

Agenda



Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership Board

Wednesday 13 September 2023 at 10.00 am
Virtual meeting via MS Teams

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Members:

Richard Benwell
Dr Prue Addison
Gillian Aitken
Camilla Burrow
Tim Coates
Michelle Leek
Professor David Macdonald CBE
James Price
Councillor David Rouane
Ian Boll
Dr Rosie Rowe
Simon Smith
Tom Curtis

Chair
Environmental NGO representative
Landowner representative
Environmental NGO representative
Landscape scale delivery representative
DEFRA family of organisations
University representative
Farming representative
Local Authority member representative
Local Authority officer representative
Health representative
National landscape body representative
Business representative

In attendance:

Matt Whitney
Susan Harbour
Kevin Jacob
Chloe Edwards
Local Nature Partnership Manager
Strategic Partnerships Manager
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Local Nature Recovery Strategy Project
Manager

AGENDA

1 Apologies, conflicts of interest, Chair's announcements and welcome to guests 10:00

2 Notes of the previous meeting (Pages 4 - 13) 10:05

To consider the notes of the previous meeting held on 14 June 2023.

3 Local Nature Recovery Strategy progress and ambitions (Verbal Report) 10:10

Oxfordshire's new LNRS Project Manager will present an update on the progress and plans of the LNRS steering group. The Board is asked to welcome Chloe Edwards and provide key comments on progress, plans and ambitions.

4 Oxfordshire's current affairs update (Verbal Report) 10:30

Members of the Board to update one another on key matters of importance relevant to the Local Nature Partnership arising since the previous meeting, including feedback from the Future Oxfordshire Partnership process.

5 Oxfordshire Nature Fund (Pages 14 - 16) 10:45

LNP Manager presents a suggestion for an innovative financial facility to unblock barriers to leveraging private money for nature recovery.

The Board is asked to provide feedback on the concept, consider alternative approaches to addressing the problem, and suggest ways to capitalise such a fund.

6 Spotlight on Biodiversity Net Gain (Pages 17 - 21) 11:15

This paper provides some key considerations about Biodiversity Net Gain in England. Crucially, it includes:

- a set of principles we may wish to agree
- an overview of our work with LPAs on ensuring a robust methodology for offsite option
- a proposed communications flurry around requiring 20%

The Board is asked to endorse the principles, consider the work with the LPAs, and endorse our championing of a policy of 20% BNG.

7 Local Wildlife Sites within the Context of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Pages 22 - 27) 11:35

This item provides an overview of the Local Wildlife Sites project and makes the case that it is important and worthy of expansion and increased security. Some proposals are made to achieve this.

8 Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership Manager Update (Pages 28 - 29) 11:50

The Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership Manager to provide an update of important conversations and actions over the last three months that are not captured in other agenda business.

9 Any other business 11:55

10 Dates of future meetings Suggested agenda timing

To note the dates of the next meeting as 13 December 2023.

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE



Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership Board

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE 2023 AT 10.00 AM
VIS MS TEAMS

Present:

Members: Richard Benwell (Chair), Dr Prue Addison, Tim Field, Michelle Leek, Professor David Macdonald, James Price, Councillor David Rouane, Rosie Rowe and Simon Smith

Officers: Becky Chesshrye, (Strategic Partnerships Communications Manager), Susan Harbour, (Strategic Partnership Manager, South and Vales Councils), Kevin Jacob, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership Democratic Services Officer), Matt Whitney, (Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership Manager)

Guests: Tom Curtis

30 Apologies, conflicts of interest, Chair's announcements, welcome guests

Apologies for absence were received from Gill Aitken, (Landowner representative), Ian Boll, (Local Authority Officer representative), Camilla Burrow, (Environmental NGO representative), and Tim Coates, (Landscape scale delivery representative), substituted by Tim Field.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting.

31 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the Board Meeting held on 8 March 2023 were approved.

32 Oxfordshire's current affairs updates

The Chair invited members of the Board to raise any matters of note, interest or concern at a local level or national level which might impact upon Oxfordshire's natural environment or the Local Nature Partnership.

Prue Addison referred to the culminative impact on flood plain meadows arising from the some of the major developments taking place within the county and suggested that the recurring, non-application specific issues arising should be looked at by the Nature Policy Group. This had been raised as a subject at the recent LNP annual forum.

The Chair responded that it might be useful to also consider whether there were implications for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, (LNRS) work as part of the later agenda item although the time scales involved in the LNRS were very different. It was also practical to consider potential risks to locations with particularly rich habitats such flood plain meadows and the potential use of compensatory approaches given that it was estimated that only around 20% of flood plain restoration projects succeeded.

The Chair queried whether there was a need to highlight and convey the cumulative impact of development on flood plain meadows to local planners over and above existing channels. Prue responded that the cumulative impact of solar applications was key issue, but it was possible that the issues arising were wider than those related to solar alone.

ACTION: It was agreed to refer the issue to the Nature Policy Group.

Councillor David Rouane updated the meeting on the recent local election results from May 2023. It was noted that Matt Whitney as LNP Manager was seeking to give briefings to each of the councils on the work of the LNP now that the election period had completed as an action. The Chair suggested other representatives of organisations on the Board from the natural environment space could potentially also be invited to attend.

ACTION: Matt Whitney to offer LNP briefings to all of the Oxfordshire principal local authorities.

33 Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership Manager's update

The Board considered a report as set out in the Agenda which gave an outline of the some of the key activity undertaken by the LNP Manager and colleagues between Board meetings. In presenting the report, Matt Whitney encouraged board members to highlight any areas of co-dependencies or work they were involved in or areas of duplication or potential conflict. Ideas around possible additional support were also welcomed.

A number of areas were highlighted to the Board including work to support land based carbon sequestration which formed one the of the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan, (NZRMAP) priorities.

Tom Field referred to work relating to land based carbon sequestration and also research into a hydrology based sequestration solution as part of the Thames Valley Flood Scheme. He suggested that there might be potential to marry up elements of the two workstreams.

Reference was also made to the Evenlode Flood Management Strategy and a map which set out different flood management interventions which could potentially come in at a lower cost than other forms of flood defence on the edge of Oxford.

In response to a question regarding the future of the Oxfordshire Treescapes Project, Matt Whitney commented that the project had come to the end of its existing funding and he had been supporting them to come to decision on whether or not to seek to continue. His understanding was that it was hoped to continue with the community engagement and advice side of the project through the Community Action Network and secondly discussions were ongoing around how to ensure that interactive spatial mapping data from the project remained accessible to landowners and others taking decisions about land use. In his view, such a tool would be significant to the delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Prue Addison queried 1) whether data collected as part of the project had been subject to independent evaluation and 2) whether that there had been any analysis of how reports generated from the data had been used together with how relevant and effective the reports had been to those using them. This was important in terms of understanding if improvements were required through the LNRS workstream.

Action: Matt Whitney to investigate further.

Simon Smith in referring to the points within the report relating to cross boundary working with the Southeast Nature Partnership commented that it was also important to remain aware that Oxfordshire also bordered the Southwest and West Midlands regions in terms of cross border working and in ensuring the Oxfordshire LNRS lined up with other nearby strategies without duplicating existing structures and arrangements. Matt Whitney commented that he also engages with Warwickshire, the Southeast Midlands LEP group of LNPs, Gloucestershire LNP Manager and is supporting Wiltshire to establish a new LNP.

Finally, Matt Whitney drew the Partnership's attention to the submission of a joint letter on behalf of approximately 25 LNP Chairs to The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Levelling Up Communities and the Regions which called for greater consideration of local nature recovery strategies within the local development planning process. This was because of concern that current wording that local authorities 'to have regard for' LNRS was not strong enough to ensure that LNRSs had real influence and impact on local planning decisions. It was considered that the letter had been well received and he and the Chair had had a positive meeting with Rachel Maclean MP and civil servants on the 13 June where it was clear they at least understood the issues.

Rosie Rowe commented that initiatives such as this demonstrated the value added of the LNP and suggested that this should form part of stakeholder communications.

Action: It was agreed to share a link of the letter to board members the accessible shared Teams drive.

34 Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership Forum 6 June

The Chair and Matt Whitney provide a verbal report updating the Board on the LNP Forum which this year had taken place on 6 June. The focus of this year's event had on been on local nature recovery strategies and to create an initial frame of reference and ambition for

the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy by exploring positive and negative scenarios for different habitat types. The event was considered to have gone very smoothly on the day and the Future Oxfordshire Partnerships team were thanked for their roles in supporting in planning and delivering.

Matt Whitney gave a short presentation setting out an initial overview of priorities emerging from discussions on the day.

Trees and woodland habitats

- Restore heathy treescape.
- Education and engagement.
- All woodland in good condition or active management
- Raise profile of trees in development

Urban habitats

- Engagement and education
- Retrofit more nature into places without it being very hard/expensive.
- Community-level urban gardening projects (25% of all urban green space).
- Design nature into new developments better (GI standards, BNG, neighbourhood plans)

Arable habitats

- 90% of farmland to be managed regeneratively.
 - Link to Oxfordshire Food Strategy
 - Oxfordshire regenerative food branding?
- Landscape biodiversity
 - Landscape Recovery schemes in Environmental Land Management, (ELM).
 - How to prioritise ELM options locally.

Grassland habitats

- Bigger, better, more joined up grasslands as advocated by Professor Sir John Lawton.
- Enhance reputation and importance of grasslands on people's hearts and minds, (currently undervalued).

River and wetland habitats

- Landscape-scale restoration (link with Catchment Based Approach, (CaBA).
- Enhance water quality, (engagement with Thames Water)
- Physical restoration (removal of barriers, riparian habitats, tree planting/thinning, re-wiggling).

Overall key themes from the Forum

- Measurement, monitoring, recording and data management.
- Condition data, habitat quality lacking
- Funding – establish an Oxfordshire Environmental Fund?
- How to manage access

- Facilitation, (of communities, landowners, farmers etc)
- How to deal with climate change uncertainty?
- People's changing attitudes.

Note: In discussion, a number of points were made which related or crossed over with the following agenda item and so the Chair decided that the items be merged. The following comments relate to the discussion of the organisation and delivery of the Forum event only and other comments made which related to the development of the LNRS are addressed in the next item:

- Various board members commented the Forum had been a great day and very well organised.
- There was a need to seek to define what the success of such an event might look like – for instance was success about the good conversations, networking and engagement with others leading to information exchange etc that took place?
- Had the excellent points made by various expert delegates during the day really affected the understanding or changed officers' perspectives?
- Evaluation of who had attended and what groups they had represented and whether it was felt that certain groups were not being as represented as well as they could be. The perception was that certain groups such as the farming community and business groups were still underrepresented.

In respect of the objectives of the day, Matt Whitney responded that there had been two main objectives for the Forum event. Firstly, to update everyone and establish a common understanding of the current LNRS position and the future tasks to be completed. It was felt that this had been achieved. Secondly, to help inform the development of the LNRS as a LNP in terms of a defining a long list of priorities for the next stages of engagement, whilst maintaining an awareness that the LNRS was a document ultimately owned and to be produced by Oxfordshire County Council as the responsible authority. It was felt that this had also been largely achieved and what was needed now was further prioritisation and creative thinking.

The Chair added that the discussions had also indicated ways in which it might be possible for Oxfordshire to go above the baseline and to raise awareness of this with local decision makers.

The update was noted.

35 Local Nature Recovery Strategy progress update and ambitions.

The Board considered a report which highlighted suggested ambitions for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, (LNRS) to add value to the LNRS process.

The Board was asked comment on the ambitions presented and to endorse the consideration of this approach to the Local Nature Policy group and the LNRS Steering Group.

A detailed discussion followed. A summary of the main points raised by Board members and the response of officers is as follows:

- It was positive to see the recognition of the importance of the inclusion of arable habitats. The Regeneration of Agriculture was an important subject with significant

potential to benefit wildlife, but it was important to be cognitive that this was not always the same as nature recovery and this needed to be understood in the context of the development of the LNRS and where the two overlap and where they did not. Performance measures needed to be developed for both specialisms.

- Caution was needed in thinking about and applying distinctions around the breakdown of wildlife into habitats as in reality, the habitat of a particular species over its life cycle might feature in a number of what were often regarded to be distinct habitats.
- It was important to consider the links to higher level political policy in the context of discussions around specific habitats. For example, in the case of grasslands there been discussions at the Forum about developers putting in low quality grass areas on sites under the pretext of BG40 bio-diversity net gain which actually contributed almost nothing to biodiversity. This suggested that the policy for biodiversity net gain itself was flawed and that the juxtaposition of the policy framework and reality on the ground needed to be considered.
- Confusion existed around the term Regen Agriculture as it was possible for it to mean all things to all people so as the LNRS progressed it was important to become more specific.
- Reference to food production was necessary and it was important to understand that it was possible to do all the landscape recovery possible over thousands of less favourable areas of land and still not make an appreciable impact on wildlife in terms of species. There was a need to address these issue on a holistic, whole farm scale.
- The food system within Oxfordshire, nationally and internationally needed to change to a system that rewarded best practice, high environmental and welfare standards, Procurement, particularly public procurement had a role to play in achieving this change. The challenge was around how this changes might be assisted through the LNRS.
- It was felt that this might be outside of the scope of the LNRS, but potential ideas that the LNP Board might consider in the context of supporting farmer that achieved high environmental standards.
- The ambitions as set out in the Board paper were supported but it was felt there did need to be reference to agriculture over and above the environmental aspects of farming.
- Alignment of ambitions around accessibility to natural green space within 15 minutes with Natural England's criteria as where possible it was sensible to align with nationally set standards.
- The LNRS should set out how its measures linked to and where compatible with HMG's 25 Year Environment Plan and the Environment Improvement Plan. This would need quantitative targets which would require monitoring and evaluation.
- It was important to set ambitious goals for the LNRS and to develop a finance plan in order to deliver it.
- The interface between rural and urban habitats. The urban fringe and peri urban landscapes were incredibly rich in terms of access and also nature dividend potential. The contribution of those areas also interfaced with the role Green Belt.
- Whilst it was valid that Regeneration Agriculture was not a direct proxy for good habitats, it was known that the manner of farming was a key part of the diagnosis that nature was in decline. Bringing back nature into farming systems would be highly significant in transforming nature outcomes.
- There were opportunities to use nature finance through the agriculture space to mobilise nature recovery.
- There was a need to put in place clear definitions for the priorities and ambitions, for instance what was meant by 'nature rich'? This task could potentially be undertaken by

the Nature Policy Group and it was logical that this be informed by any nationally available definitions.

At this point, the Chair suggested that in addition to the LNRS suggested principles and early objectives set out in the report his sense from the discussion to that point was that there was a body of opinion within the Board for some kind of numerical objective around the wider farmed environment. This needed to be expressed in a way that was meaningful and could be added to the LNRS ambition. For example, could this be through an objective around regenerative agriculture, perhaps 90%, or was a more exact metric needed?

A range of views were expressed with some members supportive, whilst others, also supportive of the aspiration behind it, expressed concern that a cautious approach would be needed because there was risk a KPI approach could sometimes not cover the nuance involved.

Other points raised by various Board members on the LNRS priorities and ambitions set out in the paper and additional suggestions, were in summary:

- Was it important to recognise that there could be differences of opinion between the OLNP as a collective of nature and land management voluntary experts and the accountable body around the priorities and ambition for the LNRS that went beyond baselines required by Defra? This could be a potential matter for further discussion within the steering group, but it was felt to be the role of OLNP to seek to be as ambitious as possible and make the case for this.
- With regard to proposed high level targets and target that 30% of land be managed for nature by 2030 there was a risk that because of the rigid criteria that applied, 30% would not be enough as an overall habitat extent target and Oxfordshire would fail to deliver 30% by 2030 as defined by Defra. If a nature recovery framework was to be delivered a target of 30%-40% would be needed.
- An overall target would only be effective if it was supported by a breakdown of specific habitat targets as well.
- Whilst the principle of proposed priority 4) Landscape scale projects was supported; a view was expressed that the proposed wording set out in the report around nominating specific flagship landscape delivery projects created the impression of a hierarchy when all landscape were of the same priority. A possible replacement priority was around local wildlife sites in light of the significant role of these sites in building the recover of nature. It was agreed to include both in the same point.
- In considering what priorities and ambitions to follow, it would be necessary to engage with the public in order to secure their understanding and support of the measures as there remained a level of misunderstanding and resistance to wildlife initiatives such as reduced verge cutting, particularly in urban and semi-rural locations. This is in agreement with the discussions and outputs of the LNP Forum.
- The process of suggesting LNRS priorities was about the challenge of making clear definitions and being able to demonstrate what had been achieved and delivered. Specifically with regard to the 90% regeneration target, data could be obtained from governmental bodies around the amount attributable to ELMs. The challenge was around this data was presented and it was possible to be creative with data to substantiate delivery whilst retaining confidence that targets were making a real difference.
- ELMs was a structure that easier to follow than to seek to define regenerative agriculture and which lent itself to target setting. There were also links to fundraising and private finance top up.

- More support and advisers were needed to support farmers in wildlife recovery.

A conclusion of the discussion, the Chair proposed that in light of the wide range of views expressed and number of suggestions for LNRS priorities and ambitions made it would be necessary to undertake further consideration and an updated menu of potential options drawn up and. It was possible that it might be necessary to return to the more difficult issues before final decisions were taken.

36 Strategic overview of the workstreams

The Board considered a written report setting out a strategic overview of the progress of the three core workstreams of the OLNP, Nature and Health Nature Finance and Nature Recovery and representatives of the workstreams also provided a verbal update.

Nature and Health

Michelle Leek and Rosie Rowe highlighted:

- The most recent meeting of the group had received a presentation on Live Well Oxfordshire IT platform. This was partnership between Oxfordshire County Council and Age UK Oxfordshire to provide a directory to bring together information about groups and organisations offering services for adults with a variety of needs in one place.
- Research to support the work of the group, (and wider partnership) was shortly to commence looking at the priorities for the provision of nature rich green spaces within Oxfordshire. This would build on a number of existing data sets, seeking to consolidate the available information and produce an opportunity map setting out access to green spaces.
- The advertisement for the LNP Health and Nature Project Officer post.
- Good progress had been made towards the data mapping evidence piece objective for the group.
- Green social prescribing awareness was increasing and it was hoped to influence the green social prescribing policy. Although this was taking its time to finalise, discussions about leveraging resources in support were continuing.
- The Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy was shortly to be refreshed, looking at health and wellbeing properties for the whole system and as part of the review process the connectivity with nature would be made.

Nature Finance Update

Prue Addison and Matt Whitney highlighted:

- Key progress made had been in finalising the draft Nature Finance Strategy as set out in the agenda papers. In developing this it had been important to collate sufficient evidence in order to be able to put a proposition to local planning authorities and business in order to start to have conversations about private investment in nature's recovery within Oxfordshire.
- The assistance of Oxford University through Isabelle Hawkins who interned to support the project in examining the size of the biodiversity net gain market was much appreciated.
- The draft Nature Finance Strategy did not explicitly make reference to the creation of an Oxfordshire Environmental Fund, but that was a potential next step it was thought to be appropriate to do so.

Nature Recovery

Simon Smith highlighted:

- Oxfordshire County Council had not as of the date of the meeting been formally appointed as the LNRS responsible authority but was expected by late June. An initial induction had been given regarding the grant budget for the production of the Strategy.
- A LNRS Project Manager had been recruited and it was expected this person would be representing the County Council on the steering group and there would a role to help guide them.
- The district and city councils would be asked whether they wished to be represented collectively or via individual representatives.
- There had been revaluation of the different groups supporting the LNRS steering group to avoid duplication and it was felt that would be a future need to liaise with the Nature and Health group more.

37 Nature Finance Strategy

The Board considered a proposed draft strategic plan to catalyse a framework of natural capital investment in Oxfordshire.

Matt Whitney in response to a question confirmed that in drafting the strategy, the Nature Finance Group had considered the next steps required to put the strategy into practice and secure the strategy's ambition for funding.

A query was raised regarding the intended audience for the strategy and what actions were expected. Matt Whitney responded that the strategy was a front facing document that it was also hoped that businesses would be able to understand and engage with, but in particular it was hoped that local authorities would consider endorsing it. It was intended to set out a strategic direction for all main stakeholders that had been involved in its development as a way forward and it would also need to be promoted. Consideration would be given as to the most effective way to do this.

The Chair commented that the conclusion within the strategy around the scale of the need provided a potential summary for communications.

It was also suggested that in communicating the strategy to business and seeking the participation of business it would be necessary to understand and focus on demand side issues as there was a risk of overly focussing on supply side considerations. Understanding of the market was important as was an offer across a broad range of marketplaces to be more resilient and hedge risk.

The Chair commented that the points made were really useful in informing the next steps, particularly in illustrating the demand side and the types of products the strategy related to through a menu of options. He also suggested a tighter definition of what was meant by 'high integrity markets' so as to be clear that only investments consistent with high ethical values would be supported.

Action: The Nature Finance Strategy was endorsed by the Board taking into account the points for further action raised during discussion.

38 Appointment to the Local Nature Partnership Board

Action: That Tom Curtis be appointed to the OLNP Board as a representative of the business sector.

39 Any other business

Action: That slides relating to the Evenlode Project be circulated outside of the meeting.

40 Dates of future meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted as set out in the agenda.

The meeting closed at 11.57 am

Oxon LNP Board Paper for Approval

Title:	Oxfordshire Nature Fund
Author:	Matt Whitney
Date:	14/09/2023

Summary:

This paper presents one method of operationalising the Oxfordshire Nature Finance Strategy – establishing a revolving fund for nature, or an Oxfordshire Nature Fund. This fund would offer short term loans/grants to farmers/landowners, enabling them to prepare to sell environmental credits (eg BNG or carbon) to developers or local businesses. Credit sales result in nature recovery actions being undertaken on land to support delivery of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Actions for the Board:

- Explore alternative ways of addressing the issues
- Suggest potential parties who might support the further exploration of the concept
- Suggest parties who may wish to capitalise such a Fund
- Support further exploration of this concept

1. Introduction

OLNP has recently produced the Oxfordshire Nature Finance Strategy, which aims to leverage private money to support delivery of nature recovery ambitions. The strategy identifies two main environmental benefits which are most readily monetizable – biodiversity (net gain) and carbon sequestration (credits). Both have existing, proven and growing demand. The challenge for stimulating and accelerating the flow of private money to fund nature recovery, in both instances, is on the supply-side - the lack of 'investment-ready' sites. Another way of framing this is to say there are not yet enough farmers ready to sell credits on their pieces of land.

2. Barriers to investment readiness

A number of barriers exist to farmer uptake:

- A lack of understanding of the incentives and policy framework
- A lack of clarity on central government financial incentives, such as ELM, SFI and issue around inheritance tax
- A desire to wait to see what happens to the price of carbon and biodiversity net gain (BNG) units
- A conflict between the wish to grow food and diversity land management
- A lack of disposable income with which to become 'investment ready'.

Oxon LNP Board Paper for Approval

3. Removing barriers

Clearly OLNP cannot provide clarity on government policy, nor can it predict future prices. However, OLNP can support information dissemination, and indeed actively does so, via relationships with farmer clusters and the NFU.

Currently, the BNG offset sites that are ready are either led by environmental charities, or by affluent landowners with adequate resources with which to pursue this option. Relying on these options a) does not result in enough sites to meet demand, b) has yet to result in at least one offset site per LPA area and c) prohibits any kind of spatial prioritisation, which we know is necessary in order to best stimulate nature's recovery.

4. A revolving fund for nature

The establishment of a finance facility would help address one of the key barriers to farmer/landowner uptake, which is resources and money. An Oxfordshire Nature Fund could provide money to those who are interested in better understanding their land's potential for selling environmental credits. This could be in the form of staged soft loans, whereby portions of money are released pending on certain criteria being met. This would reduce the risk associated with the provision of finance.

OLNP Manager has been discussing the idea with one environmental funder in Oxfordshire already, who is keen and has a small amount of capital with which they may do so. This report proposes that OLNP explore provision of support for this approach, including by supporting its design and establishment, and working with partners to increase the finance available. The Board is asked to endorse this proposal.

For clarity, funding provided by the facility/Fund would be provided for preparation, not for any groundworks. It is envisaged that private investors or other actors, potentially such as Finance Earth, Oxbury Bank or Triodos, may step in following the initial support we offer, to provide a more secured form of repayable finance if required.

5. The need for high integrity

Oxfordshire Nature Finance Strategy lays strong emphasis on high integrity markets, with Oxfordshire desiring to demonstrate the gold standard. Any Oxfordshire Nature Fund would need to work hard to ensure that it supports only projects and transactions that are ecologically excellent. This would need to be an early necessary step in taking this work forward. Any Fund would be directly aligned with the forthcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy, for instance.

6. Examples from elsewhere in England

- a) Nationally, the Environment Agency-led Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund has provided grants of up to £100,000 to over 75 projects in its first two rounds. This fund was to develop projects to 'investment readiness', or readiness to receive private funds, whether that be via repayable finance or by selling credits to buyers. NEIRF projects include:
 - o Heal Rewilding, which resulted in HEAL securing a £5million loan from Triodos to deliver huge a nature recovery project in Somerset

Oxon LNP Board Paper for Approval

- Wendling Beck, which has sold and is selling environmental credits to fund the transformation of farmland through river restoration, grassland and wetland creation to offset impacts elsewhere

A third round of NEIRF is open currently, available to farmers only. The complexity of application process and limited overall funding means this is extremely unlikely to solve Oxfordshire's supply problem.

- b) Cambridgeshire has secured £1.2million from the Combined Authority to establish a '[Doubling Nature Fund](#)'. This is not dissimilar from what is proposed here.
- c) Gloucestershire has the [Nature and Climate Fund](#), which supports farmers to prepare to sell BNG units. They hope to expand into carbon credits soon.
- d) Greater Manchester has an environment fund [GMEF](#) which is supporting the preparation of five sites ready to provide BNG units to developers who require them.
- e) The Big Nature Impact Fund will support high-quality Nature-based Solutions (NbS) projects and enterprises that deliver social and environmental impact, while generating financial returns for institutional investors driven by the sale of a range of ecosystem services. With a seed investment of [£30 million from the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs \(Defra\)](#) for England-based investments, the fund aims to mobilise funds from the private sector to accelerate and scale nature recovery in the UK.

7. Recommendations

This paper recommends the Board:

- approves further investigation into the establishment of a fund
- considers potential methods of capitalising such a fund
- suggests alternative approaches to unblocking the BNG and carbon credit supply challenges

8. Post script – a note on the demand-side for other environmental service markets

This paper focusses on BNG and carbon credits, for which demand is clear and apparent. Markets for other ecosystem services may be considered even more nascent and confusing, but it is clear that a mixed landscape can supply a range of other environmental services alongside and simultaneously to food production. For such a market there has been relatively little demand-side investigation.

OLNP, with the Bucks and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (LNP), is seeking funding to deliver a project that aims to:

- Understand the range of nature-based services we can sell, and the range of customers we can sell them to
- analyse and advise on local capacity and infrastructure required to turn opportunities into transactions
- develop a step-wise plan for 'setting up shop' and building a pipeline of transactions.

Oxon LNP Board Paper for Approval

Title:	Spotlight on Biodiversity Net Gain
Author:	Matt Whitney
Date:	14/09/2023

Summary:

This paper presents the biodiversity net gain policy and implementation environment and considers the approach we should take in the coming months towards addressing some of the concerns, threats and opportunities related to BNG

Actions for the Board:

- Endorse the principles
- Acknowledge work done to date
- Comment on the evidence base
- Endorse the LNP taking a strong stance on asking LPAs to adopt a level of at least 20% BNG

1. Introduction

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a policy which requires housing and infrastructure developers to leave the natural environment in a better state than pre-commencement. This policy has been operating to varying degrees across Oxfordshire for a number of years, indeed we are seen as front runners nationally.

The Environment Act 2023 requires all LPAs to ensure all developments deliver at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity. This will apply to all planning applications submitted post-November 2023.

2. DEFRA metric

The DEFRA metric is used to calculate biodiversity change and uses something called biodiversity units to do so. There are concerns that the DEFRA metric drives mediocrity. This is largely due to how it treats rare or particularly important habitats, which results in it favouring average grassland in average condition.

3. Onsite BNG

There are strong concerns that onsite delivery of BNG will be inadequately delivered, monitored and enforced, for reasons described in [this Oxford University paper](#). This risk could be mitigated by the recruitment of a county-wide resource, operating on behalf of all

Oxon LNP Board Paper for Approval

the LPAs in Oxfordshire, who performs spot checks on developments to check whether the promised biodiversity measures have been implemented.

4. Offsite Concerns

Where a developer cannot achieve 10% net gain onsite (*they must try to do so) they have the option of purchasing offsite biodiversity units. It is likely that offsite biodiversity net gain will be more stringently policed than onsite, with greater checks and balances, and therefore more reliably delivered. However, there are real challenges regarding delivery of offsite biodiversity net gain. These can be split into the following categories:

- Complicated nature of legal agreements used (Section 106, conditions, or conservation covenants)
- Paucity of biodiversity net gain offset sites (also known as habitat banks)

On top of all this, the government still has not released its guidance for BNG, nor has it provided LPAs with adequate funding or time to prepare for a smooth roll-out of the scheme.

5. Legal Agreements

One key issue which threatens the roll out of the new scheme is the lack a perfect statutory instrument of contract with which to discharge and agree conditions for planning permission, and agreements with landowners for offsite units. There are two options – S106 agreements (commonly used, but not yet for habitat banks, which are required post November) or conservation covenants (*it is also possible that planning conditions may be used). As we don't yet know how the latter will work (due to late provision of guidance from government), S106 is the only known approach that will work.

OLNP Manager and partners are working to support LPAs to effectively and efficiently develop appropriate S106 agreements that can drive excellence in BNG delivery which providing a process which is as simple as possible for themselves, landowners and developers, including by sharing S106 examples that have been developed elsewhere in England.

6. Paucity of offset sites

Currently there is not a sufficient supply of offsite BNG units to meet projected planning requirements. There is a national fallback scheme, which has been priced so as to be extremely unattractive to developers (over double the cost of local units). Without swift action to increase the pipeline of BNG-ready sites, money from BNG could leave the county. There may also be a significant delay to planning applications being processed and approved, which could slow down the rate of housebuilding in the county, leaving us open to more unregulated developments from speculative applications.

One solution to this is described in another paper being presented to OLNP Board in Sept 2023 – the exploration of the establishment of an Oxfordshire Environment Fund, which would offer short term loans/grants to farmers/landowners to enable them to prepare to offer offsite BNG units to developers.

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7. Guiding principles

OLNP's Biodiversity Net Gain group has drafted a set of guiding principles, which are included as an appendix to this paper. These are designed to combat some of the pressures described above, helping to ensure this policy delivers as much as it can for Oxfordshire's natural environment. **The Board is asked to endorse these principles.**

8. Offsite opportunity

Despite some of this gloom, there is real hope that the offsite elements of Biodiversity Net Gain can contribute meaningfully to nature recovery in Oxfordshire. [Research conducted by Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery](#) on behalf of Oxfordshire LNP demonstrates that it could deliver up to 13% of the estimate £800m required over the next ten years to ensure 30% of our county is managed for nature.

9. Increased ambition

This is an opportunity to be seized, and the same research also shows that a target of 20% BNG would contribute a further £108m towards this total. Over twenty LPAs across the country have already included this target in their adopted Local Plans, with many more expected to follow when the timelines for the Local Plans allow.

This paper therefore proposes that all LPAs in Oxfordshire adopt this target, and that the LNP work hard to support them to do so. This has already been happening across the partnership, but this paper **asks the Board for suggestions of further actions that can be taken to influence LPAs to adopt this higher target.**

10. Oxfordshire LPAs' support for nature vs perceived impacts on viability

All LPAs in Oxfordshire have declared a climate emergency. Some have declared ecological emergency, while others have included the ecological emergency in their climate emergency declarations. All have corporate targets and priorities for nature recovery, and ambitious policies in their local plans.

This should make 20% an easy ask, but it is not proving to be the case. One of the main reasons for this is the perceived impacts on financial viability of developments. Studies have been conducted in other parts of the country demonstrating that an increase from 10% BNG to 20% BNG would have a 'negligible' material impact on viability. OLNP has shared an example of this study with LPA ecologists.

11. Conclusion

BNG has potential to deliver gains for nature in Oxfordshire, but there are barriers to maximising these gains. OLNP continues to work hard with LPAs, funders, farmers and wider partners to break down these barriers.

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12. Appendix – Proposed BNG Principles

Guiding Principles

1. Work towards a co-ordinated county-wide approach for BNG, ensuring consistency across the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) area. This could involve a common policy framework for implementation of BNG, and harmonisation of BNG policy in local plans. OLNP is pleased to work with local authorities' planners to develop this framework and policy.
2. Target offsite BNG towards the areas that are most important for nature recovery. LNRS spatial prioritisation should be used as a multiplier in the DEFRA metric, ensuring it is more favourable for offsite gains to be delivered in areas identified by the LNRS as high priority.
3. Favour BNG schemes which create priority habitat and other non-spatial LNRS-related priorities, helping to meet the national and local targets.
4. Ensure onsite BNG delivery is assessed accurately through the production of guidance on the type and condition of habitats that are commonly delivered within residential and commercial developments.
5. Be precautionary in BNG predictions to ensure the uplift potential is not over-estimated. Is it realistic to expect that for the vast majority of developments only low and medium distinctiveness habitats will be achieved in poor or moderate condition. Any project with greater ambitions would need to be supported with detailed method statements prior to determination of planning applications.
6. Put procedures / checks in place to ensure quality information is provided from developers and that metrics (both onsite and offsite) have been completed by competent and qualified individuals.
7. LPAs should aim to adopt a minimum requirement for BNG of greater than 10%. OLNP has produced an evidence base to support LPAs in securing this ambition through local plans.
8. Third party verification is required at certain points in the monitoring process for onsite and offsite BNG Agreements to ensure landowners do not "mark their own homework".
9. Establish a system of spot checking BNG agreements and delivery (onsite and offsite) to help raise standards, along with implementing a system to deal with non-delivery. This could be delivered by an existing organisation (eg TOE/BBOWT), or a new resource located within an organisation (eg OCC, OLNP).
10. Adopt a 'biodiversity first' approach when applying policy. Biodiversity gain should take precedence and not lose out to public space, developer concerns, proximity to development, etc. This needs further explanation if it's to be useful.

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11. Avoid good quality agricultural land being used for BG (except where clear rationale e.g. connecting corridor).

12. Agree an approach to Open Mosaic Habitat (OMH). OMH on previously developed land is classed as 'Highly Distinctive' in the Defra 3.1 metric. While there is no doubt that this is an important habitat, it is arguably the type of habitat most often created, as urban sites are left derelict. Trading rules in the metric suggest that the loss of OMH should be compensated for by the gain of the same habitat. However, securing a site appropriate for OMH creation is problematic from a price perspective as nearly all will be appropriate for development. Additionally, creating OMH on land that has never had a hard surface is likely to involve the introduction of aggregate or substrate and removal of topsoil etc. Is the introduction of man-made elements into a "green" habitat appropriate? A policy could be adopted to compensate for losses of OMH with the creation of other habitat classified as highly distinctive by the metric e.g. lowland meadow, lowland mixed deciduous woodland or lowland heathland.

In some instances it will be appropriate for like-for-like to be required; wherever existing and high quality OMH habitat is being impacted it would be right for this to be directly offset. However, where OMH was once present or is obviously in an advanced state of succession, this would seem to be needlessly restrictive. Exactly where to draw the line is challenging and, if this approach is to be adopted in some instances, a process to approve the use of this approach should be agreed.

Oxon LNP Board Paper for Approval

Title:	Local Wildlife Sites within the Context of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Author:	Simon Smith
Date:	14/09/2023

Summary:

Local Wildlife sites are an essential conservation activity containing the majority of priority habitat. Despite the efforts of partners investment is required for Local Wildlife Sites to play their full role in developing and delivering the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. There is a need for the frequency of monitoring and management advice visits to be increasing by nearly fourfold, and a need for more security of funding. This is seen to be one of the best ways for local authorities to partly fulfil their strengthened biodiversity duty introduced by the Environment Act 2021.

Actions for the Board:

It is recommended that:

- The LNP acts as a champion for the LWS Project and promotes the essential role LWS play in nature conservation and nature recovery initiatives.
- The LNP supports the work of the LWS Project and gives the LWS project Steering Group the status of an LNP Working Group.
- The LNP encourages and supports the relevant local authority officers to use this paper in seeking an increase in the total annual funding for LWS monitoring visits to £114,700 and an increase in the total annual funding for LWS management advice and support visits (including meeting the full employment costs) to £105,300. This should be new funding for conservation effort and not from funds redirected from existing conservation commitments.
- The LNP encourages and supports the relevant local authority officers to use this paper in seeking a financial settlement for the LWS Project of no less than 3 years and ideally up until the LNRS review in 5 to 7 years' time.
- The LNP considers the LWS Project when developing funding proposals including green financing with a view to resourcing the project to build on the core programme with proactive work.
- The LNP encourages the local authorities to consider the business-as-usual scenario compared to the fit for purpose proposal in terms of compliance with the enhanced biodiversity duty.

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1. Local Wildlife Sites

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are identified at a county level according to an agreed set of criteria consistent with national Defra guidance. Local sites are identified in the planning system and they receive protection through planning authorities' Local Plans, forming a key part of Oxfordshire's ecological network.

The vast majority of the area of Oxfordshire that is of importance to wildlife is found within LWS (7,872 Ha, comprised of 6,676 Ha identified LWS and 1,196 Ha proposed). A far greater area than the nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) (4,476 Ha). SSSI's were only ever intended to be a representative sample of the very best quality habitats, they were never intended to include the bulk of wildlife rich areas.

The Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Sites Project is a partnership of landowners, conservation bodies and local authorities. Two partners deliver most of the work programme on behalf of the partnership. Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) identifies and monitors sites, maintaining the data including spatial data. It is important to remember that although essential, monitoring and data alone do not deliver conservation action. Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) acquires landowner survey permissions and follows up on the monitoring by providing management advice and support visits which result in a written management brief.

2. Local Wildlife Sites and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

LWS are an essential conservation activity in their own right and they support an array of national and local wildlife policies not least biodiversity policies in Local Plans and the National Environmental Improvement Plan (2023). Also contained within the Environmental Improvement Plan, the LNRS gives a new impetus to LWS work.

As the Lawton Report (Making Space for Nature, 2010) makes clear, wildlife can only recover if our existing habitats are "*more, bigger, better and joined*". If wildlife is to move across the landscape to a new climate space in response to climate change, habitat quality, area and distribution are all important. In the face of climate change, failure to deliver a nature recovery network based on these Lawton principles will lead to a mass extinction event.

As they cover the greatest area of good habitat including priority habitat, LWS are arguably the most important element of our existing conservation effort from a nature recovery perspective. They form the vast majority of the building blocks from which a nature recovery network can be developed. This has been recognised through their inclusion within the obligatory base layer of LNRS data.

So, is Oxfordshire's current LWS effort fit for the purposes of developing and delivering the LNRS? Unfortunately, it has to be concluded that it is not.

3. Demand compared to current delivery.

Ideally most LWS should be visited every 5 years although for woodland sites this interval can be increased to 10 years. These are the optimum intervals considered necessary to identify changes in management and condition in time to take corrective action. It is also a

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good interval at which to remind landowners of the wildlife value of their land and to provide encouragement and advice on how to best manage it for that wildlife.

It is possible to apply these visit intervals to the number and type of LWS to provide a rough estimate as to the scale of activity required. The detail of how to best develop the programme would of course be worked out in detail by the Steering Group.

There are 472 Identified LWS, of these 120 are mainly woodland and 352 other habitats

To visit the 120 Identified woodland LWS at a 10-year frequency requires 12 visits a year
 To visit the 352 identified other habitat LWS at a 5-year frequency requires 70 visits a year
 To visit all the currently identified LWS at the optimum frequency requires 82 visits a year.

There are additionally 78 proposed LWS that are in urgent need of visiting so where they meet the criteria they can be included within the dataset (& the formal evidence base for the LNRS). Many of these sites have been proposed for a considerable time so visiting them all irrespective of their habitat type within 3 years is a priority. This would require 26 visits a year over three years.

The total number of visits required to visit identified LWS at the optimum frequency and to catch up on the backlog of proposed LWS is 108 visits a year.

This level of visits should provide an effective LWS programme up until at least the review of the LNRS within 5 to 7 years. Once the existing back log of proposed sites has been worked through within the first three years, that capacity of 26 visits a year will be used to tackle the expected increase in proposed LWS and the larger number of identified LWS.

Additionally, some proposed sites need specialist species surveys to provide the data to lead to LWS status, this work is currently outside of the project's capacity. Experience to date indicates that around 60% of proposed sites are LWS standard and the remaining 40% could be with management support. This means that there are sites out there with willing landowners that could be improved for wildlife that are not currently receiving timely support.

52% of LWS are in positive management according to the latest SDL 160 (Single Data List) report provided annually to Defra. This demonstrates the urgent need to bring sites into conservation management, in many cases requiring additional effort outside of the project's capacity.

Currently around 35 sites a year are being visited for monitoring by TVERC and 28 a year to provide management advice by BBOWT. The current visiting regime is 73 visits short a year for monitoring and 80 for management advice. There is a great deal of catching up to do to meet this standard. Currently 35% of sites have not been visited within the last 10 years.

Bringing the current number of visits up to match the needed scale would require a threefold (x3.1) increase in the number of monitoring visits and a fourfold (x3.9) increase in the number of management advice and support visits.

4. Predicted increase in demand

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Our knowledge of the true extent of good habitat is far from complete with new potential sites being discovered all the time. Additionally, there are already known sites that although suitable do not currently have LWS or potential LWS status as the landowner doesn't wish to bring them forward.

The LNRS itself and wider changes in the funding of land management (and in particular a shift away from basic payments towards funding conservation management or ecosystem services) will make having land identified as LWS increasingly attractive. This will further increase the demand on the project.

In time the LNRS and the funding sources it will help direct will create more good habitat of LWS standard. This is after all the point of an LNRS. This will also further increase the demand on the LWS project

5. The need

If LWS are to play their role in the LNRS there is an urgent need to develop the LWS project to the point where it can work through the current backlog of proposed sites and be ready to handle existing and new ones in a timely manner.

The current level of activity is supported by local authorities contributing £37,000 to TVERC and £19,000 to BBOWT. This level of funding does not fully cover the costs of the current programme. For the permissions and management advice element, BBOWT contributes a further £8,000 (from a restricted fund expected to run out in 2025/26) to cover £27,000 of employment costs and additionally covers the hosting costs. For the monitoring element, TVERC supplements the contributions received with income from data searches and licences to the value of £7,400. This reflects income derived from using the data.

This funding is negotiated on an annual basis which does not permit forward planning or a strategic approach.

The current position as we embark on developing the LNRS is one of a project that is working effectively within the resources available and making a significant contribution to Oxfordshire's conservation effort. It is also however, struggling with uncertain and insufficient resources to adequately support the scale of existing sites and tackle a backlog of proposed sites. Consequently, confidence in the LWS data within the LNRS is not as high as it should be.

We should aim for a position at LNRS review where there are many more LWS forming the backbone of the nature recovery network and they are monitored and provided with management advice at an appropriate interval. Consequently, confidence in LWS data will be high and targeting of nature recovery priority areas (which is based on buffering existing data) within the LNRS will improve. We will also have better information on sites that are working towards LWS status which can further improve the targeting of nature recovery priority areas.

The need is for a LWS project that is fit for purpose to:

Support the development of the LNRS

- Strengthen the quality and quantity of LWS data within the LNRS including by proactively seeking new sites.

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- Monitoring the condition of LWS every 5 years (10 years for woodlands).
- Catch up on the current backlog of proposed sites and handle a predicted increase in new sites coming forward in a timely manner
- Demonstrate evidenced and mappable progress for LNRS review & inform a refinement of nature recovery priority areas.

Support the delivery of the LNRS

- Move sites into positive management through advisory visits every 5 years (10 years for woodlands).
- Allow existing and new proposed sites to receive management advice in a timely manner.
- Allow proposed sites close to LWS status to achieve it through improvement.

Based on the estimated increase in visits required this can be achieved by a threefold (x3.1) increase in the total funding for monitoring visits and a fourfold (x3.9) increase in the total funding for gaining permissions, management advice and support visits (after meeting the full employment costs). The delivery partners would still be contributing additional funds and covering hosting costs. This would be sufficient to support a core programme that is fit for purpose and would result in the following funding package;

Monitoring, £37,000 x 3.1 = £114,700

Management, £19,000 made up to £27,000 x 3.9 = £105,300

Building on this core programme, further funding from new sources could be sought for additional proactive work such as specialist surveys and proactive management support.

6. Strengthened Biodiversity Duty

Public authorities who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This is the strengthened 'biodiversity duty' that the Environment Act 2021 introduced. This means that public authorities must:

- Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on these considerations.
- Act to deliver policies and achieve these objectives.

Supporting the LWS Project to the extent that it is fit for purpose to support LNRS development and delivery is one of the key ways that local authorities can demonstrate they are fulfilling this duty.

7. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- The LNP acts as a champion for the LWS Project and promotes the essential role LWS play in nature conservation and nature recovery initiatives.
- The LNP supports the work of the LWS Project and gives the LWS project Steering Group the status of an LNP Working Group.
- The LNP encourages and supports the relevant local authority officers to use this paper in seeking an increase in the total annual funding for LWS monitoring visits to £114,700

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and an increase in the total annual funding for LWS management advice and support visits (including meeting the full employment costs) to £105,300. This should be new funding for conservation effort and not from funds redirected from existing conservation commitments.

- The LNP encourages and supports the relevant local authority officers to use this paper in seeking a financial settlement for the LWS Project of no less than 3 years and ideally up until the LNRS review in 5 to 7 years' time.
- The LNP considers the LWS Project when developing funding proposals including green financing with a view to resourcing the project to build on the core programme with proactive work.
- The LNP encourages the local authorities to consider the business-as-usual scenario compared to the fit for purpose proposal in terms of compliance with the enhanced biodiversity duty.

Simon Smith, LNP Board Member.

This paper is written for the LNP Board by a Board Member. Any errors or omissions are the authors. Written in consultation with selected members of the LWS Project Steering Group.

Oxon LNP Board Paper for Approval

Title:	LNP Manager Update
Author:	Matt Whitney
Date:	14/09/2023

Summary:

This paper presents an update of LNP Manager activity since the last Board meeting

Actions for the Board:

- Consider dependencies between your work and that presented here.
- Consider what support could be provided to LNP Manager in his endeavours
- Suggest specific projects or funding related to these actions which could further the aims of the LNP

OLNP Manager has had significant periods of leave since the last Board meeting. Despite this, much activity has taken place. The list below is non-exhaustive and items are selected based on their relevance to the Board, their importance for achievement of OLNP aims and whether they have been sufficiently covered elsewhere in the agenda.

OLNP Manager has:

- 1) Co-authored [a report](#) with Prue and academics from Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery into the potential contribution offsite BNG can make to Oxfordshire's achievement of its nature recovery ambitions.
- 2) Successfully recruited a Nature and Health project manager. Lizzie starts work on November 6th and is already up to speed with the workplan, having been involved in the OLNP Health and Nature group since its inception.
- 3) Secured funding for and begun recruitment of a nature finance project manager.
- 4) Accepted an invitation to be a member of the Oxford City Nature Recovery Plan steering group and attending its first meeting.
- 5) Investigated Wilder Carbon with a view to assessing its suitability as a metric and method for calculating and marketing carbon sequestration rates from nature recovery projects in Oxfordshire.
- 6) Lead the South East Nature Partnership's exploration into developing a funding model, based on that of Nature North.
- 7) Supported North East Cotswold Farmer cluster engagement with West Oxfordshire District Council, with a view to aligning work, and introducing solutions for the council.
- 8) Submitted an unsuccessful joint bid (with Bucks and MK Natural Environment Partnership) for funding from Natural England. The funding would have enabled exploration into a market for ecosystem services, focussing on working with supply-

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side actors across Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, primarily food and drinks producers with material interest and supply chain dependencies in the farmed landscape.

- 9) Supported a visit by West Oxfordshire district Councillors to Long Mead flood plain meadow restoration project. This award-winning project has just been granted the contract to manage some Oxfordshire County Council sites adjacent to their own.
- 10) Continued to provide support for the Windrush Catchment Partnership officers.
- 11) Continued to provide support for the Leverhulme Centre funded LNP project into investigating the inequitable distribution of accessible natural greenspace.
- 12) Supported LNRS project manager in exploring methodologies for prioritisation.