

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE



Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership Board

**HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 10.00 AM
MARLBOROUGH ROOM, BLENHEIM PALACE, WOODSTOCK, OX20 1PS**

Present:

Members: Richard Benwell (Chair), Professor Jeremy Biggs, Camilla Burrow, Tim Coates, Michelle Leek, Professor David Macdonald CBE, James Price, Councillor David Rouane, Ian Boll, Dr Rosie Rowe, Simon Smith, Tom Curtis and Matthew Stanton

Officers: Kevin Jacob, Amber Lyford, Lizzie Moore, Huw Thomas and Matt Whitney

44 Apologies, conflicts of interest and Chair's announcements

Apologies were received from James Price, Professor Jeremy Biggs and Tom Curtis.

The Chair gave a summary of the meeting agenda to the Board members and gave thanks to Dave Gasca from Blenheim Palace who had kindly arranged for the meeting to be held on the palace grounds.

Dave explained to the Board that they are happy to host such nature-based events and meetings. He noted that he has been following the work of the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and while the journey to nature recovery is a long one, we are only at the beginning.

Finally the Chair prompted Board members to ensure they fill in the Register of Interest form that was circulated following the last meeting, he asked for them to be send directly to Kevin Jacob.

45 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the Board meeting held on 12 June 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

46 Local Nature Recovery Strategy update paper

Matt Whitney gave a presentation on behalf of Chloe Edwards; this highlighted that Oxfordshire County Council will launch a consultation on the draft Local Nature Recovery

Strategy (LNRS) around mid-October for six weeks. The consultation will include drafts of the below:

- Statement of biodiversity priorities
- Species priorities list
- Description of strategy area
- Local habitat map

Matt noted that there have been over 1,000 contributions so far, indicating strong engagement for Oxfordshire's LNRS compared to other counties.

The following discussion focused on the habitat map, where Matt explained the blue areas represent the existing habitats (at 6.5% of the county) and the purple areas are where new habitats will look to be created (an additional 29% of the county). The goal is 30% by 2030 however 35% has been highlighted to provide some flexibility. Simon Smith added that there will be an additional step to distinguish between the different types of habitats.

Camilla Burrow mentioned that the consultation will include an interactive map for people to zoom in and out of and pin specific areas to add comments. There will be an accompanying questionnaire with questions of varying detail. Board members were asked to share the consultation information with their wider networks when it goes live.

David Macdonald offered to assist in creating a more advanced interactive map as he has previous experience in building a similar platform, he will speak with Matt and other relevant Board members outside of the meeting to see where he can support.

Action – David Macdonald to meet with Matt, Camilla, Chloe, and Alison Smith to discuss the interactive map.

Action – Communications pack to be sent out to Board members to share when the consultation goes live.

The Chair opened a conversation on creating the deliverables and a delivery plan for the LNRS once it is live. It was agreed that delivery is best handled at a local and landscape scale and is something to be addressed next year. Simon emphasised the importance of supporting farmers and other partners, ensuring they are funded and resourced appropriately to enable the delivery of the LNRS.

Camilla Burrow highlighted feedback received from the last consultation that suggested people aren't aware of how they can help, what they can do or where to get the funds. It was discussed that the existing group of trusted advisors be expanded and supported further to have more comprehensive support abilities to support project development beyond an initial consultation.

Ian Boll noted that the planning departments across the councils are currently busy working on their Local Plans and may have limited capacity to support the LNRS at present. It was highlighted that clarity is needed on how the LNRS is being integrated into individual draft local plans.

Action – LNRS team to consult with planning officers to confirm to what degree the LNRS is mentioned within local plans.

Rosie Rowe suggested updating the LNP website to include information on the LNRS. This is on the Wild Oxfordshire website, but it would be helpful to have it all held in one place.

Action – LNP website to include LNRS details.

47 Oxfordshire Nature Catalyst Investment Fund

Matt spoke on this item explaining that this follows a suggestion to collaborate with the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) before committing to full alignment.

Matt explained that the Oxfordshire Nature Catalyst Investment Facility (ONCIF) aims to provide soft loans to farmers and landowners for nature recovery projects, these will generate carbon or biodiversity net gain (BNG) credits that can be sold to repay the loans.

Currently, there is £200,000 in the fund from TOE's BNG surplus and there are efforts underway to increase this amount through collaboration with local councils, corporate funding, and potentially philanthropy. He added that the project is looking to address the financial risks faced by smaller farmers and landowners and in turn making nature recovery more accessible. Matt explained that there is interest in BNG credits but, there is more interest in carbon credits from local authorities.

An opportunity around woodland carbon credits was highlighted, noting that it includes 5 land holdings and short-term lending, it is nature rich while also having biodiversity and flood risk benefits.

Matthew Stanton asked about the expected return on investment for the loans and what the necessary financial regulations are. Huw Thomas indicated that the desired return may focus more on nature uplift and social benefits than purely financial ones, although specifics are still being determined. Regarding the financial regulations he explained there are different methods which would be used in different scenarios, this will depend on what is needed.

The Chair proposed the Board has ONCIF as a standing item on agendas going forward to monitor progress.

Matt ended by highlighting the purpose of ONCIF as per the report as:
"To stimulate financially self-sustaining, revenue-generating projects which deliver measurable benefits in biodiversity, and which are aligned to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy"

48 Oxfordshire's Nature Recovery Narrative

The Chair gave an introduction into this item, emphasizing the difficulty in conveying the purpose of the LNRS and the need for a compelling narrative.

The Board was tasked with evaluating the current narrative and suggesting ideas for a one-page overview that explains nature recovery beyond the LNRS. Matt Whitney proposed an approach which expands on Professor Sir John Lawton's "Making Space for Nature," focusing on assessing and improving priority sites and aiming for complete nature recovery across Oxfordshire.

The following discussion highlighted strategies for changing public behaviour, with Camilla Burrow suggesting that normalizing nature in decision-making could be effective. She also proposed collaborating with a visual artist to enhance storytelling. Rosie Rowe stressed the importance of ensuring underserved communities have access to and a connection with nature.

The Board then split into groups to discuss this item in further detail. During group discussions, members agreed that the narrative should communicate a clear vision and purpose, include a route map, and highlight Oxfordshire's unique selling points. They suggested incorporating a section on existing nature recovery initiatives and how individuals can engage.

The Chair suggested that the one-page narrative could be used as either the first page of the LNRS delivery plan or an annex to it.

The Chair concluded that the LNRS currently lacks an action plan, which is a key risk, and emphasized the necessity of developing one to make the strategy actionable and deliverable.

49 Annual Report and Workshop - Future Strategic Approach

Matt Whitney, Huw Thomas, and Lizzie Moore presented updates on their respective areas of the LNP work, which covered past work / achievements, work currently in progress and the future plans. Matt also noted that funding secured by OLNP has contributed to employment of a new facilitator for the Cherwell Farmer Cluster.

Action – Ian Boll to speak with Tim Coates and Matt Whitney about the Cherwell farm cluster launch.

Board members were asked to consider how their organisations and individual roles can support the partnership's goals and provide suggestions for future work.

The Chair gave thanks to everyone on their hard work overall and highlighted that while the OLNP is still a relatively new partnership it already has done lots of great work going on and a strong voice.

It was agreed that the three main themes of the LNP work (Nature Recovery, Nature Finance and Nature & Health) are still relevant. It was noted that the delivery of the LNRS should fall under the LNP's scope of work, but it would require additional resources, such as hiring an additional team member.

The creation of a collaborative communications piece was proposed to share ways to achieve nature recovery and showcase the successes while being a shared narrative that can be provided to partners.

Action – Becky Chesshyre to work on a communications piece for the narrative of nature recovery.

A discussion was had around creating the correct governance approach for the LNP. The Chair added that a shared delivery plan between all the local authorities in Oxfordshire would be preferable and governance should be included within this.

Rosie recommended there be more emphasis on inclusion and delivery along with the connection with nature within the Nature & Health work.

50 Any other business

Nothing to add for this item.

51 Dates of future meetings

The next meeting will be on 11 December 2024.

Matt confirmed the meeting structure for 2025 will be meetings in March, June, September and December, dates and locations to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 12:00pm.