

Nature matters

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



October '18

Newsletter from the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) to inform those who can affect nature's position in politics and help inspire community involvement.

Nature matters. It feeds us, provides our clothing, stabilises our environment, and so much more. Nature is in decline. The result may be more extreme weather events like those of this summer, and disturbing reports that we might only have one hundred harvests left because of depleted soil quality. Alongside this we have an epidemic of obesity and mental health challenges in our country which are undoubtedly linked to people's lack of access to a thriving and attractive natural world. The State of Nature report in 2016 revealed that the UK is 189th on a ranking of 218 countries for 'biodiversity intactness'.

BBOWT works to demonstrate what can be done locally, whilst making a case for how national legislation can help to protect nature and promote its recovery. This issue of *Nature Matters* covers our work in Banbury and Oxford, our response to the Ox-Cam Expressway, how national planning policy will impact on local developments, and of course our exit from the

EU. We've also just released our Annual Review and there is some information below about the impact of our work.

Whether you voted to leave or remain, we hope it will offer some reassurance to learn that there are opportunities that arise from Britain's withdrawal from the EU, particularly for the environment. There are opportunities to maintain EU protections, including environmental principles such as the 'polluter pays', and to review the Common Agricultural Policy. There is broad acceptance that the environment is a priority to voters, so now is the time to demand stronger legislation.

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Our impact

2017-18

You may not know of all the work BBOWT does, who we partner with or the impact we're having across the three counties.

This is the second year of our Strategic Plan 2016-21: *Be part of Nature's Recovery*. Our work falls under five themes: Restore, Connect, Value, Partner and Build. Here is a snapshot of our achievements across the year. There's more information in our Annual Review 2017-18 and a short video of our work at www.bbowl.org.uk/about

1,800 volunteers contributed to 24,278 volunteer sessions

293 landowners reached, making gains for wildlife in our wider countryside

15,000 planning applications screened

87 nature reserves covering 2,644ha of land

25,136 memberships

39,000+ people attended more than 400 public events

From EU to a wilder Britain?

a chance to pioneer nature's recovery

The government has already announced its ambitions via its 25 Year Environment Plan and pledge to leave the environment in a better state than they inherited. These are bold words in a country needing trade deals to counter the economic challenges presented by Britain leaving the EU.

Following our withdrawal from the EU, Britain could be a country that pioneers the recovery of nature, challenges the use of plastics, and leads in countering and mitigating climate change.

The Agriculture Bill will hopefully change the way landowners receive subsidies, and be based on public services provided rather than on the size of landholdings. Our intensive approach to farming is the greatest threat to the 10 per cent of species faced with extinction in the UK. An overarching Environment Bill needs to set ambitious and measurable goals for nature's recovery, map the places where this needs to happen, and create a strong

What you can do

- As someone who can influence the agenda we hope to have your support. You can show your support for our campaign by getting in touch with nickywarden@bbowt.org.uk

green watchdog that can hold the government to account regarding further environmental harm.

This autumn the Wildlife Trusts are launching a bold campaign to ensure that the legislation going through parliament is strong enough to repair the damage done by previous generations and our own. We are also having a hard look at our approach to achieving nature's recovery locally at our annual conference 'The Future for a Wilder Britain' on 13 October.



10,000 people took part in the first-ever People's Walk for Wildlife on 22 September in London

Wilding our cities and towns

the story of Wild Oxford and Wild Banbury

Green spaces are increasingly important as more of us live in urban areas. The Wild Oxford project has brought the people of Oxford closer to the city's special wildlife and natural spaces. Launched in 2013 in partnership with Oxford City Council, the project has taken a sustainable approach to managing the city's nature reserves including Chilswell and Lye Valleys, Rivermead Nature Park and Raleigh Park. Across the city we have worked with growing volunteer teams from local communities to restore precious habitats, improve safe access to green space, and engage more city residents with the benefits contact with nature brings.

Wild Banbury, a partnership with Banbury Town Council, is approaching its third year. The project currently focuses on Spiceball Park, Banbury's largest green space, and the Hanwell Brook Wetland. Volunteers have made dramatic improvements for both people and wildlife in the town, and the project has reached more than 1,000 local people and school children.

For more information visit:

www.bbowt.org.uk/wild-banbury
www.bbowt.org.uk/wild-oxford



Oxford to Cambridge Expressway

enough space for nature?

On 12 September the Department for Transport selected 'Corridor B' that extends from south Oxford in a north easterly direction to accommodate the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway and associated housing development. In our opinion this is the worst of the three options that were under consideration.

We contributed to a Highways England consultation by providing comprehensive ecological information about the corridor options, but we have profound concerns about the corridor that has been chosen. Is it not time to ask whether our environment can continue to be so perilously threatened whilst economic gains are prioritised? It is very difficult to envisage this route selection avoiding existing valuable wildlife habitats, let alone allow provision for nature's recovery for the benefit of future residents of the region.

We believe that due process has not been followed in the selection of this corridor. EU law instructs that a plan or programme that impacts on the environment needs to undergo a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This process would have resulted in the much-demanded public consultation on the corridor selection, which would have identified whether the economy, society and environment were equally considered in making such a decision.

We do not wish a precedent to be set whereby projects of

this size do not undergo an SEA. On 27 September 2018 we issued notification to the government that we intend to legally challenge the lack of due process through a Judicial Review. Late in October we intend to make our claim to the court.



What you can do

- Our reaction to the Ox-Cam Expressway announcement:

<https://bit.ly/response-ox-cam-expressway>

- Have a look at our consultation response to Highways England to learn more about the impact the Expressway is likely to have on nature:

<https://bit.ly/ox-cam-expressway>

- Get in touch to let us know if you feel more consultation was needed and you therefore support the legal challenge: nickywarden@bbowt.org.uk

New National Planning Policy Framework

what this means for local wildlife

The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published by the government in July. This will have a considerable impact on planning policy and planning applications. After campaigning by The Wildlife Trusts, the NPPF now includes some reinstated protection for Local Wildlife Sites, which the government's draft framework did not include. The all-important new wording says that local councils will need to identify, map and safeguard components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity.

The NPPF stipulates that planning policy and developments should achieve a net gain in biodiversity. This is a big step forward. A net gain in biodiversity means development must assess the ecological value of a

site before master planning, and then ensure there will be more wildlife after the development than before. This net gain in biodiversity should be measurable.

The new NPPF should support the recovery of nature locally and help guide towards better outcomes for wildlife through the planning process.



What you can do

- Take a look at paragraphs 8,170,174 and 175 of the new NPPF:

bit.ly/Nat-PI-Policy-Framework

- Learn more about Local Wildlife Sites: www.wildlifetrusts.org/local-wildlife-sites

- See The Wildlife Trusts' vision for housing: www.wildlifetrusts.org/planning

- You may have an influence on planning in your position. If you or your committee would like to learn more about the new NPPF or our housing vision then contact nickywarden@bbowt.org.uk and we can arrange a specialist to explain.

Nature Matters

the next edition

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust sends out this *Nature Matters* newsletter twice a year to inform local decision-makers about our work.

Tom Beckett, our Director of External Affairs, and Nicky Warden, our Political Research Officer, regularly engage with local political parties, NGOs, councillors, MPs and peers, and will continue to do so over the coming months, particularly regarding the Environment Bill, the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway and the Campaign for a Wilder Britain.



Contact us

BBOWT wants to engage you in a number of different ways. Here are some key contacts:



Nicky Warden
Political Research Officer
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If you want to arrange a presentation to your organisation (e.g. local political party, NGO or Council) on BBOWT's work, or on any of the topics covered in this newsletter,

please contact Nicky. We'd welcome your feedback on this newsletter, or let us know if you wish to be removed from the list.



Tom Beckett
Director of External Affairs
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Tom leads on BBOWT's work in advocacy, marketing, communications and fundraising. If you are considering ways for your NGO or local political party to position

itself in line with BBOWT's work, or if you are looking to develop projects or are considering collaboration please contact Tom.



Carlyne Culver
Media & Campaigns Manager
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Carlyne manages our media relationships and helps coordinate campaigning activities. Contact Carlyne with details of your publications that could feature

BBOWT's work. Follow us on social media:

@bbowildlifetrust @BBOWT

County Directors Conservation and Education

Our County Directors manage all the conservation and education work in the three counties. They work with a wide range of other organisations and networks such as Local Authorities, National Statutory Environmental Agencies, other NGOs and Local Nature Partnerships. If you have county-specific projects, or are considering how to distribute mitigation funds, please contact the relevant County Director.



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