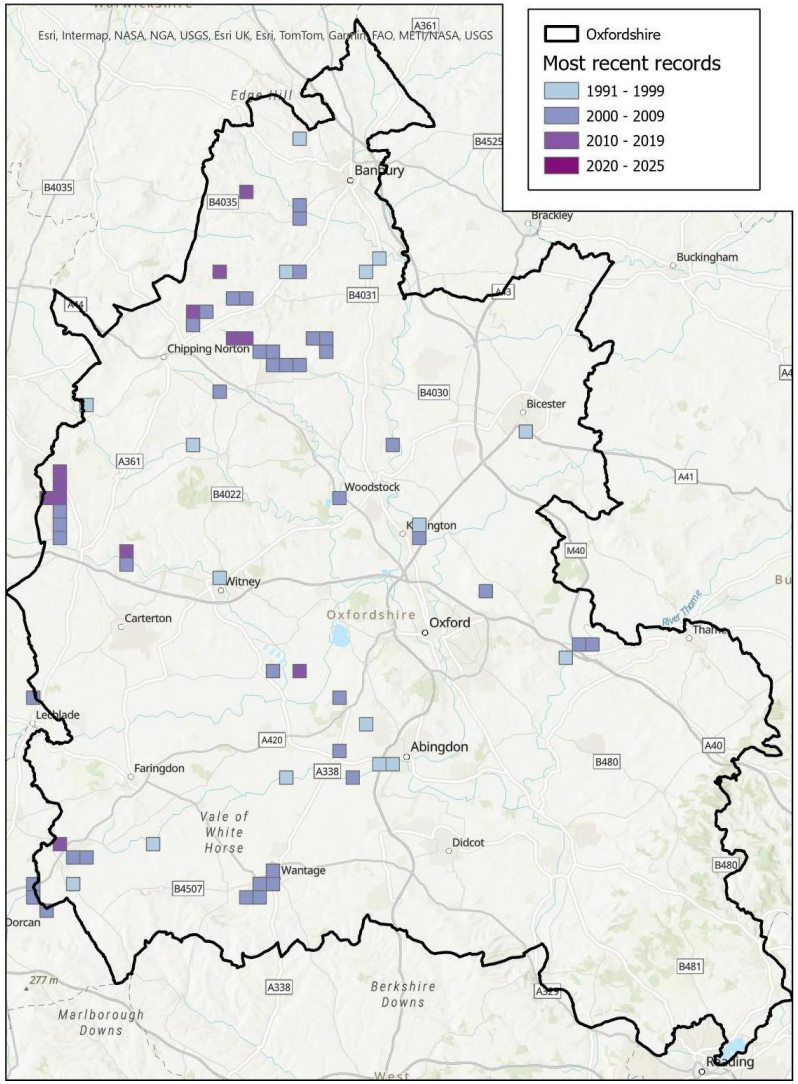


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

White Admiral records 1990-2025

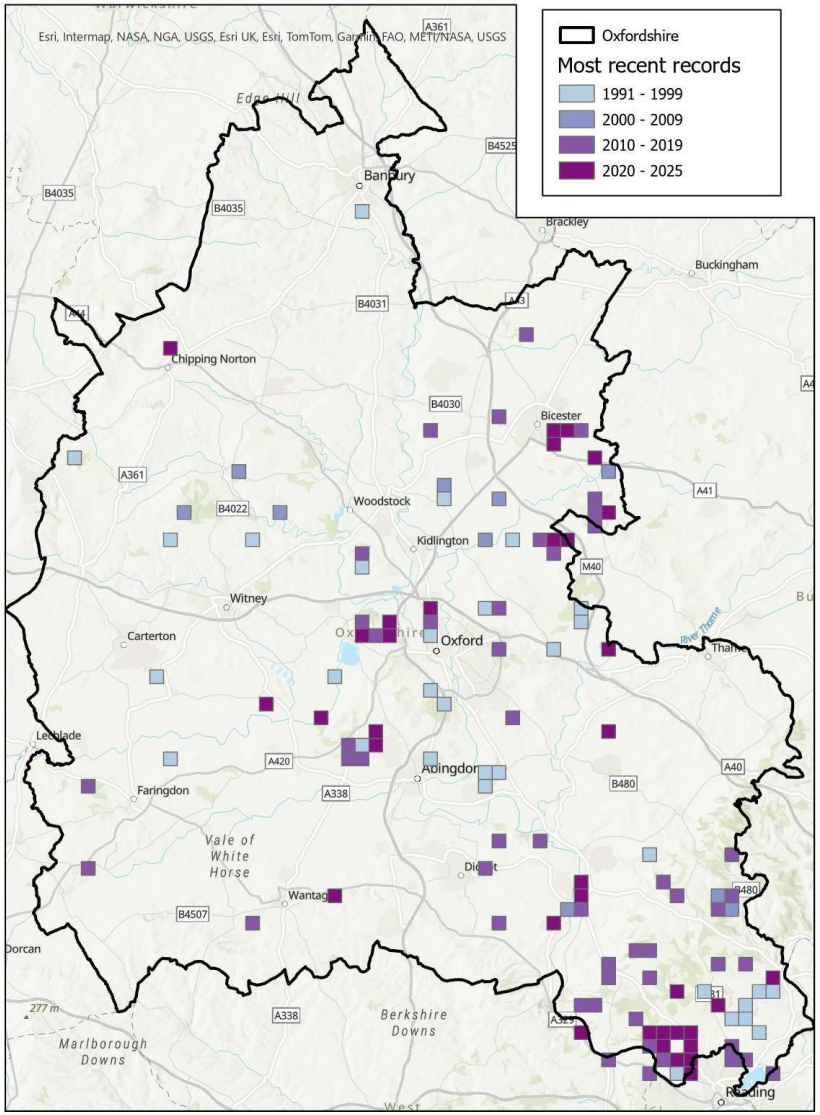


White-clawed Crayfish records 1990-2025

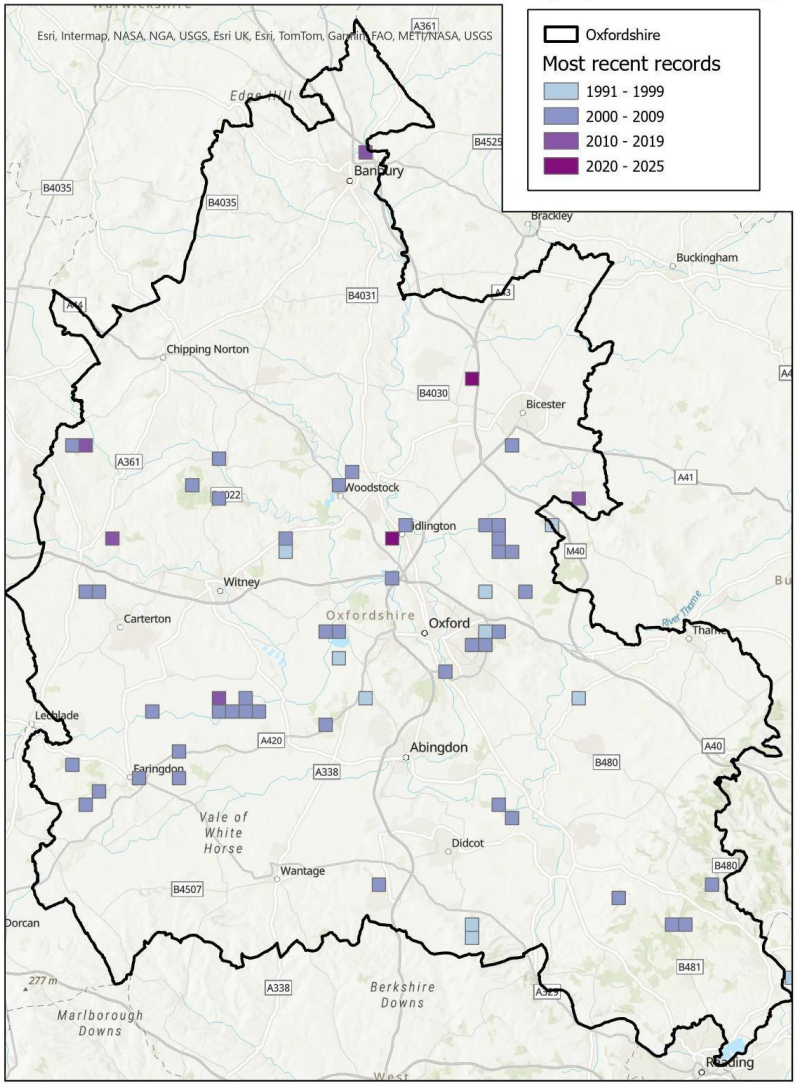


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre] to inform future work

White-letter Hairstreak records 1990-2025

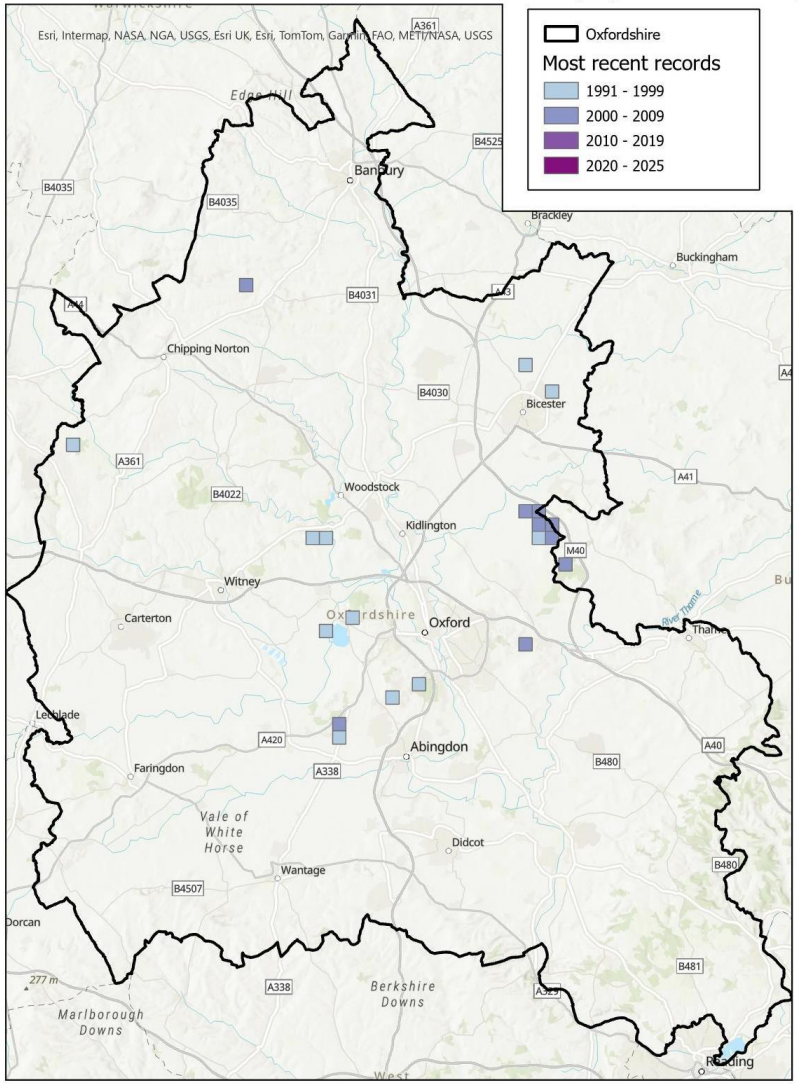


Willow Tit records 1990-2025

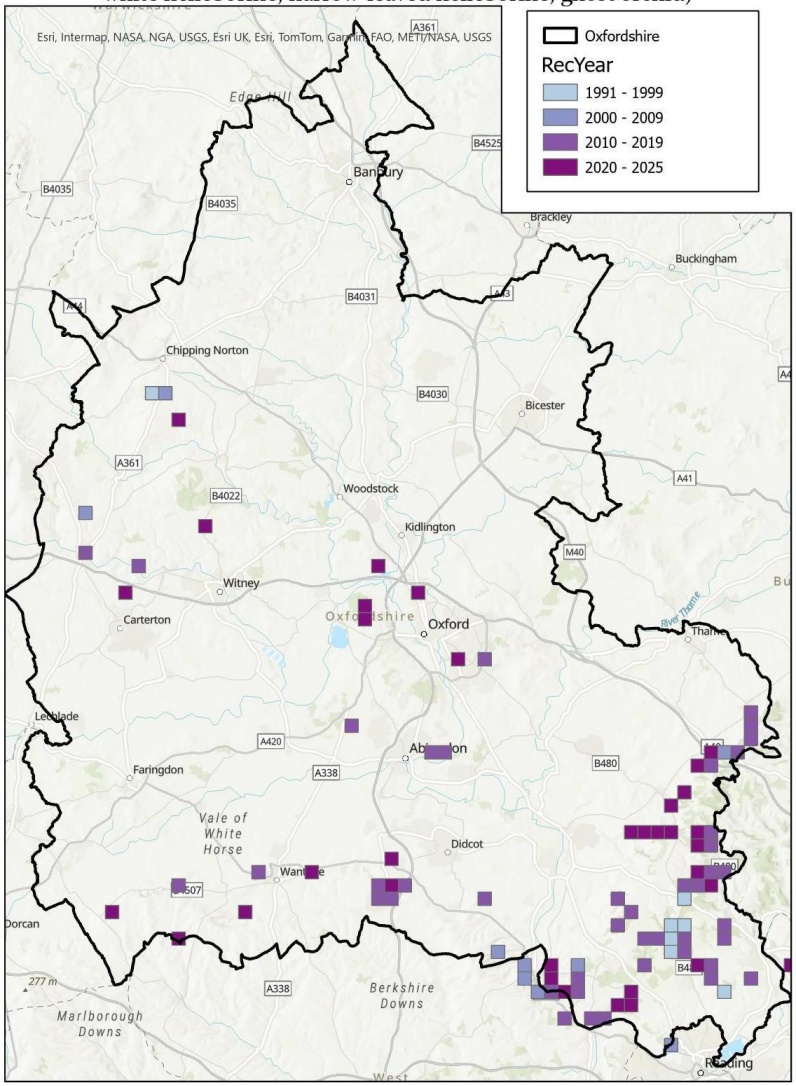


Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#) to inform future work

Wood White records 1990-2025



Woodland fungi and fungus-associated plant records 1990-2025
(Bronze bolete, Devil's bolete, bird's-nest orchid, yellow bird's nest, white helleborine, narrow-leaved helleborine, ghost orchid)



Please report sightings of these species to [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre] to inform future work

For the attention of LNRS Supporting Authorities,

The Environment Act 2021 (c. 30, "the Act") requires responsible authorities in England to prepare and publish local nature recovery strategies. In July 2023, Oxfordshire County Council was appointed as the Responsible Authority for leading the preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Oxfordshire and your authority was appointed as a Supporting Authority to oversee, support, and guide the preparation of the strategy.

Your role as a Supporting Authority has been integral to the creation of this strategy and Oxfordshire County Council would like to thank you and your officers for their consistent support on this project since August 2023.

Previously in late 2024 we shared a draft copy of the strategy with yourselves and others through a formal public consultation. Now, having made a number of requested changes to the strategy, we are very pleased to share with you the final version of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire County Council intends to publish the final strategy on its website in the second week of November 2025 (expected the 12th November 2025).

The strategy sets out how (and where) people and organisations in Oxfordshire could work together to create a more resilient, connected, network of nature in Oxfordshire with great benefits for both people and wildlife. Additionally, the strategy offers recommended actions to be taken in the wider countryside to improve the environment across the county. The strategy contains:

1. The **Description of the Strategy Area** – a written description of biodiversity in the county with an explanation of what the LNRS is and how it has been prepared.
2. The **Statement of Biodiversity Priorities** (SBP) – a list of actions to enhance or create habitats in Oxfordshire that would enable the county to achieve priority outcomes for biodiversity. Delivering these actions is of great importance in Oxfordshire.
3. The **Species Priorities List** (SPL) – a list of species that require additional, bespoke actions in order to recover their populations and range in the county.
4. The **Local Habitat Map** – an online, public, interactive map tool that identifies the locations where habitat creation or enhancement is most likely to provide the greatest benefits for nature, certain species, and the wider environment in Oxfordshire. The mapped actions come from the actions listed in the SBP and SPL (above)
5.

What we are asking of you

As a Supporting Authority, we (Oxfordshire County Council) are now sharing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy documents and map with you to invite you and enable you to begin your democratic approvals processes and seek endorsement from your authority for the publication of this strategy.

Please note that whilst the regulations state that there is a 28-day window to raise a notice with the Responsible Authority if your Supporting Authority needs to object to the publication of the final LNRS (this objection is called a "publication advisory notice" or PAN). However, this letter

sent to you on the 22nd July 2025 is not designed to start or trigger that process. In Oxfordshire, we (County Council) spoke with you (the Supporting Authorities) and understood the need for local authorities to have more time to review this final LNRS and to ensure that the strategy has time to go through your various democratic processes. Therefore, Oxfordshire County Council is giving Supporting Authorities the opportunity to start their democratic processes earlier than the start of the 28-day window. This letter and the accompanying strategy is designed to invite you to start that process and to notify you that we intend to send the 28-day letter to you on Thursday the 25th of September 2025 and the 28-day period would end on Wednesday the 22th October 2025. We strongly encourage you to let us know as early as possible of any concerns or problems with the strategy that you think might cause you to need to raise a PAN during the 28-day window. This can allow us an opportunity to rectify any relevant problems before that time. Please ensure that you all re-read the Regulations that we are all being held to during this LNRS process.

Please note that between July – late October the documents will go through a full design process including proofreading. You should not expect any major changes to these documents but there may be tweaks to wording or layout to improve the look and flow of the documents as well as the wording and functionality of the map tool.

We sincerely look forward to having endorsement from all Supporting Authorities to be able to publish this first Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Oxfordshire. Once published, the LNRS documents and map may not be changed until their formal review and republication in 3-10 years' time unless specific agreement is sought from the secretary of state.

Kind regards,

Chloe

Chloe Edwards
Local Nature Recovery Strategy Project Manager
Oxfordshire County Council

Reference materials:

- **LNRS Statutory Guidance**: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1146160/Local_nature_recovery_strategy_statutory_guidance.pdf
- **The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023:** https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2023/341/made
- **The Environment Act (2021):** https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents

This report is public	
Response to Motion: Primary Care Facilities in North Oxfordshire	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	7 October 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities, Councillor Rob Pattenden Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management, Councillor Jean Conway
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	25 September 2025
Report of	Corporate Director Communities, Ian Boll

Purpose of report

To agree the response to the motion raised at the Council meeting on 21 July 2025 with regard to supporting the Integrated Care Board (ICB) in making provision for Primary Care Facilities.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To affirm its clear commitment to supporting the ICB in meeting its responsibilities for the planning, commissioning and management of NHS services for the population of Cherwell.

1.2 To request that officers offer regular, structured meetings with the ICB to support this commitment.

1.3 To note the important role the Council has in holding the ICB to account for the appropriate and timely provision of Primary Care and its supporting infrastructure.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 At the Council meeting on 21 July 2025, the following motion was referred to the Executive:

"This Council considers that more needs to be done to expand and improve Primary Care facilities across North Oxfordshire.

Following a productive cross-party meeting between members and representatives the Integrated Care Board (ICB), together with a careful review of representations from local stakeholders in recent weeks, this Council resolves to request that the

Executive facilitates the expansion of Primary Care provision via any reasonable means, which may include, where appropriate and reasonable, the following:

i. issuing standing advice on planning matters to the ICB to assist it in its place and facilities planning.

ii. producing evidence to the ICB to support the well understood assertion that Primary Care is now at capacity across this district;

iii. supporting the ICB to create a plan for the delivery of new and expanded primary care facilities across North Oxfordshire;

iv. requesting that the ICB estates team better supports its 'drive to digital' by encouraging developer contributions into, inter alia, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) projects; and

v. review, in conjunction with the ICB, why the proposed facilities at Longford Park, Hanwell Fields and Graven Hill have proven unsuccessful in recent years to avoid failures in new developments elsewhere.

vi. consider Primary Care needs as widely as reasonably possible in future supplementary planning documents to encourage a greater number of capital projects coming forward and encouraging the ICB to request developer contributions on all applications of 10+ homes without limiting such bids to bricks-and-mortar projects alone."

2.2 This report explains the current opportunities for engagement with the ICB in its planning of primary care facilities and the opportunities for the ICB's input into the planning of new development. It proposes more regular, mutually beneficial engagement.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	There are no financial implications arising from this report. Costs associated with stakeholder engagement is within existing operational service budgets. Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 25 September 2025
Legal	This is Executive's response to a motion to full council and there are no legal implications or actions are identified resulting from this. Denzil Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 25 September 2025
Risk Management	There are no risk implications as a direct consequence of this report. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader, 25 September 2025

Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		The additional engagement proposed is in the interest of the whole Cherwell community.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		The additional engagement proposed is in the interest of the whole Cherwell community.
Climate & Environmental Impact		X		None
ICT & Digital Impact		X		None
Data Impact		X		None
Procurement & subsidy		X		None
Council Priorities	A Vision for Lasting Change 2025-2030: Priority 2: Community Leadership Priority 4: Quality Housing and Place Making			
Human Resources	None			
Property	None			
Consultation & Engagement	Additional engagement with the ICB is proposed.			

Supporting Information

3. Background

3.1 The Council is a member of the Oxfordshire Health and Well-Being Board. The Board is the principal structure in the county with responsibility for promoting the health and well-being of its people.

3.2 The Board is a partnership between local government, the NHS and Oxfordshire's residents. Representation includes the Integrated Care Board's (ICB's) Place Director, local General Practitioners (GPs), the Chief Executives of the NHS Foundation Trusts, NHS England, the Director of Public Health, councillors, officers and Healthwatch Oxfordshire - an independent charity which works to ensure decision makers hear feedback on the County's health services.

3.3 The ICB and the Council are signatories to Health and Well-Being strategy 2024-2030. The ICB produced a Primary Care Strategy in May 2024. The Council hosts the Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership, the priorities of which are aligned to those of the ICB.

3.4 The Council's Wellbeing team engages with the ICB through the County Council's public health structure and directly through the Health and Wellbeing Board. As Local Planning Authority, the Council seeks to engage with the ICB on the facilities required to support new development. There are clear governance structures and formal processes for engagement and the discussion of primary care needs.

4. Details

4.1 The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Oxfordshire County Council provides an opportunity for questions to be asked of the Integrated Care Board in relation to their obligations to assess the level of primary care provision available to residents.

4.3 As Local Planning Authority, the Council seeks the input of the ICB in its plan-making. The ICB has opportunities to seek the allocation of land for new development to meet evidenced primary care need, to advise what new facilities are likely to be required to support planned development and what developer contributions are necessary where needs directly arise from new development.

4.4 The Local Plan and its supplementary planning documents are the statutory means by which policy is provided to deliver on those requirements. A proposed new Local Plan is presently being independently examined and will inform a future review of planning guidance.

4.5 The motion's proposal to issue standing advice would be addressed through the review of developer contribution guidance in due course. The ICB will have the opportunity to engage in the preparation of that guidance. It is important that all stakeholders and local communities also have the opportunity to input. Officers have reached out to the ICB in the past to improve the quality and timeliness of responses and there has been an improvement in the ICB's response to planning requests.

4.6 Every major planning application received by Cherwell District Council (10 or more houses or residential institutions such as care homes and hotels) is sent to the ICB to comment on.

4.7 The length of the patient list and capacity available at each surgery is not data held by the district council and the ICB is aware of the pinch points in provision locally.

4.8 The Assistant Director for Planning and Development, the Head of Development Management, the Assistant Director for Wellbeing and Housing, and the Wellbeing Manager propose to meet with appropriate officers at the ICB to review the responses provided by ICB to planning applications.

4.9 Supporting the ICB to undertake their responsibilities is possible and improved locality working is desirable. A regular meeting with the ICB is proposed to consider how primary care facilities will be promoted and secured across Cherwell.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

5.1 It is proposed to seek engagement with the ICB on a more regular basis. However, it is an option not to deploy officer resource in this way. A more structured approach to meeting with the ICB should be mutually informative and support the common aims with regard to the provision of primary care. It is therefore recommended.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 The motion referred to Executive seeks the expansion and improvement of Primary Care facilities across north Oxfordshire.

6.2 It is recommended that the Executive affirms its clear commitment to supporting the ICB in meeting its responsibilities for the planning commissioning and management of NHS services for the population of Cherwell. Officers proposed that regular, structured meetings with the ICB are offered to support this commitment. The Executive is also invited to note the important role the Council has in holding the ICB to account for the appropriate and timely provision of Primary Care and its supporting infrastructure.

Decision Information

Key Decision	No
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	None

Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/social-and-health-care/public-health-and-wellbeing/health-and-wellbeing-board/about-board
Report Author	Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Housing Services, Nicola Riley Assistant Director Planning & Development, David Peckford
Report Author contact details	Nicola.Riley@cherwell-dc.gov.uk David.Peckford@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	Corporate Director Communities, Ian Boll 25 September 2025

This report is public	
Award of Grant to Banbury Museum Trust	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	7 October 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities, Councillor Rob Pattenden
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	13 August 2025
Report of	Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing, Nicola Riley

Purpose of report

Cherwell District Council is the principal funder of The Banbury Museum Trust. This report sets out the reasoning for an award of grant funding until March 2027.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To award Banbury Museum Trust a grant for their continued operation until 31 March 2027

2. Executive Summary

2.1 Banbury Museum Trust have manged the Museum and Gallery since the Council approved the establishment of an independent trust in 2013.

2.2 The Council agreed a funding plan at the establishment of the Trust to sustain the service. That funding plan completed in April 2025.

2.3 In line with the savings agreed by successive Council budget plans over the last three years, a new grant agreement has been negotiated with Banbury Museum.

2.4 The grant is at a level that requires Executive approval.

2.5 The Council has a representative on the Museum Trust Board as a point of connection and officers meet to ensure that the Museum fulfils their development plan.

2.6 The Museum provides a free entry gallery that celebrates the history of Banbury since the Civil War and draws upon the role it has played in the region as an industrious, growing town and its importance as a market town. Banbury continues to be the largest market town in Oxfordshire, and the Museum has developed a

reputation for temporary exhibitions drawing audiences into the Town from all over the region.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	**Commentary**			
Finance	The proposed grant agreement is in line with the budgetary assumptions included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, approved by Council in February 2025. To deviate from this would cause a pressure to the Council and require additional savings to be identified from services elsewhere. Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer), 28 August 2025			
Legal	Legal Services have prepared a draft funding agreement which is being put in place to secure the proposed grant and provide advice on the content of the same to protect the Council's interests. Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 11 September 2025			
Risk Management	Reducing the Council's funding for Banbury Museum Trust could pose a greater challenge for the Museum to keep running all its current services. Although the Trust has been good at raising money from other sources, there's a risk they might not get enough to fill the gap. The Council will continue to have a representative on the Museum's Board to help keep things on track. Also, a decline on the Museum's services could affect the community and reflect poorly on the Council. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 27 August 2025			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact	x			Banbury Museum provides an opportunity to access cultural activities to our communities, including those within the protected characteristics. As such, supporting its operations has a positive impact. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 27 August 2025.
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could		x		

impact on inequality?				
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	x			
Climate & Environmental Impact		X		
ICT & Digital Impact		x		
Data Impact		x		
Procurement & subsidy		x		
Council Priorities	Healthy resilient and engaged communities Banbury Museum is a foundational organisation in the delivery of the Councils cultural offer. Continuing funding supports that delivery.			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	Extensive negotiations have been concluded with the Museum Trustees			

Supporting Information

3. Background

3.1 Banbury Museum and Gallery occupies a purpose-built facility, spanning the Banbury Canal with its shop in a prominent position within Castle Quay. Funded by the Council and Heritage Lottery Fund the Museum opened in 2002 in the current building.

3.2 A Museum has operated in Banbury since the 1940's and the Banbury Historical society, which has been active in the Town since 1958 meets at the Museum and their library is housed there.

3.3 Banbury Museum & Gallery is accredited with Arts Council England. The Trustees support the importance of full accreditation, which ensures the Museum meets the national standard expected by its audiences and stakeholders. Maintaining accreditation is a key requirement of continuing funding.

3.4 An independent trust was established to continue the development of the Museum and Gallery programme and facilitate improved fundraising from trusts and foundations.

3.5 The Trust has been successful in fundraising for a shop refit and several important exhibitions. They have recently successfully applied for an Arts Council Grant to continue their development.

3.6 Alongside the free to enter galleries, the museum also operates an award-winning reminiscence group, offers an engaging schools' programme and is a key member of the Banbury Quays consortium.

4. Details

4.1 Banbury Museum is a key partner in delivering the cultural aspirations of the Council.

4.2 Cherwell District Council has a history of supporting arts and culture and considers it important that individuals have an opportunity to access cultural opportunities for their improved wellbeing. Goal five of The Councils Wellbeing Strategy underlines this approach

4.3 The Council provided a great deal of stability with a long-term funding plan for the museum. This ended in April this year. Negotiations over the new funding agreement have taken several months to conclude as the level of funding for the Museum is set to reduce by £145,000 over the term of this proposed agreement to align with the agreed budget position.

4.4 The proposed grant will be £332,552 in 2025/26 and £257,552 in 2026/27 financial years.

4.5 Banbury Museum and Gallery will continue to run the programme as it currently stands and during the term of this funding agreement will work with the council to secure its future operation.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

Option 1: To fund the museum at the previous level and not achieve budget savings as approved
Rejected; The Council must balance its budget and continue to drive efficiencies in its own and funded operations.

Option 2: To not fund the Museum
Rejected; This would result in immediate closure and run counter to the Councils current agreed policies

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 The continued funding of Banbury Museum and Gallery is in line with approved budget plans and maintains the Councils commitment to providing high quality opportunities to participate in cultural activity locally for residents.

Decision Information

Key Decision	Yes Financial threshold met and community threshold met.
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	None
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	Banbury Museum and Gallery Funding agreement 2025 - 2027 Everyone's Wellbeing - Cherwell District Council Wellbeing strategy
Report Author	Nicola Riley Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing
Report Author contact details	Nicola.riley@cherwell-dc.gov.uk 01295 221724
Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	Monitoring Officer request for report 12/08/2025 Corporate Director for Communities 26/09/25

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This report is public	
Growth and Regeneration Funding 2025/26 – 2027/28	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	7 October 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, Cllr Lesley McLean
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	25 September 2025
Report of	Corporate Director Communities, Ian Boll

Purpose of report

To secure project funding to the Growth & Regeneration and Development Management Services within the Place and Regeneration Directorate to address capacity constraints and to support priority projects including the Housing Delivery Action Plan, Local Area Energy Planning, inputting into the Oxford Growth Commission and enabling infrastructure to support complex development sites.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To accept an award of £300k funding from MHCLG to be spent in 2025/26 on investment in capacity funding to support the acceleration of infrastructure and housing delivery in Bicester as part of the Bicester Garden Town Programme.

1.2 To transfer £600k from the projects reserve to a new earmarked "Growth and Regeneration Projects Reserve" and to allocate £100k of this in 2025/26. This funding will add capacity to the other two Area Oversight Group areas of Banbury and Kidlington (and the 4 surrounding parish areas of the Local Plan Partial Review 2020) to accelerate housing and employment delivery through projects detailed in the report.

1.3 To delegate to the Corporate Director Communities[1], in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, the programme management and change control of funding to meet the identified projects, and subject to approval of the project business plans by Executive Committee as identified within the report.

2. Executive Summary

[1] The post title will change to Executive Director Place and Regeneration effective 15 October 2025

2.1 This report seeks to secure project capacity and resources for the Growth & Regeneration and Development Management Services to enable the effective delivery of key projects and action plans to drive housing delivery, economic growth and enhance communities across Cherwell.

2.2 This investment will enable the council to:

- Attract external investment, including infrastructure funding and ongoing capacity support to the approved sites within the Local Plan and identified as strategic priorities, accelerate housing development by working with developers in an enabling role and through the prioritisation of S106 funded projects. This is a key part of the Cherwell Housing Delivery Action Plan 2025 approved by the Executive in February 2025.

- Support the development and delivery of complex regeneration schemes and address key challenges in town centres including but not limited to East West Rail London Road railway crossing options analysis, projects referenced in the emerging Oxfordshire County Council Rail Strategy (OxRail 2040) such as a new mobility hub at Banbury Station, prepare a new masterplan to interrelate the new communities of the Local Plan Partial Review sites with the existing communities of Kidlington and the surrounding parishes.

- Provide support to Area Oversight Groups and the Area Priority Plans through the development of regeneration plans for our three main urban areas, leveraging and harnessing CDC owned assets to bring forward regeneration.

2.3 This fixed term investment will deliver new plans and supporting evidence ahead of the Government's devolution act requirements of spatial development strategies, to ensure our communities are best represented through collaborative visions for sustainable development. It will provide capacity to continue working with developers on specific issues that are delaying housing delivery due to complex infrastructure requirements and to work closely with stakeholders on the development of new town centre visions, specific to each area oversight group.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	The council has sufficient reserves within the Projects Reserve to transfer £600k into the new "Growth and Regeneration Projects Reserve". The reserves policy allows Executive to amend the earmarking of reserves and to allocate reserves in year. Once 2026/27 and onwards projects are sufficiently scoped, with financial costs and performance metrics identified, future funding can be released following Executive Committee approval. Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance, 25 September 2025
Legal	Detailed business plans as noted in paragraph 4.5 of this report will need to be prepared to set out the case for this funding and identify how it is to be spent. These Business Plans will need to be

	approved by Executive Committee to ensure there is appropriate oversight of the spending. As noted within the report, once these Business Plans have been approved a robust project management and reporting structure should be implemented to ensure that the funding is achieving the desired outcomes and being spent in line with the overall objectives and approved plans. Once the Business Plans are approved there will need to be appropriate input from procurement team to ensure that the Business Plans are implemented in a procurement complaint manner. Legal services will review the terms of the MHCLG grant in order to confirm that there are no issues with allocating the funding in the manner envisaged by this report. Denzil Turbervill, Head of Legal, 25 September 2025			
Risk Management	Delays in deploying funding and resources could hinder progress on housing and infrastructure priorities, risking missed targets and reduced external investment. However, the proposal in this report outlines clear mitigation measures—including delegated programme management, performance monitoring, and phased funding allocation—which demonstrate a proactive approach to managing these risks effectively. As such there's no risk as a direct consequence of this report, risks related to this proposal will be managed through the service Operational Risk Register and escalated to the Leadership Risk Register as and when deemed necessary. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 24 September 2025			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact		X		N/A
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		N/A
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		N/A

Climate & Environmental Impact	X			Progressing LAEP work will have a positive impact on decarbonisation through the understanding and delivery of low carbon energy solutions.
ICT & Digital Impact		X		N/A
Data Impact		X		N/A
Procurement & subsidy		X		N/A
Council Priorities	Priority 1: Economic prosperity "We want to create diverse, active town centres and welcoming, vibrant villages throughout Cherwell" Priority 3: Environmental stewardship "We are committed to making and promoting choices today that will help safeguard our district for future generations" Priority 4: Quality housing and place making "Cherwell will be a place where people feel at home in areas that improve their health, happiness and wellbeing today and in the future"			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	N/A			

Supporting Information

3. Background

3.1 Cherwell has over 8,000 homes with planning permission and awaiting construction. The council approved a Housing Delivery Action Plan in February 2025 to support acceleration of housing delivery and support sustainable growth in the district, within which are a number of actions which require resourcing to deliver, including:

1. Local Area Energy Plans (LAEP's) - The council, with all other Oxfordshire authorities, is working to develop an LAEP to identify energy grid constraints and infrastructure investment requirements to support the transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources and prepare for the increased demand from decarbonisation of vehicles and heating systems. There is a chronic shortage of future energy supply impacting the pace of delivery of housing and employment in Bicester particularly but increasing also in other areas of the district, requiring investment and innovation.

2. CDC Area Oversight Groups (AOG's) - These groups have been established to bring together key stakeholders and agree local priorities under an Area Priority Plan, support planning colleagues to resolve outstanding S106 issues, apply for

external funding from MHCLG/Homes England, engage with developers on strategic delivery priorities and support local communities.

3.2 Funding for AOG's initially came from Bicester Garden Town Programme funding together with short term funding allocations for Banbury through the Banbury Vision project and for Kidlington through a two-year investment approved in February 2024 for 2024/5 – 2025/6.

3.3 In addition, external project pressures and demands on resources need to be met for the council to be able to respond in a timely and positive manner to the priorities of government direction on the establishment of a Mayoral Strategic Authority and the Oxford Growth Commission which are bringing renewed focus to strategic planning, future sustainable growth and the unlocking of current growth sites which require support.

3.4 The continued focus of the Regeneration & Growth team will be to deliver the Area Framework of priorities as set out in the November 2024 Executive report, the Area Oversight Groups, enabling, monitoring and delivery of the three Area Priority Plans and the UKSPF programme 2025/6.]

4. Details

4.1 In relation to the Councils vision & strategy for 2025-2030 which outlines the Corporate Strategic Priorities, the additional resources will also be delivering the outcomes set out in the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) 2025 with a focus on:

- Economic prosperity – continued engagement with the business community, continued retention and attraction of business investment into the district, but also growing the engagement & support we provide to a wider business community.
- Enabling and delivering projects to create vibrant town centres and deliver a new Economic Strategy for Cherwell, with specific plans for each of the growth areas.
- Quality housing and place making - will be assisted though the delivery of the Garden Town programme in Bicester, especially progressing Northwest Bicester with the Atlas team from MHCLG & Homes England to enable over 5,000 new homes, the emerging Banbury masterplan with Oxfordshire County Council and working with the Developers & the community of Kidlington to enable the delivery of over 4,000 new homes.
- Community leadership - the continued active participation in County wide partnerships and leadership forums including the newly developed Oxfordshire Growth Commission.
- Environmental stewardship - continued engagement with the business community and working with them in partnership on helping to address the climate emergency and bring forward green economy initiatives as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and possibly its successor.

4.2 The following is a brief summary of the activities also undertaken by the team to provide an understanding of the breadth and depth of team members required to deliver the Executive priorities.

- Regeneration & place-shaping – Bicester, Banbury, Kidlington currently; Heyford & Rural areas to be developed including housing enabling, viability, s106 negotiation and delivery (CQ project board).
- Development of appropriate plans and strategies to provide a framework for area enabling & delivery e.g. Area Framework documents and AOG meeting planning, attendance and management of process, and development of the new Cherwell Economic Development Strategy.
- Economic prosperity activities and engagement with the local business community to help retain existing businesses and develop new relationships. Eg Bicester Motion.
- Developing partnerships to help skills development and training opportunities and economic development e.g. Bicester Vision.
- Developing the visitor economy tourism e.g. working with Experience Oxfordshire.
- Involvement with strategic economic partnerships and initiatives including Oxford Growth Commission, (OxCam Arc) OxLEP, OXIS and other regional and sub-regional partnerships. Working with MPs.
- Working with stakeholders including Thames Water, SSEN, Network Rail, CRT, East West Rail on regeneration proposals and design work.
- Climate change and decarbonisation initiatives working closely with business – including working with SSEN on energy supply issues particularly in Bicester.

4.3 The Growth & Regeneration Service has had detailed dialogue with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Atlas team who support councils in the delivery of complex development schemes. This has resulted in a grant offer in 2025/26 of £300k to be expended in year to support the service and to provide additional principal planning officer capacity funding in the Development Management Service to engage with developers associated with the North West Bicester housing allocations in the 2015 Cherwell Local Plan.

4.4 To continue the delivery of the above, this report recommends to Executive to accept the £300k of MHCLG funding which has been awarded to Biester and to allocate up to £600k of revenue funding across 2025/26 to 2027/28 to add capacity to the remaining Area Oversight Areas of Banbury and Kidlington (and the 4 surrounding parish areas of the Local Plan Partial Review 2020) to accelerate housing and employment delivery through the identified projects detailed in the report.

4.5 The in-year requirement for the use of reserves is forecast to be up to £100k, allowing for time to recruit and commission resources to develop full business cases to take forward for approval to Executive. Therefore, the remaining profile would be across 2026/7 and 2027/8. Once business cases are approved by Executive they will be monitored quarterly.

Outputs

4.6 The additional funding sought needs to be clearly measured against performance and output criteria, for the purposes of project management and change control, and to provide clearly defined deliverables against the funding sought.
These are:

- The timely production of the Local Area Energy Plan

- Achievement of the project plan agreed with MHCLG ATLAS as part of the £300k grant funding criteria
- The production of regeneration plans for each of the three Area Oversight Area's
- Monitoring of the success of the Housing Delivery Action Plan
- Production of Area master plans, regeneration plans, economic development plans inc visitor economy.
- Delivery of S106 programmes through held S106 funds.
- Agreement of additional funding from external sources including MHCLG, OGC, accelerated infrastructure and the expenditure of agreed S106 programmes.

4.7 Further detail is provided in Appendix 1 which be used to create the indicative programme for future monitoring and reporting back to the Executive and through the Housing Delivery Action Plan (HDAP) which was approved February 2025.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

Option 1: Do nothing.
This would severely limit the ability of the Growth and Regeneration Service to continue to support the Area Oversight Groups and to progress actions within the Housing Delivery Action Plan 2025 and the ADP. The £300k grant to MHCLG would be returned. S106 projects would not benefit from additional oversight or acceleration.

It is not recommended to select this option. Without progress on the key infrastructure projects to support allocated growth sites, the councils housing supply figures could worsen and growth across unallocated sites would likely be forthcoming at an increased rate.

Option 2: Only accept the MHCLG funding and await decision to invest council funding in continuation of the service for 2026/27 – 2027/28 until the Medium-Term Funding Strategy is set in February 2026.

This option would restrict investment in year to the MHCLG grant for Bicester only and would prevent the service from making early progress in recruiting and deploying resources until a decision is reached in February 2026 at the earliest.

This option is not recommended due to the urgency of the Housing Delivery Action Plan and the ongoing priorities associated with unlocking growth. With the government direction on Mayoral Strategic Authorities and strategic planning, it is anticipated that there will be a significant shortfall in resources to support priorities and waiting a further five months will compound this risk.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 Investing in capacity to support sustainable growth is a priority for the council as set out in the plans and strategies outlined in the report. The allocation of grant funding to provide further capacity shows that this is a priority understood by government.

6.2 It is recommended that:

1. The council accepts the award of £300k funding from MHCLG to be spend in 2025/26 on investment in capacity funding to support the acceleration of infrastructure and housing delivery in Bicester as part of the Bicester Garden Town Programme.

2. That the council allocates up to £600k revenue funding across 2025/26 – 2027/28 to add capacity to the Area Oversight Group areas of Banbury and Kidlington (and the 4 surrounding parish areas of the Local Plan Partial Review 2020) to accelerate housing and employment delivery through a series of identified projects detailed in the report.

6.3 To manage the programme and projects outlined in this report for the performance of delivery and the investment of additional funding it is further recommended that the programme management and change control of funding to meet the identified project outputs it is delegated to the Corporate Director Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration.

Decision Information

Key Decision	Yes
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Example of planned workstreams and Cherwell Wide Stratagems
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Report Author contact details	Ian.Boll@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk
Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	N/A – report of Corporate Director

Appendix 1.

Example of planned workstreams and Cherwell Wide Stratagems

Priority Action Plans

Parameters: Identification of gaps in provision and associated projects.
Detailed understanding of requirements across the locality.
Review of Masterplan.
Understanding community driven local need.

Outcomes: Priority Action Plan for each locality.
Identification, design and review of projects so they are spade ready.
Review of S106 funds held and available, identification of external funding sources.
Bringing forward projects to delivery.

Resource / Timeline:
Internal team. (Funding for additional project management and urban designer across all three areas)
Community procurement.
External specialists.
Planning input.
Partially started: Delivery to be planned.

Vision and strategy

Parameters: Strategic area documents to guide future development delivery. It typically encompasses a broad range of physical, social, economic, and environmental factors, aiming to create a coherent vision for the future. Understanding community driven need. Identifying gaps and commissioning supporting evidence and masterplanning designs to augment internal urban design resources where appropriate.

Outcomes:
Create a Vision for each area.
Map and illustration of the area confirming connectivity, green and blue corridors, areas owned by CDC, development sites identified in the LP.
Priority Action Plan for each area identifying projects and any associated funding.
Presentation of projects to agree funding.

Resource / Timeline:
External specialists.
Planning support.
S106 funds held.
Internal team.
OCC input.

Connectivity

Parameters: Green and blue connectivity, walk to school routes, school streets, road networks and onward connections, public transport availability and accessibility.

Outcomes: Create connectivity mapping of all areas.
Identify, understand and promote ‘walk to school’ routes.
Identify major projects and add to Priority Action Plan.
Connectivity on 15/20 min locality principles.

Resource / Timeline:
Planning support.
Internal team.
External specialists.
OCC input.

High Street Review

Parameters: Audit and comparison of empties. Wider review of High Street regeneration, reflections on why some areas seem to be more insulated than others from change and economic factors.
Answer the does parking play any part question.
Linking to the Night Time Economy.

Outcomes: Report on High Street Regeneration covering parameters.
Individual reports on Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington
SPD on High Street Regeneration and possible reuse of property.

Resource / Timeline:
Experience Oxfordshire.(Partnership)
Internal team.
Commercial property agent for audit. (Funding)
In progress: Delivery Q2.

Night Time Economy

Parameters: Review of changes to the Night Time Economy, reflections on why some areas seem to be more insulated than others.
What does that look like in relation to the High Street.
How should we plan for adequate provision.
Linking to High Street Review and Tourism.

Outcomes: Report on the Night Time Economy covering parameters.
Report on the current position and action plan for provision in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington.

Resource / Timeline:
Experience Oxfordshire. (partnership)
Internal team.
Commercial property agent for audit. (Funding)

Tourism

Parameters:
Audit and review of current visitor numbers, comparison to wider Oxfordshire, estimates of growth moving forward.
Understanding and evaluating what the future might look like.

Outcomes:
Report on current position, reflecting parameters.
Report on the expected impact and outcomes of future development sites and the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor.
Individual Tourism Report on Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington identifying local drivers, travel connectivity, employment, and future requirements.
Report on mechanisms for increasing locality stays, local spend and relation to the circular economy.
Proposed itineraries for Cherwell centric routes.

Resource / Timeline:
Experience Oxfordshire – (Partnership)

Economic Review

Parameters: Current economic position for UK plc, Oxfordshire and Cherwell. Reflections on Cherwell's national positioning. Review of the Oxford to Cambridge Growth corridor and the expected long term economic outfall.
Identification of locality drivers across Cherwell, industrial sector specialisms, employment issues, economic requirements moving into the future.

Outcomes: Report on current economic position, reflecting parameters.
Report on the expected impact and outcomes of the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor.
Individual Economic Report on Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington identifying local drivers, specialisms, employment, and future requirements.

Resource / Timeline:
External reporting – commercial delivery. (Funding)
Internal team.

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This report is public	
Cherwell Futures Programme	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	7 October 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Leader of the Council, Councillor David Hingley
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	25 September 2025
Report of	Corporate Director Resources and Transformation, Stephen Hinds

Purpose of report

To seek approval for the next phase of Transformation to transition to the Cherwell Futures Programme. Following a comprehensive review by the Executive and analysis of progress made in 2024-25, the programme's focus has been strategically narrowed to focus on three priority areas: Planning, Environmental Services, and Customer Engagement (Single Front Door).

This approach will provide clear assurance on targeted savings and establish a definitive means of implementation. Depending on the full scope of the project agreed, it is anticipated to achieve between £3 million and £4 million in savings per annum over the medium term (6-18 months) from approval.

The report asks the Executive to allocate an initial £400k in funding to enable work on the priority areas identified, and to agree that a further £1.1m can be accessed subject to strict governance and oversight procedures.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To approve the Cherwell Futures Programme to prioritise the three key areas of Planning, Environmental Services, and Customer Engagement (Single Front Door), as the core focus for the next phase of work.

1.2 To approve the allocation from the Projects Reserve of £0.4 million to fund initial support and preparatory work required for the three prioritised areas noted in recommendation 1.1 above, together with transferring £1.1 million from the Projects Reserve to a new Cherwell Futures Reserve for

implementation and resource costs, subject to Executive approval, as required by the Council's Reserves Policy.

1.3 To approve the proposed delivery model referenced in section 4. This model aims to bring more project management in-house to reduce risk and maximise cost-effectiveness, using external support only where necessary.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 Cherwell District Council is facing a projected funding gap of approximately £10.7 million by 2029/30, with savings of £3.8 million required in 2026/27. The Transformation Programme was launched to tackle these financial pressures and prepare the council for potential Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

2.2 The Council has adopted a new Vision and Strategy for 2024, setting out a clear ambition to become a modern, high-performing authority delivering positive, lasting change. The goal is to improve outcomes for residents, communities, and places, while equipping the council to meet financial challenges and modernise its ways of working. This vision is being delivered through a refreshed transformation programme approach, combining bottom-up service reviews with a top-down Target Operating Model (TOM). The approach is designed to identify efficiencies, income opportunities, and potential service reductions, while also investing in new ways of working and a lower-cost operating model.

2.3 The initial phase of the program has already secured approximately £1.8 million in recurring savings for the 2025/26 financial year. Building on this success, the program is now proposed to be refocused to a targeted, phased approach prioritising three key projects that have the potential to deliver significant savings and service improvements in the short to medium term:

Planning, Environmental Services, and Customer Engagement.

2.4 These three primary project areas have a combined estimated savings potential of approximately £2.8 million to £3 million. The review of additional potential savings initiatives may contribute a further £1 million in potential savings, bringing the total estimated savings to £3 million to £4 million over the medium term.

2.5 To prepare these projects for implementation, i.e. to be specified in sufficient detail for procurement, a targeted investment of £1.5 million is requested, subject to business cases being developed and approved by the Executive. This funding is split into two parts: £0.4 million for the 2025/26 revenue budget to fund preparatory work and essential interim support, and £1.1 million ring-fenced in reserves for implementation. Each project will require a separate business case and Executive approval before funds are released. This approach is intended to ensure robust governance and control of expenditure,

delivering a long-term strategy to build a more resilient organisation that can protect core services and improve efficiency.

2.6 Beyond the savings anticipated from this programme, the latest MTFS estimates that a further £6 million in savings will be required by 2029/30. Further investment to continue transformation efforts across other service areas may assist in closing this gap. Therefore, the council will continue to consider additional programmes of work to offset the need for likely service reductions that will be required to balance the budget over the medium term, pending the outcome of the Fair Funding Review and other government decisions on local authority funding.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	The programme requests £1.5m to progress three priority projects (Customer Engagement/Single Front Door, Environmental Services operational improvement, Planning). This comprises a transfer from reserves of £0.4m revenue in 2025/26 for preparatory work and the creation of an earmarked reserve of £1.1m for implementation. Each draw-down from the £1.1m reserve will be subject to a separate business case and Executive approval. The transfer from reserves in 2025/26 is expected to fund the following: • Leadership: Programme Director • Delivery: 3 Programme Managers (IT/Digital, Environment, Planning) • Support: 2 Business Analysts, Comms/Marketing, Feasibility Assessment • Specialist Input: External resource for business case development • Methodology: Zero-Based Budgeting rollout Estimated savings potential across the three projects is ~£2.8m–£3.0m, with a further ~£1.0m potential in other initiatives (total ~£3.0m–£4.0m over 6–18 months). This may potentially contribute to the £10.7m MTFS gap by 2029/30 (pressure crystallising from 2026/27) but will not close the gap. If further transformation funding is not approved across other services, residual MTFS gap closure may require service reductions. Phasing, benefits tracking and gated approvals will manage non-delivery risk.

	The transfer from reserves and the creation of the new earmarked reserve can be accommodated through realigning existing reserves to this strategic programme. Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer), 24 September 2025			
Legal	Best Value duty requires continuous improvement in the delivery of services. The Council, as a best value authority, is under a legal obligation to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised. In doing so, it must have regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. The Council is also obligated to demonstrate good governance across all its functions and to manage risk effectively. The guiding principles in delivering best value are continuous improvement, leadership, governance, culture, use of resources, service delivery, and partnerships and community engagement. This report outlines the Council's transformation ambitions, focusing on key areas in fulfilling this duty and balanced budget, with member oversight at the heart of its delivery. There are no legal implications identified in this report. Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, 29 September 2025			
Risk Management	Programme-level risks include: • benefits shortfall/non-delivery, mitigated by gated business cases, Executive oversight and a benefits tracker. • capacity and change fatigue, mitigated by staged delivery and targeted external support. • dependencies with LGR and county programme, managed through governance and SRO escalation. • cost pressures in Environmental Services, addressed through a dedicated Programme Manager, route optimisation, and operational redesign. A programme risk register will be maintained, with exception reporting to the proposed Transformation Board.			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact				N/A
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is	x			The Customer Engagement Front Door and wider service redesigns can improve access and consistency. However, if self-service channels are not complemented by assisted options, there is a

delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?				risk of digital exclusion and differential impact on people with protected characteristics. We will complete proportionate Equality & Climate Impact Assessments (ECIA) at the project level using the Council's template and involve user groups in co-design and testing. Mitigations will include: • assisted digital and telephone/face-to-face options. • accessibility by design (plain English, translation). • targeted engagement with disability, age and ethnicity networks. • active monitoring of outcomes. Potential if services were "digital-only". Mitigated via assisted channels, inclusive design, and targeted engagement.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	x			Potentially, depending on channel design and process changes, impacts will be assessed and mitigated in each project.
Climate & Environmental Impact	x			Projects align with the Council's ambition to achieve net zero for our own operations by 2030. In Environmental Services, operational redesign, route optimisation and better system integration can reduce fuel use per lift, while improved recycling/ "Simpler Recycling" readiness should increase resource recovery. Operational trade-offs (e.g., changes to collection patterns) may require carbon assessment at the business-case stage. The Customer Engagement shift to digital and process automation can reduce printing and staff travel. Each workstream will complete climate sections in the ECIA and quantify carbon impacts and mitigations.
ICT & Digital Impact	x			The Proposed Delivery is consistent with the Digital Futures Strategy, consolidating platforms, improving data flows, exploring RPA/automation, and strengthening cyber posture and user experience. Customer-facing changes will leverage our Microsoft 365 environment and existing integration patterns, with IT governance ensuring

				security-by-design and resilience. Any system changes will pass through architecture, information security, and change control.
Data Impact		x		Where personal data processing changes (e.g., SFD customer records, planning workflows), we will complete Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA), follow data-minimisation principles, update ROPAs and privacy notices, and apply Council cyber and information security policies. Information governance changes will be agreed with SIRO/IG leads before implementation.
Procurement & subsidy		x		All procurements will follow Council processes (route to market, evaluation, contract management) via the Procurement Team, including compliance with current public procurement rules, transparency, and conflict management. Where projects modify existing contracts or grant/support arrangements, Legal/Procurement will advise on material change risk and subsidy control compliance; a proportionate subsidy assessment will be completed where relevant. Programme procurement will re-use corporate approaches to ensure value for money.
Council Priorities	The programme supports the Council's Vision "A modern council inspiring and enabling positive, lasting change" and four strategic priorities (2025–2030): • Economic Prosperity, • Community Leadership, • Environmental Stewardship, • Quality Housing and Place Making. Customer Engagement improves customer outcomes and efficiency. Environmental Services improvements contribute to Environmental Stewardship. Planning transformation underpins quality housing/place-making; all three contribute to financial sustainability.			
Human Resources	Dedicated Programme Managers will be recruited for Environmental Services and Customer Engagement. Wider redesigns may change roles, structures, and skill requirements (e.g., digital capability, process ownership). HR and management will work with trade unions on consultation, organisational design, job evaluation, learning & development, and equality considerations. Change impact assessments and			

	communications will accompany each business case. Relevant organisational policies will be adhered to. Claire Cox, Assistant Director of Human Resources, 26 September 2025
Property	Environmental Services work may have property/infrastructure implications, requiring separate capital planning, cost control caps and business cases. No immediate property implications arise from Customer Engagement/Planning readiness work, but any future changes to office/customer-facing footprints will return with specific proposals. Mona Walsh, Assistant Director Property, 29 September 2025
Consultation & Engagement	The refined focus responds to Member feedback at the Executive BPM away day and subsequent discussions. Further engagement will continue via the Project Board and Transformation Board. Project-level consultation (staff, unions, service users, portfolio holders) and statutory consultations (where required) will be planned alongside ECIA/DPIA work as business cases come forward

Supporting Information

3. Background

Financial and Operational Context

3.1 Cherwell District Council, like local authorities across the country, is facing significant financial and operational pressures. Our latest medium-term financial projections indicate a funding gap, now estimated at approximately £10.7 million by 2029/30, with a substantial portion of this deficit anticipated to emerge by 2026/27. The funding gap is forecast primarily as a result of an expected reduction in resources available to the council as a result of the Government's anticipated Fair Funding Review 2.0 and associated Business Rates Reset.

3.2 Concurrently, the council is preparing for the complexities of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), guided by Ministerial instructions to ensure a smooth transition and maintain long-term viability. The Transformation Programme, now the Cherwell Futures Programme, was developed as a direct response to these dual pressures, designed to deliver efficiency savings, minimise any impact on frontline services, and position the council as a resilient and effective organisation to prepare for LGR.

Progress to Date and Strategic Refinement

3.3 Over the past year, the council has comprehensively assessed its operating model, financial resilience, and service delivery. This work has included the development of a draft Case for Change and a new Target Operating Model (TOM), which was informed by a series of internal and external engagement exercises. The initial phase of this work has proven successful, with circa £1.8 million in savings already secured and approved in the current year's MTFS budget. This accomplishment demonstrates the council's capacity to deliver tangible results and provides a strong foundation for the next phase.

3.4 A clear timeline of events has guided the programme's delivery. The procurement process for a transformation partner began in June 2024, with a partner starting work in July 2024. This initial engagement focused on an analytical phase, including baselining and activity analysis (Phase 1) in August 2024, assessing effectiveness and pressures (Phase 2) in September/October 2024, and undertaking service-level work (Phase 3) in November 2024. These activities culminated in briefings to the Leader, Deputy Leader, and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services in November 2024.

3.5 This foundational work and subsequent analysis led to a paper being presented to the Executive in January 2025 to summarise the work and seek approval for Phase 4. Following this, the continuation of transformation work, including process mapping and lean delivery, has been ongoing, with improved Phases 1, 2 and 3 work carried out across the council since April 2025. This progression demonstrates an evidence-based approach to the transformation process.

4. Details

4.1 Feedback from the Executive on the transformation programme’s progress provided a significant opportunity to reflect on the emerging proposals and to reframe work into a more focused programme that continues to deliver financial impact while building the foundation for longer-term improvements. The next phase is proposed to provide targeted outcomes grounded in evidence and shaped by the lessons of our work to date.

4.2 Three key areas are proposed to form the core of the Cherwell Futures programme from herein: Customer Engagement, Planning Service Improvements, and Environmental Services Improvements. Embedded across these three priority areas, digitalisation and a shift in culture will act as key enablers that will support all transformation efforts. By investing in automation, we can move administrative tasks to automation and reduce manual workflows, allowing officers to focus on value-added activities and decisions that require judgment. This will create efficiencies, improve effectiveness, and speed up the customer journey.

4.3 To successfully complete this work and maximise efficiencies, these projects must be underpinned by a comprehensive process review and organisational

redesign. Simply introducing new technology without first addressing existing processes and culture risks a lack of confidence in its effectiveness.

4.4 This strategy seeks to prepare for alignment with external Environmental Services transformation and ensure we are prepared for the future transition to a new unitary authority.

A. Primary Transformation Projects: Focused Delivery for High-Impact Savings

4.5 The three primary projects have been prioritised due to their potential to deliver significant savings and improvements. The approach to delivering these projects is tailored to their individual readiness and complexity, reflecting a prudent and pragmatic strategy.

Customer Engagement (Single front door)

4.6 The customer engagement door aims to make it easier for residents to access council services, while enabling staff to focus on the most vulnerable and complex cases. Although activities such as community engagement, place-making, and targeted communications are not within the scope of this programme, elements of this pre-work will continue to be delivered as part of normal service operations. These efforts add value by helping residents find their own solutions, build resilience, and reduce preventable demand, ultimately freeing up officer time for those who need it most.

4.7 When residents do need to contact the Council, a new digital front door will provide a single, accessible point of entry for all services. The Customer Engagement Door will bring together teams, enable process redesign, organisational redesign, and drive automation, digitalisation, and the introduction of robotics.

4.8 A new digital front door will provide a single, accessible entry point for all services. Simple requests and transactions will be automated wherever possible, but crucially, support will always be available for those who need it. Self-service will never mean digital exclusion: accessibility and inclusion are non-negotiable. The aim is to move administrative tasks to automation, so officers can focus on value-driven activity and decisions that require judgment.

4.9 The outlined approach ensures that the council maintains control over the project's scope and objectives, enabling a more targeted and cost-effective procurement process for a specialised external partner, rather than engaging a broad and potentially more expensive transformation partner. This model minimises risk and ensures value for money by allowing the council to define its needs before seeking external support.

4.10 The estimated savings from this project are £1 million. The £1 million savings estimate relates only to the front door element. Savings from “pre front door” activities, such as community engagement, place-making, and targeted communications, are not included in this figure.

Environmental Services (Operational Improvement)

4.11 Environmental Services is currently projecting an overspend of £0.75 million for 2025/26, making operational transformation urgent. The plan is to recruit a dedicated Programme Manager to lead service redesign and operational improvement.

4.12 Key opportunities that have been identified and will be pursued by the Programme Manager include addressing the currently below-average recycling rate of 50.39%, implementing operational efficiencies such as a potential shift to a different collection model, and investing in digital integration of waste management systems to enable route optimisation and real-time monitoring.

4.13 The Programme Manager will also produce the business cases required for these changes, ensuring that all proposed initiatives are rigorously justified and aligned with the council's financial and strategic goals, with further assurance on savings, costs, ROI etc.

4.14 The estimated savings are £1 million, and the changes will help ensure the Council is ready for future structural changes.

Planning

4.15 The transformation of Planning Services is not simply about implementing new processes or systems. It begins with a thorough understanding of the root causes of current challenges. Working closely with service teams, the Council has gathered a wealth of reports, self-improvement plans, and feedback. The next step is to move beyond piecemeal fixes and develop a holistic plan that addresses the underlying issues and delivers a long-term solution. This readiness assessment will identify what can be done immediately and what should be prioritised for future phases.

4.16 Some of the root causes we are addressing include:

- The need for a culture change programme
- Process redesign and standard Operating Procedures to drive consistency
- Reducing email workflows
- Removing silo working
- Optimising and automating CRM systems to improve efficiencies
- Implementing a performance management system
- Integration of systems and services
- Restructuring of teams
- S106 process

The aim is to avoid siloed interventions and instead create a joined-up approach that supports the organisation. Only by tackling the root causes can the Council ensure that transformation delivers lasting benefits for residents and staff.

4.17 The Planning service has an estimated saving potential of £800,000. The first step will be to complete an internal readiness assessment to understand the service's current state and capacity. A paper will follow this assessment for review, outlining the next steps and a clear critical path forward.

4.18 This phased approach prioritises internal readiness and assessment before committing to a full-scale programme. Before proceeding, it is designed to provide a clear and evidence-based understanding of the project's feasibility and scope. It aligns with the overall strategy of maximising cost-effectiveness by being more targeted with external partners, ensuring that any future engagement is based on a solid foundation of internal analysis.

B. The Foundational Pillars: Digitalisation and Culture Change

4.19 The success of the three primary projects is contingent upon two underpinning foundational pillars.

4.20 **Digitisation** is the central enabler for the targeted Cherwell Futures programmes as highlighted above. The objective is not merely to introduce new technology but to fundamentally redesign services to be more efficient, accessible, and responsive. This involves mapping existing processes, identifying areas of duplication and inefficiency, and then leveraging digital solutions to streamline workflows and enhance the user experience.

4.21 **Culture change** is recognised as a critical component of successful transformation. The council's vision is to modernise its services to achieve maximum efficiencies and, where possible, with limited service reductions, to provide a best value service for residents and employees. This requires a fundamental shift in organisational culture, fostering an adaptable, innovative, and collaborative environment. A comprehensive workforce development programme will be essential to equip staff with the necessary skills and to align their capabilities with the new Target Operating Model (TOM), ensuring they feel empowered to deliver services effectively and efficiently within the new operational environment.

C. Financial Strategy and Phased Funding Request

4.22 The council's financial projections indicate a significant funding gap of approximately £10.7 million by 2029/30. The Cherwell Futures Programme addresses this challenge by identifying and delivering efficiency savings and enhancing revenue generation.

4.23 The initial request for £1.5 million is a targeted investment to cover the costs of essential interim roles and specialist expertise. We are requesting £0.4 million for the 2025/26 revenue budget to fund preparatory work, and the remaining £1.1 million will be ring-fenced for future implementation, with strict governance controls in place requiring separate business cases for each expenditure, which will include detailed scope, risk assessments, and spend controls.

4.24 The estimated savings from the three priority projects: Customer Engagement Front Door (£1 million), Planning (£800,000), and Environment initiatives (estimated £1 million)—total approximately £2.8 million to £3 million, aligning with this projection. The review of additional identified potential savings initiatives may contribute a further £1 million in potential savings.

4.25 While this report outlines a low-risk, phased approach to transformation, it is important to recognise that this alone will not fully address the council's projected £10.7 million budget gap. To safeguard services in the longer term, further work across other service areas may be required, subject to future funding and political support

4.26 This report aims to provide the Executive with a balanced view of the risks and opportunities associated with continued investment in transformation. This will support informed decision-making on how best to strengthen organisational resilience and reduce the potential need for service reductions over the medium term.

4.27 Budget setting will continue as scheduled, with details shared and decision-making as per the timeline (including service level options, etc).

D. Governance and Oversight

4.28 Whilst the governance will develop as the programme progresses, the following will provide members with the necessary assurance and oversight

A Project Board will be established to oversee three priority areas. This board will be responsible for managing the full lifecycle of each project—from initial scoping through to business cases and implementation.

The Programme Board will be chaired by the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for Transformation (CD/ED) and will include relevant Portfolio Holders and officers. This structure ensures that Portfolio Holders are fully engaged in the delivery process and can provide strategic oversight. It also enables effective reporting to the Executive, alongside the SRO and supporting officers.

To support transparency and informed decision-making, members will receive regular project highlight reports. These reports will provide updates on progress, costs, and risks associated with each priority area, amongst other things.

The Programme Board will report updates to the Executive as part of the existing BPM agenda, and/or receive steers as appropriate through separate strategic-level sessions chaired by the Leader or Deputy Leader. Through these mechanisms, which will be fully determined in due course, relevant Portfolio Holders will be able to provide updates and receive input on the priority areas.

5 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

5.2 **Option 1: Do Nothing**
This approach would involve taking no decisive action to address the council's financial and operational challenges. Maintaining the status quo would result in a projected cumulative deficit of around £46 million by 2029/30. This would inevitably lead to greater service provision cuts and compromise service effectiveness, statutory compliance, and public trust, while failing to address underlying operational inefficiencies. Savings will need to be delivered through traditional budget methods, likely leading to greater service provision cuts. The risks of inaction far outweigh the required initial investment.

5.3 **Option 2: Minimal or 'In-House Only' Delivery**
This model proposes that the council's internal teams lead and deliver the transformation programme without any external support. While the proposed plan for Phase Two brings more delivery in-house, a purely in-house model is not considered feasible to deliver the required scale of change and pace of delivery. The current lean change capacity within the organisation is not sufficient to deliver the programme's ambitious objectives and realise the extent of savings identified. Given the urgent need to address the projected funding gap and meet government expectations for financial sustainability ahead of Local Government Reorganisation, a solely in-house approach would not be able to deliver the savings in the required timeframe.

5.4 **Option 3: Full Partner Model**
A single transformation partner model was initially considered to accelerate delivery and achieve "Speed to Value" across the Council's savings proposals. While this approach offered potential for rapid impact, concerns were raised during the Executive in July regarding risk exposure and assurance of return on investment (ROI).

Further refinements to the model were explored and presented in August, but feedback from the Executive indicated continued reservations. These discussions highlighted the need for a more prudent and targeted strategy.

The revised approach now focuses on strengthening internal delivery capability and engaging external partners only where there is a clear, evidence-based need. This ensures a lower-risk, cost-effective model with stronger ROI assurance, supported by internal readiness assessments and robust business cases. Future partner engagement will be highly selective, designed to maximise value and align with organisational priorities.

5.5 **Option 4: Achieve Savings Through Service Cuts**
This option, which involves directly reducing or eliminating council services to achieve the required financial savings, is not recommended as the primary strategy for achieving savings. A strategy based on widespread service cuts would be detrimental to the community, directly impacting frontline service

delivery, potentially compromising the council's ability to meet its statutory duties and significantly harming public satisfaction. While some service consolidation may be necessary in the future, the recommended approach of transformation seeks to improve efficiency and generate new income, thereby protecting core services rather than cutting them.

6 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 The refined Cherwell Futures programme represents a strategic and forward-thinking approach to service excellence, efficiency, and readiness for organisational change. The council has demonstrated its ability to deliver tangible results, with £1.8 million in savings already secured and approved. The proposed Phase Two represents a deliberate, low-risk pathway to build on this success and provides a credible roadmap to achieving between £3 million and £4 million in additional savings over the medium term.

6.2 The proposed initial allocation of £400k plus an additional earmarked £1.1 million is a critical and prudent investment. It will enable the council to initiate and drive the delivery of three high-priority projects, each with a clear potential for significant savings and service improvements. The robust governance structure and phased delivery model will ensure that public funds are managed responsibly and that the Executive retains control over the programme's direction, safeguarding service delivery through the need for a business case at each appropriate stage.

6.3 By approving this report and funding the next phase of the Cherwell Futures Programme, the Executive will enable the council to proactively address its financial challenges, protect essential services for residents, and prepare for a sustainable future within the new unitary authority framework, as a result of Local Government Reorganisation. .

Decision Information

Key Decision	Yes
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	None
Background Papers	Phase 1-3 Report – Executive January 2025
Reference Papers	• Draft Case For Change • Target Operation Model • Environmental Services Summary • Procurement Timeline • Letter from Jim McMahon and Summarisation of Ministerial Documents • Phase 4 Summary Report
Report Author	Charlene Greenaway – Transformation Lead
Report Author contact details	Charlene.greenaway@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	Report of Corporate Director for Resources and Transformation

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This report is public Appendix 6 to the report is exempt from publication by virtue of paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of Local Government Act 1972	
Finance Monitoring Report August 2025	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	7 October 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, Councillor Lesley McLean
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	25 September 2025
Report of	Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer), Michael Furness

Purpose of report

To report to Executive the council's forecast year-end financial position as at the end of the August 2025. Further detail can be found in the report and its appendices.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

1.1 To consider and note the contents of the council's financial management report as at the end of August 2025.

1.2 To approve the Use of Reserve and Grant Funding Requests in Appendix 4.

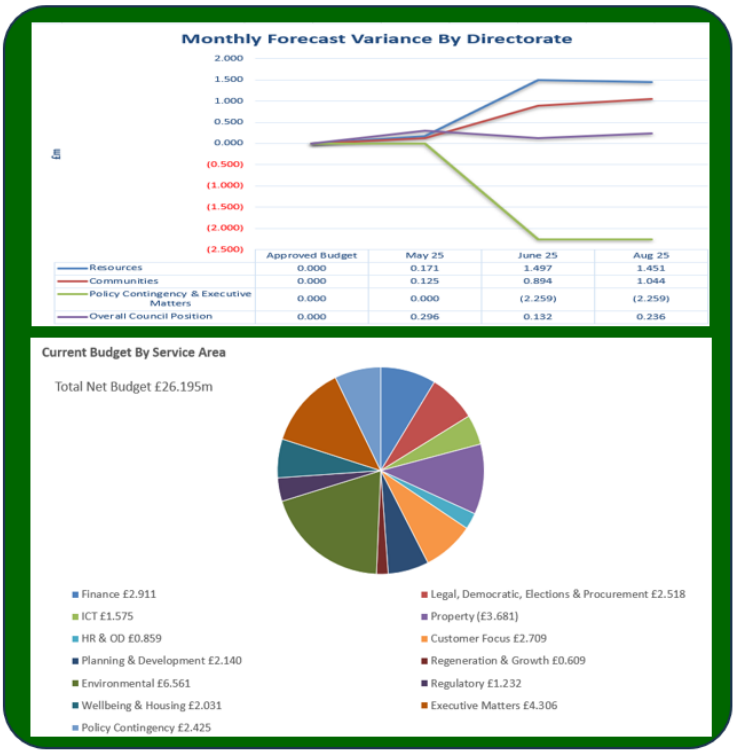
1.3 To approve the amendments to the capital programme in Appendix 5.

1.4 To approve the proposed, write offs set out in exempt Appendix 6.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The Finance section presents the forecast year-end revenue position for the 2025/26 financial year and in a summary dashboard as detailed below:



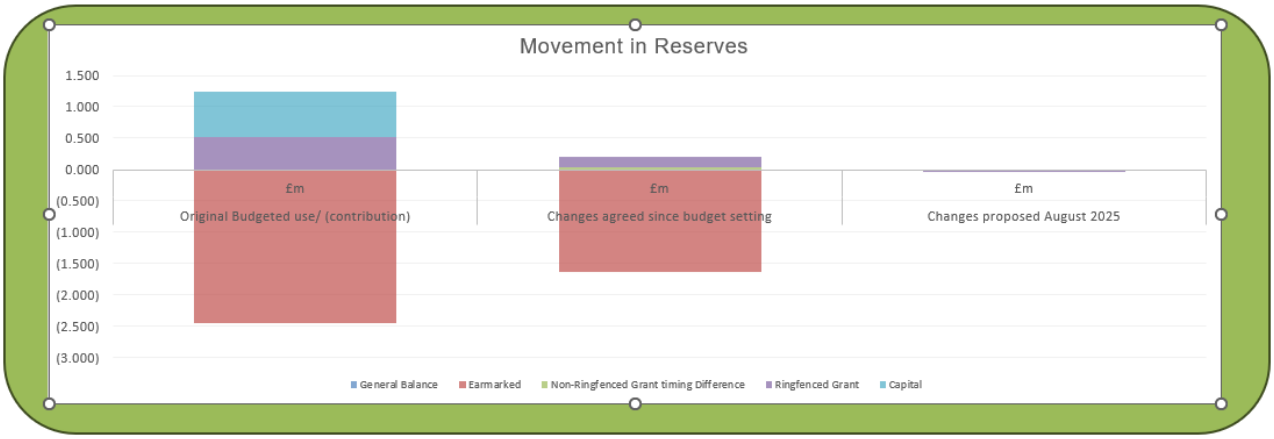


Service Analysis

Service	Finance	Legal, Democratic, Elections & Procurement	ICT	Property	HR & OD	Customer Focus	Planning & Development	Growth & Economy	Environmental	Regulatory	Wellbeing & Housing	Executive Matters	Policy Contingency	Total
Budget approved by Council	**2.911**	**2.518**	**1.575**	**-3.681**	**0.859**	**2.709**	**2.140**	**0.609**	**6.561**	**1.232**	**2.028**	**4.306**	**2.428**	**26.195**
Budget Adjustments approved:														
Current Budget	**2.911**	**2.518**	**1.575**	**-3.681**	**0.859**	**2.709**	**2.140**	**0.609**	**6.561**	**1.232**	**2.028**	**4.306**	**2.428**	**26.195**
Finance Overspend - Universal credit & fewer court summons	0.083													**0.083**
Change in overtime policy no longer going ahead					0.050									**0.050**
Top slice of grants, IT license costs and temporary accommodation costs											0.561			**0.561**
Environmental - gate fees, agency									0.694					**0.694**
Property				1.343									-1.100	**0.243**
IT			0.015											**0.015**
Additional EPR funding												-0.309		**-0.309**
Treasury												-0.350		**-0.350**
Dividend												-0.500		**-0.500**
Customer Focus underspend - over recovery of land charges income and vacancies						-0.040								**-0.040**
Planning & Development underspend - over recovery of income							-0.189							**-0.189**
Regulatory Services underspend - staffing changes										-0.022				**-0.022**
Current (Under)/Overspends	**0.083**	**0.000**	**0.015**	**1.343**	**0.050**	**-0.040**	**-0.189**	**0.000**	**0.694**	**-0.022**	**0.561**	**-1.159**	**-1.100**	**0.236**

Mitigation Table

Service	Forecast Overspend	Potential Mitigations	Potential revised Forecast Outturn	Detail on mitigation
Finance	0.083		0.083	
Legal, Democratic, Elections & Procurement	0.000		0.000	
ICT	0.015		0.015	Filling a vacant post part way through the year
Property	1.343	(0.034)	1.309	Windfall Insurance Income for car park damages
HR & OD	0.050		0.050	
Customer Focus	-0.040		-0.040	
Resources & Transformation	**1.451**	**-0.034**	**1.417**	
Planning & Development	-0.189		-0.189	
Regeneration & Growth	0.000		0.000	
Environmental	0.694		0.694	
Regulatory	-0.022		-0.022	
Wellbeing & Housing	0.561		0.561	
Communities	**1.044**	**0.000**	**1.044**	
Total	**0.236**	**-0.034**	**0.202**	
FUNDING	**0**	**0**	**0**	
Potential Revised Forecast (Surplus)/Deficit			**0.202**	



2.2 The capital forecast yearend position will be reported on a Quarterly basis with the second report being September 2025.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	Financial and Resource implications are detailed within sections 4.1 and 4.2 of this report. The reserves policy requires Executive to agree transfers to and from earmarked reserves and general balances during the financial year. Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance, 22 September 2025
Legal	There are no legal implications arising at this stage. The Council has a fiduciary duty to council taxpayers, which means it must consider the prudent use of resources, including control of expenditure, financial prudence in the short and long term and the need to act in good faith in relation to compliance with statutory duties and exercising statutory powers. The Council has a statutory obligation to maintain a balanced budget and the monitoring process enables Executive to remain aware of issues

	and understand the actions being taken to maintain a balanced budget. The report sets out as at August 2025 the finance position for the Council as part of its fiduciary duty to implement budgetary controls and monitoring. Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 22 September 2025			
Risk Management	There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. Financial resilience and any risks link to it are managed through the Corporate Leadership Risk register. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 22 September 2025			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact		X		There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report.is report. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 22 September 2025
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		N/A
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		N/A
Climate & Environmental Impact		X		N/A
ICT & Digital Impact		X		N/A
Data Impact		X		N/A
Procurement & subsidy		X		N/A
Council Priorities	This report links to all council's priorities, as it summarises our progress against them during 2025/26.			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			

Consultation & Engagement	N/A

Supporting Information

3. Background

3.1 The council actively and regularly monitors its financial position to ensure it can deliver its corporate priorities and respond effectively to emerging issues.

3.2 This monitoring takes place monthly for finance, so the council can identify potential issues at the earliest opportunity and put measures in place to mitigate them.

3.3 These updates are consolidated on a quarterly basis where Performance and Finance updates are given due to the implications and interdependencies between them, and this is the summary financial forecast for the end of the financial year position for 2025/26.

4. Details

4.1 Finance Update

4.1.1 The council's overall forecast year-end position for 2025/26 is an overspend of £0.236m. The forecast currently shows an overspend across Directorates with potential mitigations that are currently being investigated totalling (£0.034m) as detailed in the mitigations table above. These mitigations are not part of the forecast.

The projected outturn for the services is summarised below in Table 1 and further details providing explanations for variances can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 1: Forecast Year End Position

Service	Current Budget £m	August 2025 Forecast to Year End £m	Aug Variance (Under) / Over £m	% Variance to current budget %	June Variance (Under) / Over £m	Change since Previous (better) / worse £m	
Finance	2.911	2.994	0.083	2.9%	0.115	(0.032)	
Legal, Democratic, Elections & Procurement	2.518	2.518	0.000	0.0%	0.000	0.000	
ICT	1.575	1.590	0.015	1.0%	0.015	0.000	
Property	(3.681)	(2.338)	1.343	36.5%	1.343	0.000	
HR & OD	0.859	0.909	0.050	5.8%	0.024	0.026	

Customer Focus	2.709	2.669	(0.040)	-1.5%	0.000	(0.040)	
Resources & Transformation	**6.891**	**8.342**	**1.451**	**21.1%**	**1.497**	**(0.046)**	
Planning & Development	2.140	1.951	(0.189)	-8.8%	0.000	(0.189)	
Regeneration & Growth	0.609	0.609	0.000	0.0%	0.000	0.000	
Environmental	6.561	7.255	0.694	10.6%	0.769	(0.075)	
Regulatory	1.232	1.210	(0.022)	-1.8%	0.000	(0.022)	
Wellbeing & Housing	2.031	2.592	0.561	27.6%	0.125	0.436	
Communities	**12.573**	**13.617**	**1.044**	**8.3%**	**0.894**	**0.150**	
Subtotal for Directorates	**19.464**	**21.959**	**2.495**	**12.8%**	**2.391**	**0.104**	
Executive Matters	4.306	3.147	(1.159)	-26.9%	(1.159)	0.000	
Policy Contingency	2.425	1.325	(1.100)	-45.4%	(1.100)	0.000	
Total	**26.195**	**26.431**	**0.236**	**0.9%**	**0.132**	**0.104**	
FUNDING	**(26.195)**	**(26.195)**	**0.000**	**0.0%**	**0.000**	**0.000**	
Forecast (Surplus)/Deficit	**0.000**	**0.236**	**0.236**		**0.132**	**0.104**	

Note: A positive variance is an overspend or a reduction in forecast income and a (negative) is an underspend or extra income received.
Green represents an underspend and red represents a overspend for the outturn position.

4.1.2 Table 2 below analyses the variances to distinguish between base budget variances and variances resulting from the non-delivery of previously approved savings. The non-delivery of savings has a knock-on impact on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy as failure to deliver on an ongoing basis adds to future pressures.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance – August 2025

Breakdown of current month forecast	August 2025 Forecast to Year End £m	Base Budget Over/ (Under) £m	Savings Non-Delivery £m
Resources	1.451	1.401	0.050
Communities	1.044	0.819	0.225
Subtotal Directorates	**2.495**	**2.220**	**0.275**
Executive Matters	(1.159)	(1.159)	0.000
Policy Contingency	(1.100)	(1.100)	0.000

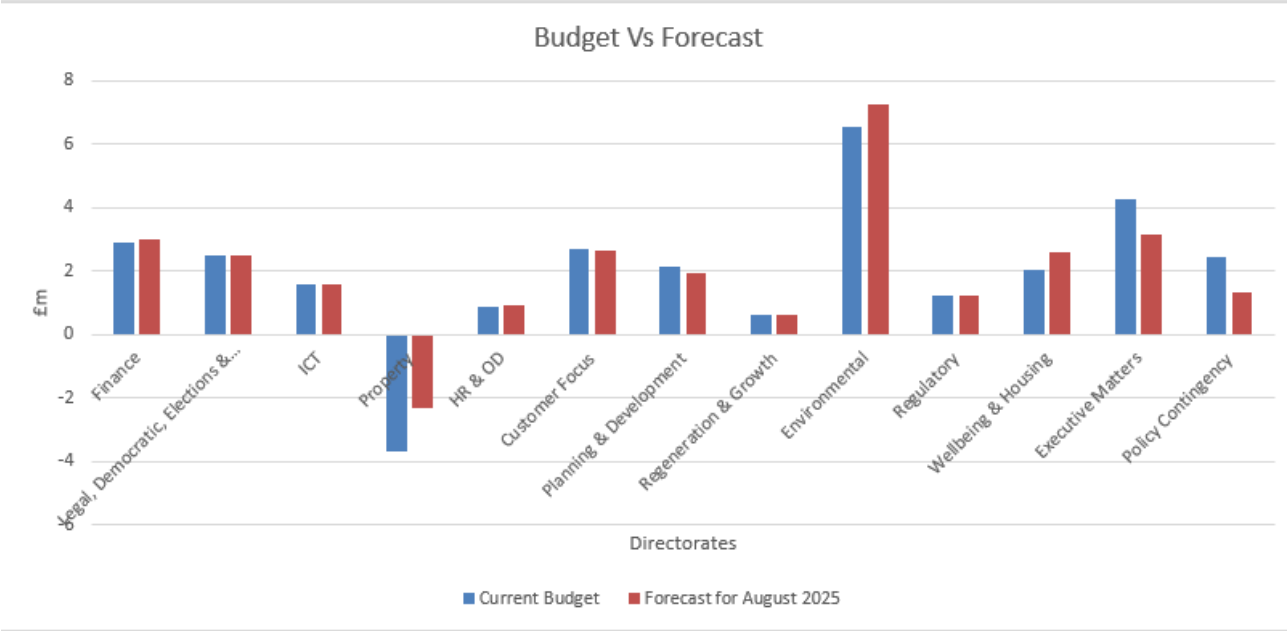
Total	**0.236**	**(0.039)**	**0.275**

FUNDING	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.000**

(Surplus)/Deficit	**0.236**	**(0.039)**	**0.275**

4.1.3 The graph below shows the Budget compared with the forecast to the end of the financial year.

Graph 1: Budget compared with Forecast



4.1.4 Table 3 below summarises the major forecast variances for the reporting period. Further details can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 3: Top Major Variances:

Service	Current Budget	Variance	% Variance
Property	3.681	1.343	36.5%
Environmental	6.561	0.694	10.6%
Wellbeing & Housing	2.031	0.561	27.6%
Finance	2.911	0.083	2.9%
Total	**10.242**	**2.037**	

Reserves

4.1.5 Allocations to and from reserves are made according to the Reserves Policy. Table 5 below summarises the movements which have been requested as at 31 August 2025, more details can be found within Appendix 4.

Table 5: Reserves forecast:

Reserves	Balance 1 April 2025 £m	Original Budgeted use/ (contribution) £m	Changes agreed since budget setting £m	Changes proposed August 2025 £m	Balance 31 March 2026 £m
General Balance	(7.853)	0.000	0.000	0.000	(7.853)
Earmarked	(31.264)	(2.444)	(1.635)	(0.007)	(35.350)
Non-Ringfenced Grant timing Difference	(0.033)	0.000	0.033	0.000	0.000
Ringfenced Grant	(1.918)	0.523	0.165	(0.036)	(1.266)
Subtotal Revenue	**(41.068)**	**(1.921)**	**(1.437)**	**(0.043)**	**(44.469)**
Capital	(7.482)	0.720	0.000	0.000	(6.762)
Total	**(48.550)**	**(1.201)**	**(1.437)**	**(0.043)**	**(51.231)**

*According to the Reserves Policy Executive are only required to approve uses of Capital Reserves, not contributions.
Please see Appendix 4 for proposed changes.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

Option 1: This report summarises the council's forecast revenue financial position up to the end of March 2026, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 The report updates Executive on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2025/26. Regular reporting is key to good governance and demonstrates that the council is actively managing its financial resources sustainably.

Decision Information

Key Decision	No
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Detailed Revenue Narrative on Forecast August 2025
Appendix 2	Virements & Aged Debt August 2025
Appendix 3	Funding August 2025
Appendix 4	Use of Reserves and Grant Funding August 2025
Appendix 5	Amendments to the capital Programme August 2025
Appendix 6	EXEMPT Write Off Details August 2025
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Leanne Lock
Report Author contact details	leanne.lock@cherwell-dc.gov.uk 01295 227098
Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	Report of Statutory Officer, S151 Officer

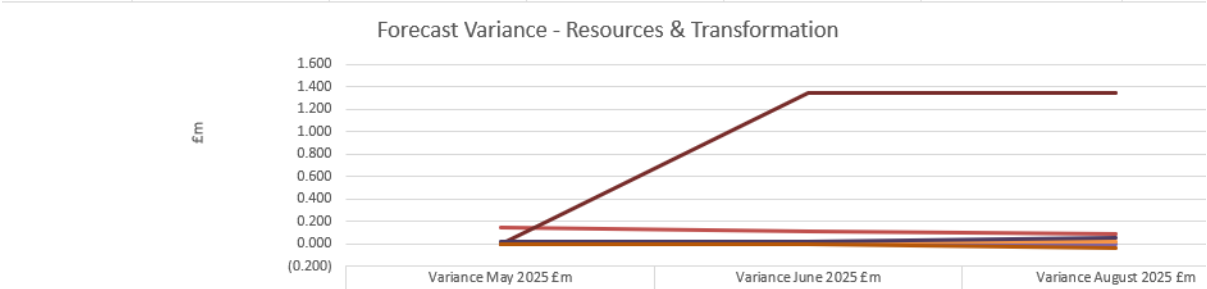
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Appendix 1 - Report Details – Additional Revenue narrative

Resources & Transformation

Revenue:

Resources & Transformation are forecasting £1.451m overspend against a budget of £6.891m (21.1%).



	Variance May 2025 £m	Variance June 2025 £m	Variance August 2025 £m
Finance	0.147	0.115	0.083
Legal, Democratic, Elections & Procurement	0.000	0.000	0.000
ICT	0.000	0.015	0.015
Property	0.000	1.343	1.343
HR & OD	0.024	0.024	0.050
Customer Focus	0.000	0.000	(0.040)

Finance	
Variation £0.083m Overspend	Overview of Forecast: The Forecast overspend is primarily due to a forecast overspend in corporate costs relating to bank charges for processing payments electronically. As the council makes more payments electronically these costs increase. The forecast overspend is £0.083m. The remaining variances net each other off with lower than budgeted forecast income from Court Costs and Housing Benefit Overpayments offset by over recovery of grant income
Variation to June's Forecast (£0.032m)	Changes since last month: Minor variations across the service. Mitigations will have to be considered as this overspend is as a result of corporate costs.

Legal, Democratic, Elections & Procurement	
Variation £0.000m Overspend	Legal, Democratic, Elections & Procurement are currently showing no overspend however there is a real risk that overspend occurs. We have increased the income

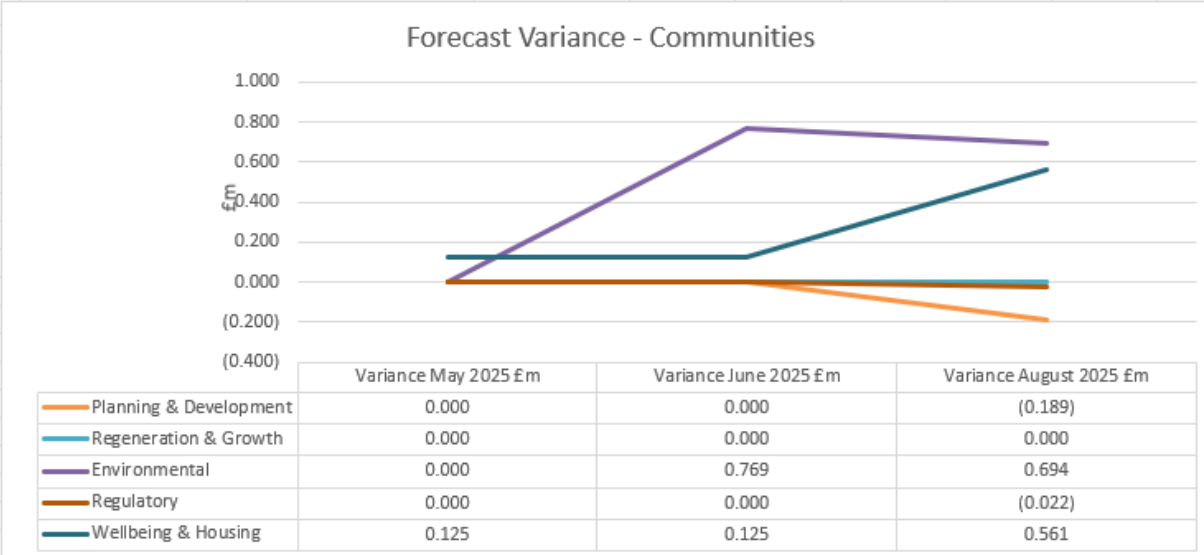
Variation to June's Forecast £0.000m	forecast, based on current projection, but this is very much dependent on developers/ planners agreeing s106 agreements. Continued recruitment issues also mean that we continue use locum staff in high risk areas such planning and litigation.
ICT	
Variation £0.015m Overspend	ICT are currently forecasting minor variations across the service.
Variation to June's Forecast £0.015m	
Property	
Variation £1.343m Overspend	Property are forecast an overspend of £1.343m the main reason for this forecast is : Property has experienced a shortfall in projected income and higher-than-anticipated costs associated with managing its properties during the current financial period. Income under-recovery is primarily due to slower-than-expected tenant uptake, compounded by broader economic challenges impacting the market and the need to agree competitive lease terms to attract tenants. Void property costs exceeded budget due to extended vacancy periods and increased operational costs required to maintain the properties in a safe and marketable condition. We are intensifying marketing efforts to secure new tenants, reviewing cost controls on properties, and updating our financial forecasts regularly to ensure they reflect the most up to date tenancy and property information. These variances are being actively managed and monitored.
Variation to June's Forecast £1.343m	**Under-Recovery of Income:** • Slower-than-expected tenant uptake. • Market challenges affecting the property sector. **Mitigations:** • Intensified marketing to attract occupiers • Cost control measures across the service.

	• Regular review of financial forecasts to reflect current position. • Ongoing review of procurement and oversight processes.
Customer Focus	
Variation (0.040m) underspend	Customer Focus are forecasting an underspend of (£0.040m) primarily down to holding onto a vacancy which will be filled in Q3.
Variation to June's Forecast (£0.040m)	
HR & OD	
Variations £0.050m Overspend	The forecast for August is an overspend of £0.050m by year-end. The overspend assumes that changes to the current overtime rates and policy will not proceed following consultation. Other overspends relate to the need to retain resources in the HR team to carry out HR functions.
Variation to June's Forecast £0.026m	Previously, the forecast assumed some savings achieved when the change to the overtime policy was implemented. The latest forecast reflects the decision to not proceed with the changes.

Communities

Revenue:

Communities are forecasting a £1.044m overspend against a budget of £12.573m, (8.3%).
The directorate recognises the overspend, in particular the pressure around staff sickness and the potential operational impact to waste collections. The team are working hard over the summer period to identify in year mitigations.



	Variance May 2025 £m	Variance June 2025 £m	Variance August 2025 £m
Planning & Development	0.000	0.000	(0.189)
Regeneration & Growth	0.000	0.000	0.000
Environmental	0.000	0.769	0.694
Regulatory	0.000	0.000	(0.022)
Wellbeing & Housing	0.125	0.125	0.561

Planning & Development	
Variation (£0.189m) underspend	Planning & Development is presently forecasting to be within budget by the end of the year. This is mainly due to Development Management fee income being bolstered by the receipts from strategic planning applications.
Variation to June's Forecast (£0.189m)	Additional income from strategic planning applications.

Regeneration & Growth	
Variation £0.000m	Regeneration & Growth are reporting on budget for August.
Variation to June's Forecast £0.000m	

Environmental	
Variation £0.694m Overspend	The forecasted pressure of £0.694m within Environmental Services is largely due to staffing pressures £0.523m within Waste and Recycling primarily as a result of agency staff usage, this continues to be closely monitored and managed alongside HR. Higher than anticipated residual waste tonnage being direct delivered to Transfer station has resulted in an overspend of £0.094m of which £0.038m relates to 2024/25. Delays to contract start date for new dry recycling processor have increased costs by £0.089m, this is also a result of a fall in commodity prices worldwide resulting in 67% increase in gate fee. A reduction in garden waste subscriptions due to a predicted 1,400 less uptake compared to 2024/25 resulting in an under recovery of income of £0.073m. The income received from sale of glass collected is currently reporting a £0.122m overspend compared to budget, this is due to a 40% reduction in glass rebates received from the processor, due to a reduction in glass income and PRN's (packaging recovery notes) on the international market. This is partly offset by non-recruitment to vacant posts of (£0.152m) within Environmental Services Admin, Landscaping Street Scene and Street Cleansing. A reduction in the amount of fuel required through usage and price (£0.082m) carrying out additional work on behalf of local partners (£0.017m) As part of the 2025/26 budget setting process HR proposed a cross-cutting saving reducing the overtime rate from time and a half to plain time during the working week. The policy change is not set to take place in 2025/26, so this has now been identified as a pressure of £0.040m.
Variation to June's Forecast (£0.075m)	As part of the 2025/26 budget setting process HR proposed a cross-cutting saving reducing the overtime rate from time and a half to plain time during the working week. The policy change is not set to take place in 2025/26, so this has now been identified as a pressure. A further reduction in recruitment to vacant posts within Admin, Landscaping Street Scene and Street Cleansing.

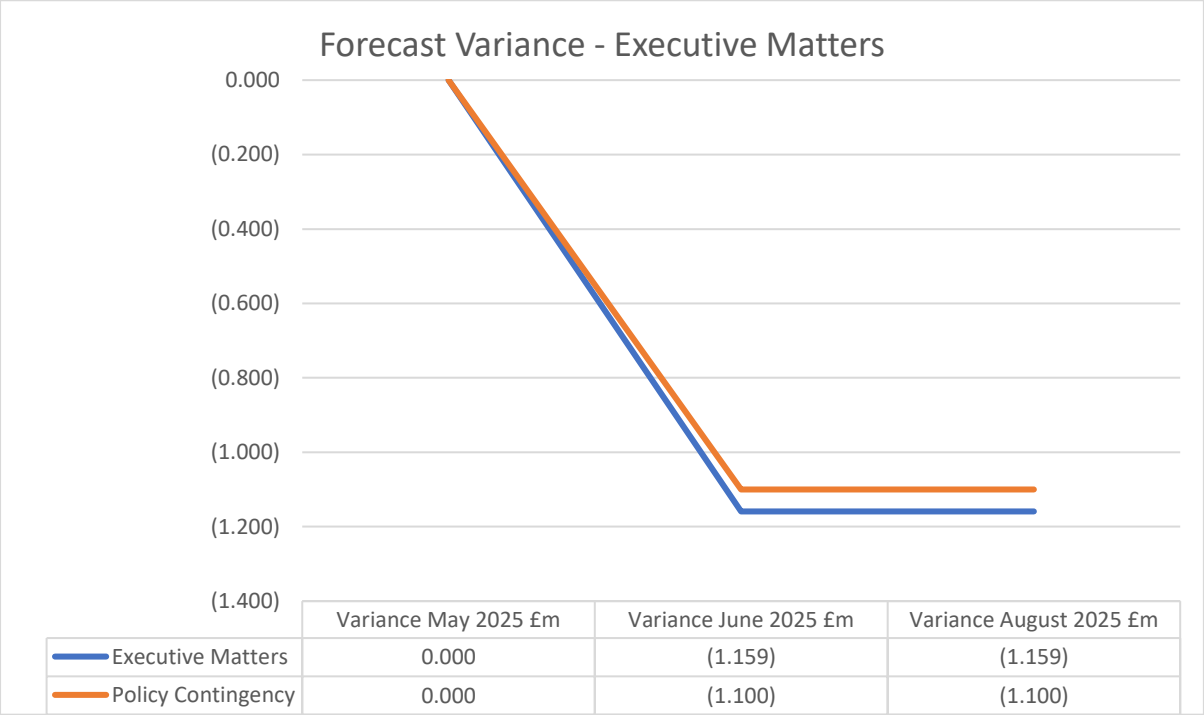
	A reduction in the amount of fuel required through usage and price carrying out additional work on behalf of local partners. A reduction in the amount of training days required for the waste operative from two days down to one. The price per tonne for the sale of glass has increased seeing additional income compared to the anticipated amount in June 2025. Environmental services are continuing to investigate ways to mitigate this overspend, to date they include non-recruitment to several vacant posts across the service, a reduction in Arboricultural works carried out at sites, additional work on behalf of local partners, a reduction in training carried out. The Waste and Recycling service are looking at ways to mitigate this overspends, one being a reduction in food waste vehicles to reduce vehicle and fuel costs. Continuing to promote the garden waste subscription service through social media and reminding residents to subscribe where bins are presented and not collected due to lack of subscription evidence. This will be continued to be monitored and mitigations identified throughout the year including any noncritical services to offset this overspend.
Regulatory	
Variation (£0.022m) Underspend	Regulatory Services and Community Safety are forecasting a small underspend of (£0.022m).
Variation to June's Forecast (£0.022m)	The variation from previous month is due to small savings due to staff changes.
Wellbeing & Housing	
Variation £0.561m overspend	The forecast is based on whole year expenses being needed as budgeted and accounts for increased IT license costs, legal fees and the increase in temporary accommodation demand due to rising homelessness.

Variation to June's Forecast £0.436m	Changes in temporary accommodation provision is likely to increase forecasted costs in the short term, separate from demand pressures, and this is reflected through the new forecast. Potential efficiencies from changes in contractual arrangements within the service are yet to be realised, but are being accelerated, but are not yet forecastable. Over the course of the year, it may be possible to underspend on some provisions within the budget and reduce the forecasted overspend. Much will depend on the demand for temporary accommodation.

Executive Matters

Revenue:

Executive Matters is reporting an underspend of (£1.159m) against a budget of £4.306m (26.9%).



	Variance May 2025 £m	Variance June 2025 £m	Variance August 2025 £m
Executive Matters	0.000	(1.159)	(1.159)
Policy Contingency	0.000	(1.100)	(1.100)

Executive Matters	
Variation (£1.159m) Underspend	Executive Matters are forecasting an underspend of (£1.159m) made up of (£0.309m) additional Extended Producer Responsibility funding that is due to be received

Variation to June's Forecast (£0.000m)	in July, (£0.500m) dividend expected from Graven Hill and an over recovery of net interest of (£0.350m).

Policy Contingency

Policy Contingency is forecasting an underspend of (£1.100m) against a budget of £2.425m, (45.3%)

Policy Contingency	
Variation (£1.100m)	Policy Contingency includes £1.100m for Market Risk. This has been released (and shown as an underspend) in order to offset overspends in the directorates.
Variation to June's Forecast (£0.000m)	

Appendix 2 - Virement Summary

Virement Movement

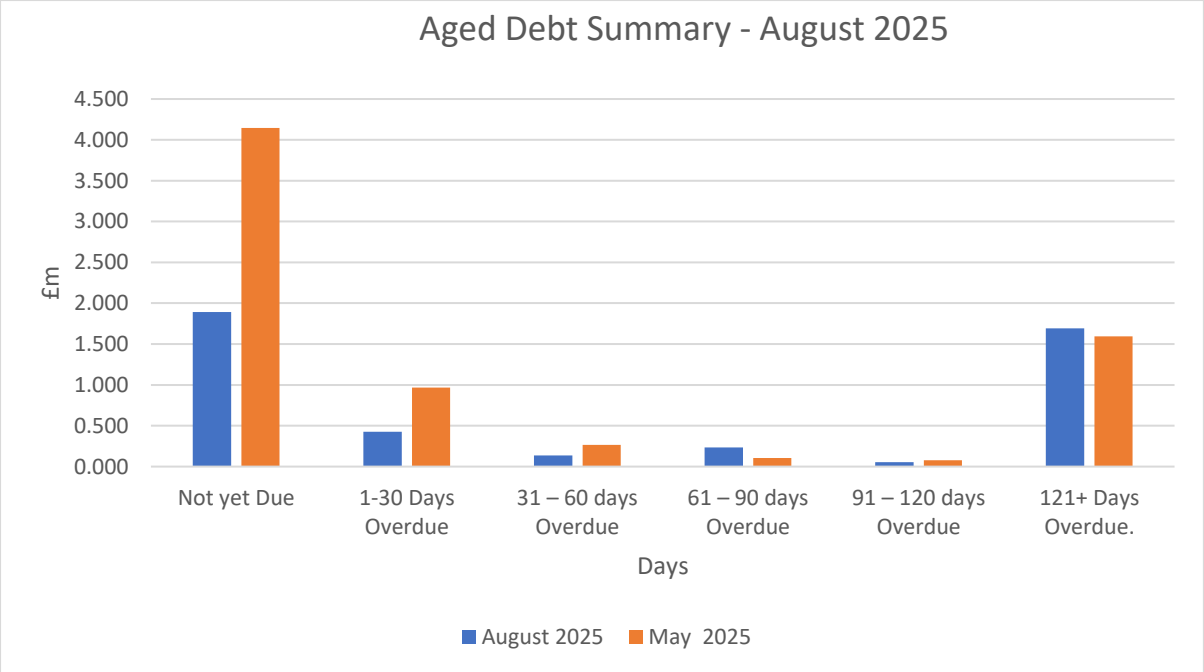
This table shows the movement in Net Budget from June 2025 to August 2025.

Virements - Movement in Net Budget	£m
Directorate Net Budget - Aug 2025	19.464
Directorate Net Budget - June 2025	19.461
Movement	**(0.003)**

Breakdown of Movements	£m
Policy Contingency - Research & Stakeholder Engagement for Mental Health Provision for Young People	(£0.003)
Total	**(0.003)**

Aged Debt Summary

The below graph shows the movement in sundry aged debt for the period ending 31 August 2025.



The financial regulations make provision for writing off debts that are bad, uneconomical to collect or irrecoverable. The Council maintains a number of bad debt provisions in the anticipation that debts will become bad and these once agreed are charged to the relevant provision or cost centre.

There is a provision within the council for sundry bad debt totalling £0.520m that is sufficient and by writing off the amount of debt mentioned in this report will not cause the provision to be exceeded. This provision is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that we have sufficient within it.

Aged Sundry Debt Write Off Summary:

	£m
Sundry Debts previously written off	0.008
Sundry Debts written off in June 2025 & July 2025 under S151 delegation	0.000
Sundry Debts written off in August 2025 over £0.005m details in Appendix 6	0.019
Total write offs in financial year 2025/26	0.027

Housing Benefit Write off Summary:

	£m
Housing Benefit previously written off	0.014
Housing Benefit due to be written off in July 2025 under S151 Delegation	0.013
Housing Benefit Overpayments to be written off via committee approval, details in Appendix 6	0.000
Total write offs in financial year 2025/2026	**0.027**

Council Tax Write off Summary:

	£m
Council Tax previously written off	0.293
Council Tax due to be written off in July 2025 under S151 Delegation	0.053
Council Tax to be written off via Committee Approval details in Appendix 5	0.029
Total write offs in financial year 2025/2026	**0.374**

Non-Domestic Rates Write off Summary:

	£m
Non-Domestic Rates previously written off	0.076
Non-Domestic Rates to be written off in July 2025 under S151 Delegation	0.015
Non-Domestic Rates written off via Committee Approval, details in Appendix 5	0.014
Total write offs in financial year 2025/2026	**0.105**

Appendix 3 - Funding for 2025/26

Specific Funding received since budget was set:

Dept.	Grant Name	Funding
		£
DLUHC	Homelessness Prevention Grant	(£0.246)
DLUHC	Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme	(£0.035)
DLUHC	Redmond Review Implementation	(£0.024)
DLUHC	Local Audit Backstop New Burdens	(£0.046)
DLUHC	New Burdens Funding for Accommodation-based Domestic Abuse	(£0.037)
DLUHC	UKSPF	(£0.335)
DEFRA	Biodiversity Net Gain Grant	(£0.027)
DWP	Welfare Reform New Burdens Funding	(£0.035)
DWP	LA IT changes Scottish Government Grant	(£0.005)
DWP	Housing Benefit Award Accuracy Initiative	(£0.017)
Home Office	Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy	(£1.299)
Home Office	Syrian Resettlement Programme	(£0.006)
DSIT	Innovate	(£0.003)
		(£2.115)

Grants included as part of Budget setting:

Directorate	Grant Name	£m
Communities	Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy	(0.244)
	Asylum Accommodation Dispersal	(0.029)
	Homeless Prevention Grant	(0.763)
	Syrian Resettlement Scheme	(0.183)
	Homes for Ukraine	(0.417)
	UK Shared Prosperity Fund	(0.335)
	Communities Total	**(1.972)**
Resources	NNDR Cost of Collection Allowance	(0.231)
	Rent Allowances	(25.004)
	Resources Total	**(25.235)**
Services Sub-total		**(27.207)**
Corporate	Extended Producer Responsibility	(1.400)
	Funding Floor	(3.400)
	National Insurance Contribution Compensation	(0.258)
	Corporate Total	**(5.058)**
Cost of Services total		**(32.265)**
Funding	Business Rates Retained Scheme	(7.490)

	New Homes Bonus	(0.935)
	Revenue Support Grant	(0.368)
	Funding Total	**(8.793)**
Government Grants Total		**(41.058)**

Appendix 4 - Reserves and Grant Funding

Uses of/ (Contributions to) Reserves

Specific requests

Directorate	Type	Description	Reason	Amount £m
Communities	Reserve	Home Improvement Agency Reserve	return £0.007m back to HIA reserve as Grant Surveyor post now partially funded from service budgets	(0.007)
			Total Earmarked Reserves	**(0.007)**
Communities	Grant	Homelessness Prevention Grant	Return £0.012m of HPG that is no longer required to partially fund the Single Person Homeless co-ordinator as this is funded by RSI	(0.012)
Communities	Grant	Domestic Abuse Grant	Transfer unspent DA grant 2025-26 allocation to reserve	(0.024)
			Total Grants	**(0.036)**

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Appendix 5 – Amendments to the Capital programme

CODE	DESCRIPTION	Project Total Budget	Primary funding source	Previous year(s) spend	Private narrative
40278	Development of New Land Bicester Depot	3,375	Borrowing	165	Move to pipeline, but commitment is released. Leader and Portfolio Holder have discussed and feel its inappropriate in light of LGR and the fact that indications are that the budget is increasing significantly.
40280	Kidlington Sports Centre - Solar PV Car Ports	135	Borrowing	0	Move to pipeline as unable to accurately reprofile given interdependencies with the school etc.- reprofiled in Q1
40308	S106 - Milton Road Community Facility and Sports Pitch Project	479	S106	8	Move to Pipeline; consider passporting the money. Money has been received – reprofiled in Q1
40323	NOA 3G Pitch Development	1,600	S106	0	Move to Pipeline until funds received. There is a potential for this development to drive increased revenue

Capital Total : Pipeline	5,589		173	

CODE	DESCRIPTION	Project Total Budget	Primary funding source	Previous year(s) spend	Private narrative
40242	H&S Works to Banbury Shopping Arcade	127	Borrowing	35	**Remove** - not capital
40327	Thorpe Place Roofing Works	113	Borrowing	16	**Remove** - Extent of works required now more significant - therefore remove and propose new Gate 1 to be approved.
40216	Street Scene Furniture and Fencing project	60	Borrowing	45	**Remove** - new bid required for Giants Cave main car park – repairs to flood damaged sub-base and surfacing.
40258	Kidlington Public Convenience Refurbishment	90	Borrowing	0	**Remove** - new bid to be prepared for relocating the toilets.
40259	Market Equipment Replacement	15	Borrowing	5	**Remove** - if still required will require new bid
	Capital Total - Removal	**405**		**100**	

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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