

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership Board

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2022 AT 10.00 AM
SANDFORD-ON-THAMES VILLAGE HALL, HENLEY ROAD, OXFORD, OX4
4YN

Present:

Members: Richard Benwell (Chair), Dr Prue Addison, Michelle Leek, Professor David Macdonald, David Rouane, Rosie Rowe, Simon Smith and Lady Jennifer Stringer

Officers: Becky Chesshyre, (Communications Coordinator for the Oxfordshire Partnerships), Susan Harbour, (Strategic Partnerships Manager, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils) and Matt Whitney, (Local Nature Partnership Manager).

1 Apologies, conflicts of interest and Chair's announcements

There were apologies from James Price, Giles Brockbank and David Knight.

There were no conflicts of interest reported.

The Board welcomed Susan Harbour, Strategic Partnerships Manager (and line manager of the LNP Manager) and Becky Chesshyre, the new Communications Manager who comes with more than five years' experience at Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust. Part of Becky's role includes providing Communications resource to the LNP.

2 Notes of the previous meeting

Notes of the previous meeting were approved.

The Board was asked to note that these, and all future agendas and minutes, are published [here](#), and will be available via the LNP website which was currently being worked on.

3 LNP Priority setting

The Board members updated one another on Oxfordshire current affairs. This will be a standing item on future agendas.

The Board noted the enhanced importance of Local Nature Partnerships in what appears to be a weakening legislative environment relating to the Environment Act and Agriculture Act. The Board also noted that, despite work ceasing on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, all of Oxfordshire's Local Authorities are committed to working together to deliver the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, which has environmental sustainability at its core. The Local Nature Partnership is considered one of the key tools towards delivering on this vision.

ACTION – MW to bring draft calendar of influence to next Board meeting, including North Wessex Downs Management Plan, Cotswolds AONB Management Plan and West Oxfordshire Issues and Options Consultation

ACTION – MW to circulate the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision with minutes

ACTION – DM and MW to connect regarding the Wytham Woods project.

As the main tools at the disposal of the LNP amount to advice, ideas and encouragement, it is imperative that we have clear, visible priorities that reflect the key areas of focus for the partnership. The Board agreed the following:

- Natural Capital,
- Nature Recovery, including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), (this to explicitly include environmental land management and farming) and
- People and Nature.

These priorities will be presented to the LNP Forum on October 12, which will be asked to endorse them (or propose amendments) and suggest objectives in each area.

4 Sub-groups

The LNP Manager proposed a framework to ensure the Board and sub-groups are able to communicate effectively. These are outlined in the paper that was circulated with the Agenda pack. The Board noted that representatives of the sub-group serve as a spokesperson for the LNP's broad objectives rather than for their employers.

Sub-group updates can be found in the paper accompanying the Agenda pack.

Biodiversity Gain Group

- 1) The Board were asked for feedback on three of the principles for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) delivery proposed by the BNG subgroup. The Board agreed pushing for countywide policy alignment on BNG is important. The Board noted the different advantages and disadvantages for people and nature of onsite and offsite mitigation. Onsite mitigation is better able to provide dual benefits to people and nature, but is not usually an appropriate replacement for specific rare habitats and species. Offsite mitigation can in the right circumstances more effectively achieve wholesale benefits for nature but is harder for people to access and enjoy. They did not endorse a minimum offsite requirement for net gain delivery, in part because the 'mitigation hierarchy' (which mandates that developers should avoid impacts first, then mitigate and only compensate as a last resort) prevents it. The LNP is taking advantage of an opportunity to link with University to research how its playing out on the ground – Prue Addison is the key contact point for this.
- 2) The Board endorsed the drive to go over and above 10% minimum. There is precedent to support this. For instance, Cotswolds AONB management plan will be recommending a higher percentage than 10%. The planning inspector endorsed 25% biodiversity net gain as part of the planning proposals for the garden village. And the Draft Nature Recovery Network (NRN) work developed a draft policy, available on the Wild Oxfordshire website, supporting a 20% ambition.

- 3) The Board noted that clearer definitions of local irreplaceable habitats are needed, to add nuance to the DEFRA metric.

ACTION – BNG subgroup to talk to council planning policy officers to establish the main problems around delivery of excellent onsite provision of net gain.

ACTION - SS to share the paper supporting 20% net gain in Cotswolds AONB

Health and Nature

ACTION - PA to introduce ML and RR to Steve at Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre.

Policy

Susan Harbour volunteered to act as the Board representative for this group, despite not being a formal Board member.

Natural Capital Investment

The Board noted that MW was meeting with University of Oxford the following day to discuss collaboration in this area.

Biodiversity Advisory Group (BAG)

BAG's request to become a LNP subgroup was formally endorsed by Board.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy group

Currently an informal group, awaiting the formal guidance and funding from central government. The Board endorsed this group being a LNP subgroup, led by Oxfordshire County Council, who are the likely Responsible Authority for this work.

5 Forum event

The Board noted progress on planning the Forum event, and approved the proposed reimbursement of Wild Oxfordshire, thanking those involved for all their work. £2,500 will therefore be paid to Wild Oxfordshire from the LNP budget.

6 Vice Chair

The Board deferred the appointment of a Vice Chair to a later date due to time constraints. Prue Addison was nominated as a candidate.

ACTION – RB and MW will conduct the process of Vice Chair appointment online before the next Board meeting.

7 LNP Manager Update

The Board noted the update from the LNP Manager.

8 LNP Budget

This item will be a standing item at all Board meetings. There was not time for consideration or approval of the budget at this meeting.

9 Next meeting - Wed 7th Dec 10:00-12:00

It was noted that next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 7 December at 10:00.

The meeting closed at 12.00 pm