

Oxon LNP Board Paper for Decision

Title:	Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Narrative
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Summary:

Oxfordshire needs a high level narrative that states clearly our main priorities for the county. This is seen as particularly useful when making the case for investment in our county’s nature.

ONLP Manager has drafted a document which he hopes can serve as a statement of intent, and can support, and be supported by, the emerging LNRS.

Actions for the Board:

- Suggest ways in which this document might be deployed for maximum impact
- Comment on the framing and content of the document

Nature Recovery Narrative for Oxfordshire

Professor Sir John Lawton was clear in his review in 2012 of nature that we needed to act differently and faster in order for nature to recovery. He famously stated we need to think 'Bigger, better, more and joined up'.

Our vision for Oxfordshire is the successful application of the Lawton principles.

Bigger

Now

Oxfordshire has some brilliant nature reserves, but we lack a truly landscape-scale area of high-nature value habitat. Similarly, with no accessible greenspace larger than 100ha, no area of Oxfordshire meets the ANGST standards.

Vision

Our vision for Oxfordshire is the creation, by 2030, of at least one new >100acre site. Given Oxfordshire’s natural landscapes, this should be a mosaic of landscapes, but probably mostly chalk grassland and floodplains. It will be accessible to all, reducing inequalities in health and wellbeing.

How

Nature recovery will require a mosaic of habitats across the landscape performing functions for people, climate resilience and wildlife. It also needs large areas dedicate to high value nature.

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One possible focus is the Bernwood Otmoor Ray Nature Park, which would see a 270sqkm area transformed into.....

Better

Now

Oxfordshire has **x** number of protected sites, covering **y**% of the county, from local wildlife sites to SACs. However, most are either in poor condition, or not in active management for nature. The same is true for waterways – the veins and arteries of Oxfordshire wildlife – very few of which are in good condition.

Vision

At least **70**% of wildlife sites should be brought into good condition by 2030.

We should work towards bringing our important chalk streams into good condition by 2030. People benefit greatly from access to green space, but the benefits are greater when that greenspace is nature-rich. We should work to improve the natural quality of accessible greenspaces, especially those near underserved communities.

How

The Local Wildlife Site project will be supported to achieve a doubling in funding in order to deliver more management visits.

Catchment Partnerships will be supported to bring partners together around our important waterways.

Working with healthcare and community colleagues we will introduce a programme of green social prescribing which will focus on delivering nature-recovery activities on accessible greenspace.

More

Now

Oxfordshire currently has only **z**% of land managed for nature (reference Bruce's or Alison's methods).

Vision

Natural England targets require the creation of 500,000 ha of new habitat and government have an even more ambitious target of 30% of land being managed for nature by 2030.

Vision

30% of our county will be managed for nature by 2050. This will require **A**%, or **B** hectares of new habitat creation by 2030. In Oxfordshire, it's likely that much of this will take the form of broadleaved woodland, calcareous grassland and wetland floodplains, and aligned to the priorities and areas highlighted by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

How

We will support development of nature markets like biodiversity net gain and carbon credits, as well as developing new markets in material risk. We will also seek investment into new nature areas by working closely with businesses and institutions.

We will support farmer clusters and catchment partnerships to achieve more via access to funding and collaborative projects to create new nature-rich habitat.

Joined up

Now

Lawton showed us that for nature to thrive, habitat areas need to be connected, for resilience and for species dispersal, but many of Oxfordshire's important natural habitats are currently disconnected from one another. This is especially true for areas of broadleaved woodland and calcareous grassland.

Vision

Hedgerows creation and enhancement and new woodland creation will help the resilience of areas of woodland.

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- Oxfordshire has three main landscape-scale nature recovery projects - around Bernwood, Otmoor and Ray, the Ock and Thame catchments, and the Evenlode. These, and their connection, should be a focus for activity.
- Farmers are primarily food producers, but much farmland restricts species movement and reduces connectivity between habitat areas. By supporting nature friendly and regenerative farming practices we can facilitate easier movement of species. Methods include improving sward diversity, reducing bare soil and improving soil quality. This focus on soil quality has additional benefits of reducing farmer's dependency on expensive chemical inputs, increasing nutrient richness of food and improving resilience to climate change related flood and drought.
- People are less connected to the land than they used to be, and this is particularly true for underserved communities. Oxfordshire should aim for all 5 areas highlighted in martha's study to be prioritised with new or improved greenspace within 15 minute walk of these communities. Furthermore, these communities should be target for proactive assistance accessing nature.