

Oxon LNP Board Paper for Approval

Title:	OLNP Sub groups update paper
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Summary:

The Local Nature Partnership currently has six active sub-groups. This paper gives an update on activity from each group, provides Board members with insight into key decisions taken by each group, and poses some questions to the Board.

The Board is asked to:

Biodiversity Gain group

UPDATE:

The group has an awareness that the policy of BNG is trying to achieve two outcomes simultaneously that have some tensions between them:

- To create greener spaces near where people live and work, providing health and wellbeing and place-making benefits
- To support nature recovery.

The primary aim of the group is still the collation of evidence to support Local Authorities to require a level of biodiversity net gain (BNG) greater than 10%.

The group notes that government have announced provision of additional funding to Local Authorities to help them prepare for the introduction of mandatory BNG (which is expected to be November 2023). The level and date of this funding is not known currently. A best estimate is £35,000 per authority. Once more detail is available on this, it is considered interesting to explore a potential pooling of resources, but this of course would be up to the sovereign councils to decide upon and agree.

There is disappointment that the government’s delayed response to the BNG consultation (published Weds 22nd Feb, following a consultation held twelve months previously) does not address some key concerns, chiefly around

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KEY DECISIONS:

- To support a University of Oxfordshire research project exploring historic losses of biodiversity resulting from previous development.
- To collate data supporting the hypothesis that Oxfordshire’s nature is in a worse state than nationally.

QUESTIONS for the Board:

Nature and Health group

UPDATE:

The LNP Health and Nature subgroup met most recently on 9th February 2023. It was another lively, engaging and well attended (32 individuals/organisations were represented) meeting with some really useful discussion generated. There was a substantive item on the new Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework which had been launched on 31st January, presented by Christine Howard of NE (link to the Framework include here for info)

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx>.

This meeting also took an update on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy from Matt Whitney (expected from April 2023). It was noted that Camilla Burrow will act as the key link between this sub-group and development of the LNRS and regular updates will be required at future meetings of this sub-group.

The meeting also took an update on the Mapping of Need and Provision of Nature Based Activities from Rhiannon Evetts of Wild Oxfordshire. This invaluable mapping continues to be enhanced & Rhiannon noted that it will soon be searchable by postcode which will be key for social prescribers.

The meeting then heard from two group members who provided an outline of the projects they are involved in – thanks to Alex Williams of Muddy Feet and Catriona Bass of the Thames Valley Wildflower Meadow Restoration Project for their fascinating & inspiring talks.

The next meeting will be on 18th May 2023.

A reminder of the objectives and proposed outputs of the group:

Priority No	Sub-Group Proposed Objectives	Alignment with Forum Proposals	Specific Forum ideas	Deliverable outputs	Timescale
1	Input into the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to ensure that it is a key thread throughout the strategy	X	People and nature needs to be a thread running through the LNRS not just a chapter	An LNRS which fully considers the needs of people and the importance of human connectivity with nature	Linked to LNRS delivery timetable -

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2	Promote Green Social Prescribing	X	Link eNGOs with health Increase skills in engaging with seldom heard	A social prescribing strategy for Oxfordshire which recognises the role of 'green prescribing' Training to share best practice in reaching groups who do not usually access nature Inclusion of nature activities on the Livewell website – social prescribers' directory Engagement with the NHS – to maximise uptake of nature based activities and to influence 'greening' of the NHS estate	2023 – linked to Oxfordshire social prescribing strategy timetable
3	Promotion of high quality green infrastructure that works for people and nature that works for people and nature, maximising the quality and use of existing green spaces	X Make access to nature easy	Focus on active travel, influencing planning policy, design guides, improving the quality of our existing green spaces so that they are multifunctional and enable access for all	Develop definitions of what we mean by high quality, accessible green spaces Identify opportunities for increasing biodiversity – check use of One Public Estate and engage with the Universities to influence their land management activities Review and provide feedback on existing Local Authority Design Guides	2023
Enablers					
1	Networking and collaboration	X	Understand what is happening and where so we can identify the gaps	Share case studies of good practice and promote them on the LNP web site Share good practice re: sustainability of projects	
2	Mapping of need and service provision	X Focus on equality, diversity and inclusion.	Development of case studies.	Detailed, accessible map of nature activities which also shows the gaps and under-utilised green spaces. (Link with existing work including HERO, sustainable healthcare, Wild Oxfordshire and District maps)	By May 2023
3	Mapping funding and free training opportunities	X Bring together research, evidence and local data	Layer priority areas of need with funding opportunities	Create a directory of funding and training opportunities	By March 2023

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KEY DECISIONS:

- To support the submission of a funding application within the Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, for a project on updating our understanding of the inequitable distribution of accessible greenspace across the county.
- To seek additional funding for a project manager for this workstream

QUESTIONS for the Board: None

Biodiversity Advisory Group

UPDATE: At its last meeting, the group agreed in principle to include parts of River Thames catchment as a new Conservation Target Area (CTA) but needed more time to assess whether there is sufficient data available to support its inclusion. This is a key consideration, as CTAs currently have some impact on informing planning decisions, so the relevant local planning authority (South and Vale District Council) needs to be confident that there is data to support this should the issue ever be disputed eg by a developer. Currently CTAs form the basis of the draft nature recovery network map.

KEY DECISIONS: To assess whether sufficient data is available to support the inclusion of River Thames catchment as a Conservation Target Area.

QUESTIONS for Board:

Natural Capital Investment group

UPDATE:

The group has met once since the last LNP Board meeting and is focussed around five key areas:

- Evidence
- Project pipeline
- Investment
- Framework
- Natural Capital Investment Plan

Evidence

Research, supported by University of Oxford's Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, is ongoing to establish 1) the cost of delivering our nature recovery ambitions in Oxfordshire and 2) the likely size of the offsite BNG market in Oxfordshire. This work is making good progress and should be in a position to share some initial findings in the coming weeks.

Project Pipeline

Having projects ready for investment and delivery has always been an issue for the natural environment sector. In order for this work to be taken forward effectively additional resource is required and is being sought, including via exploration of an ELM Test and Trial funding opportunity. We are also working with the University Colleges to assess potential of their landholding.

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Investment

We met with Ben Caldecott, a senior figure at the Leverhulme centre with a background and strong professional network in the investment world, especially around green finance. We also met with Triodos Bank to understand their position on nature finance. These meeting confirmed what we already know – there is much work to be done before we are ready to receive repayable finance. Funding can be sought now, but we are not ready to recruit repayable finance, nor should we overstate its importance.

Framework

While natural capital investment in Oxfordshire will include a variety of actors, it is considered vital that a strong, independent funder exists to help aggregate projects, attract investment, and provide administrative services to other more autonomous projects. Thus, we are supporting Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment to engage with Local Authority partners to explore how they might best constitute themselves so as to support roll out of the offsite elements of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain.

LNP is the named lead for land-based carbon sequestration element of the Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PAZCO) work, led by Oxfordshire County Council in partnership with the other Local Authorities.

Natural Capital Investment Strategy/Plan

Work has begun on a natural capital investment plan. This will be shared with the Board once a working draft has been agreed and commented on by the group, prior to wider consultation and socialisation. It has become clear that additional resource is required in order to finalise the strategy and gain senior level support for delivery from within the Local Authorities.

KEY DECISIONS:

- 1) To support South and Vale District Council in submission of a funding bid for a Natural Capital Investment project manager, and additional financial resource, to focus on developing a
- 2) To agree to act as the named lead for the nature finance and land-based carbon offsetting elements of PAZCO

QUESTIONS for the Board:

LNRS steering group

UPDATE:

- DEFRA have confirmed rollout will be from April 2023
- We still await the secondary regulations and guidance
- LNP Manager has attended a webinar hosted by DEFRA aimed at preparing LNPs for LNRS.
- Oxfordshire County Council, as provisional responsible authority, have confirmation of additional funding from DEFRA
- LNP Manager convening cross-border meetings with neighbouring counties

KEY DECISIONS: OCC are recruiting for a LNRS project manager

QUESTIONS for the Board:

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Nature Policy group

UPDATE: Following submission of responses to both the Oxford City Plan consultation and the Botley West Solar Farm consultation, this group has now found an appropriate chair. Andy Egan has experience of working within an LPA, and now holds a role leading the Woodland Trust's national policy team.

A Draft Terms of Reference has been created, which is shared with the Board for comment.

KEY DECISIONS: to hold the first meeting of this group on March 21st.

QUESTIONS for the Board: Comment on the Terms of Reference for the group.

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Appendix 1

Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership

Nature Policy working group

Terms of Reference

1. Description

The Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership (OLNP) exists to radically enhance nature, its positive impact on our climate and the priority it's given, helping to make Oxfordshire a county where people and nature thrive.

The Nature Policy working group has been set up to work under the OLNP. The group comprises representatives from organisations with experience of, and expertise in, developing and implementing nature-positive policy locally.

The OLNP is not a campaigning organisation. The Policy group seeks positively to influence policy in a supportive, diplomatic and proactive way to ensure that it does the best it can to enhance nature for the benefit of wildlife, climate, and people.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the LNP Nature Policy working group is to influence strategic and local plans to ensure the best outcomes for nature. It will do this by:

- Understanding the timelines for the various plans and strategies
- Working collaboratively and in a positive way to design and support the design of policies which ensure the best outcomes for nature
- Coordinate work between Local Authorities to ensure cross-county alignment where possible.

The group will restrict its input to aspects of plans and strategies that relate to its core purpose. It will not comment on issues such as landscape character. It will work at a strategic scale. The group will seek to develop OLNP position statements that can be shared via the OLNP website, and that can form the basis of any consultation responses.

3. Membership

Membership of Nature Policy working group is by invitation only and is reviewed annually at the first meeting in each financial year (i.e. the first meeting after 1st April).

Janice Bamsey (West Oxfordshire District Council)

Camilla Burrow (Wild Oxfordshire)

Susan Harbour (South and Vale District Council)

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Mai Jarvis (Oxford City Council)

Christine Cherry (Cherwell District Council)

Helen Marshall (CPRE)

Beccy Micklem (Oxfordshire County Council)

Sue Roberts (BioAdundance)

Neil Rowntree (BBOWT)

Matthew Stanton (BBOWT)

Andrew Thompson (West Oxfordshire District Council)

(all unconfirmed but included as all have expressed at least tentative interest)

Members are expected to abide by the Nolan Principles for behaviour in public life. Members are also expected to be able to contribute to the work of the group which is largely expected to consist of formulation of policy positions and responses to consultations.

4. Chair

The Nature Policy Working Group will be chaired by Andy Egan. The Chair will be annually elected at the first meeting in each financial year. The Chair should not be an elected member of a Council but should have a good grasp of the national nature policy landscape and a firm understanding of how to formulate policy positions for local authorities. The Chair can complete a maximum of two successive terms.

5. Meetings and duration

The Nature Policy working group will meet on an ad hoc basis which is expected to be no more than 6 times a year. Meetings will be dial-in wherever possible. The continuation of the group will be reviewed annually at the first meeting in each financial year.

6. Secretariat

The LNP Manager will provide the Secretariat role. This will be reviewed annually at the first meeting in each financial year. Minutes of each meeting will be circulated to all members and can be shared with colleagues as relevant. Any discussion of a confidential nature will be highlighted as such and recorded separately in a confidential meeting note.

7. Reporting

Camilla Burrow will represent the working group at the LNP Board, and the LNP Manager will act as conduit between this and other subgroups as appropriate. The group has delegated responsibility to speak on behalf of OLNP. Board members will be included within conversations about the appropriate stance to take. Other OLNP groups may be consulted to inform positions on certain topics.