

Nature matters

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



in Berks, Bucks & Oxon

April '19

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.

The Environment Bill *making space for nature*

At a time when Brexit appears to push all other political issues to the margins, it is easy to think that normal service will be resumed soon and marginalised topics will return to the fore. However, for wildlife, normal service will not be good enough. Nature continues to decline as species have been squashed into the margins of human life.

Things need to change, and a new approach to managing our landscapes for the benefit of wildlife must be established. The proposed Environment Bill is an opportunity to reverse the ongoing decline in wildlife.

To deliver such change, the bill needs to require local authorities to develop their own plans or local Nature Recovery Networks. These would protect, join up and enhance the fragments of nature that remain. It would identify areas where the greatest benefit for wildlife and people can be achieved and show the advantages of joining up places important for wild plants and animals, allowing them to move from place to place. Such networks would then guide decisions on housing and development to ensure they deliver a positive contribution to nature's recovery.

On 2 May 2019, almost 500 councillors will be elected in 11 councils across Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes. We have asked councillors and candidates to make this pledge:

"I believe we all need nature and I pledge to support the development of a Local Nature Recovery Map for my local authority and the embedding of it into local plans for this area."

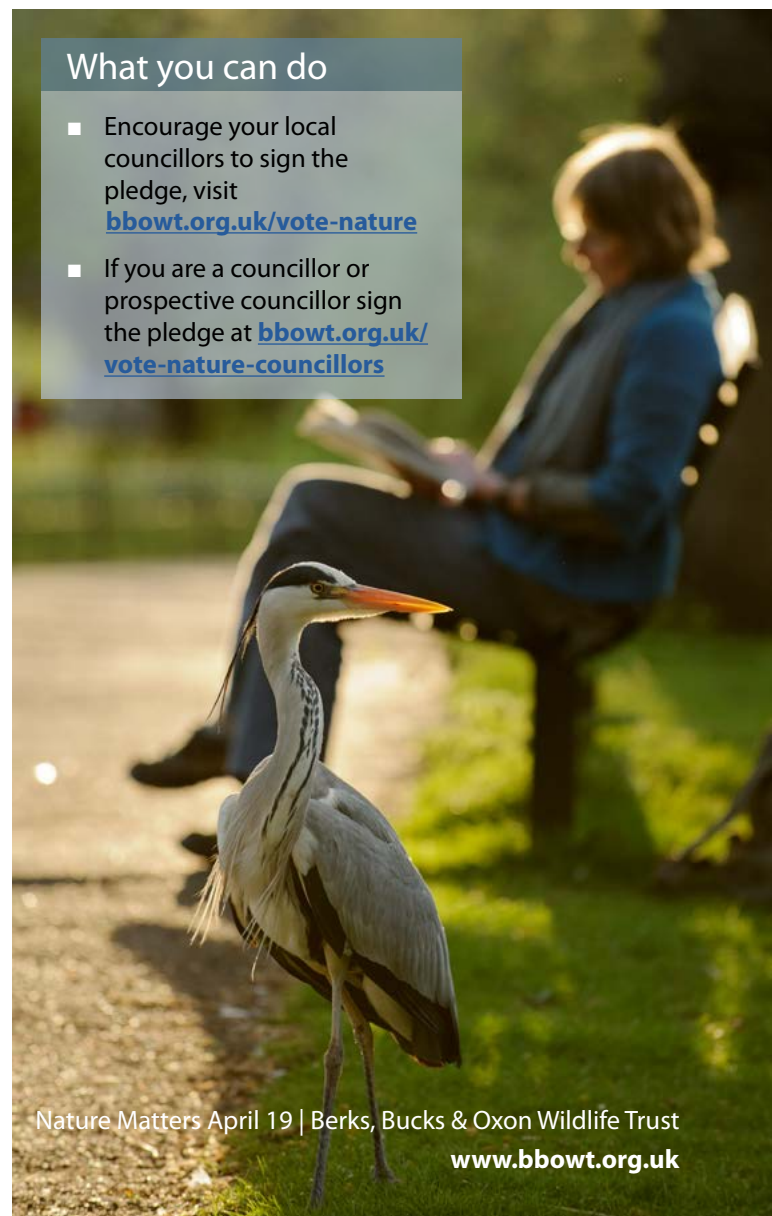
However, whilst Nature Recovery Networks would create the framework to enable wildlife to thrive, we need the Environment Bill to contain legally binding targets to drive forward policy changes. Such targets must (i) deliver clean air, (ii) ensure our freshwaters and seas support wildlife, (iii) return our soils to a healthy status, (iv) enhance habitats, (v) restore species, and (vi) tackle the drivers of climate change. The targets must be set using independent expert advice and success against them must be measurable by the use of clear metrics. It should be the duty of the Secretary of State to publish and implement plans for achieving the targets and restoring nature.

Such targets could facilitate environmental gains and benefits for wildlife for years to come, but to ensure that they are not simply forgotten by successive governments, they need to be enforceable by the public and an independent watchdog. Whilst we welcome the government's proposal for a new Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), it does not have the necessary 'teeth' to hold the government to account. The decision notices issued by the OEP after it has carried out its investigations will not be legally binding on public bodies. The OEP needs greater powers to enforce new legally binding targets.

The Environment Bill must bring wildlife back from the margins to enable it to thrive across all parts of our country.

What you can do

- Encourage your local councillors to sign the pledge, visit bbowt.org.uk/vote-nature
- If you are a councillor or prospective councillor sign the pledge at bbowt.org.uk/vote-nature-councillors



Improving people's health and wellbeing through access to nature

Obesity and mental health issues are on the rise and are seriously affecting productivity. A number of GPs, including Dr William Bird, outline that we are not evolved to live in an indoor environment. They champion us being active in nature, and are now encouraging nature centred social prescribing. This has been backed up by numerous studies, which have now been peer reviewed by the likes of the European Commission and Natural England, affirming that nature is a solution to widespread health issues across the modern world.

The Lancashire Wildlife Trust has set up a project in partnership with the Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust to engage with young people experiencing mental

health issues. They have had over 700 people come through the project with outstanding results. The participants are reducing dependence on traditional medicine and are transitioning into being productive members of society, through just a half a day spent with nature every week!

Mental health and muscular skeletal issues are hitting the bottom line of employers. The New Economic Foundation estimates that this is costing £1,000 per year per employee on average. We are helping organisations to get their employees out into nature to do conservation work through 'Wild Wellbeing Days'. The results show that staff will adapt their day to day life from this experience, and feel happier and healthier.



What you can do

- Encourage your local NHS trust to engage BBOWT in social prescribing.
- Ensure your constituents have access to nature by adopting standards such as the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) in planning.
- Consider embedding 'Wild Wellbeing Days' into your workplace health and wellbeing programme.

Heathrow Expansion

a threat to wildlife?

As part of the Paris Agreement, the UK government pledged to pursue efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C, and under the Climate Change Act 2008 the government is legally bound to ensure that carbon emissions in 2050 are at least 80% lower than the 1990 baseline. It is difficult to see how the government's support for a third runway at Heathrow can be squared with these two duties. The proposed expansion at the airport not only threatens to cause the UK to break its international climate commitments, but also has a significant impact on the local environment and the communities living there.

BBOWT has two nature reserves within 10km of the proposed development area. These are Haymill Valley and Chawridge

Bank. At a time when urban expansion and development is putting unprecedented pressure on our remaining wild spaces, the Heathrow plans threaten to destroy vital habitats.

Any development must fully assess the environmental consequences, fully mitigate any damage and deliver net gain for biodiversity in perpetuity. The creation and maturation of new habitats should be provided for before existing habitat is lost or damaged. Furthermore, any biodiversity enhancement must be provided in the locality of Heathrow as much as possible, to offset what is being lost by restoring and connecting existing and new habitats. Heathrow expansion cannot be allowed to damage our already fragile ecosystems and wildlife.

“urban expansion and development is putting unprecedented pressure on our remaining wild spaces”

What you can do

- Learn more about our planning work by visiting bbowt.org.uk/planning-advice
- Contact Matthew Stanton, Head of Planning Policy and Advocacy on matthewstanton@bbowt.org.uk

Nature Matters

in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Arc



Curlew at Gallowsbridge Farm, a wildlife rich site at threat from the proposed Expressway?

We are deeply concerned about the impacts on nature in the five counties (Oxon, Cambs, Bucks, Beds and Northants) from the construction of houses and associated infrastructure in the Ox-Cam Growth Arc. With a million new homes planned within the Growth Arc (greater than a city the size of Birmingham), it is estimated that 12% of the land within the five counties will be built on by 2050.

Only 6.3% of land is designated for nature in these five counties against the national average of 14.8%. Already, the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway threatens 396 important sites for wildlife. We simply do not have enough space for nature, especially with the rise in population bringing unprecedented recreational pressure.

We are asking those constructing the Growth Arc to consider a strategic plan in their approach, one that balances the benefit/impacts of these million new homes and associated infrastructure with the needs of the environment.

We believe that natural infrastructure is as, if not more important, than the built infrastructure to the prosperity of current and future occupants of the Growth Arc.

We will continue to push for strategic planning and will demand that more land is designated for nature, that a Nature Recovery Network is created across the Growth Arc, and that building incorporates nature so that it is resilient to a climate change future.

What you can do

- Visit our website bbowt.org.uk/expressway
- Contact Matthew Stanton, Head of Planning, Policy and Advocacy on matthewstanton@bbowt.org.uk

Legal Challenge *justice for nature*

On 20 February, the High Court granted the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust permission to proceed with its Judicial Review against the government relating to the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. This overturned the previous decision of the court to refuse permission.

The court found that there is a case for the government to answer on its failure to carry out either a Strategic Environmental Assessment or a Habitats Regulation Assessment before it accepted Highways England's recommendations for a corridor for the expressway.

We expect the full hearing to take place in early summer. Learn more about our case at bbowt.org.uk/expressway



BBOWT staff and supporters at the High Court



Wilder FUTURE

It's not too late to
bring our wildlife back

Sadly, since we first met Badger, Ratty and friends in 1908, the UK has become one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. The Wildlife Trusts have re-imagined *The Wind in the Willows* in 2019, creating an exciting new film trailer starring Sir David Attenborough, Stephen Fry and Catherine Tate. The trailer sheds a light on some of the problems our wildlife faces every day, warning that while it's not too late to bring our wildlife back, we must act now.

The **Campaign for a Wilder Future** is calling for the creation of Nature Recovery Networks to better protect and join-up important places for wildlife. In England, the campaign is

calling for the government's upcoming Environment Bill to include measures to drive the creation of these Nature Recovery Networks. **Together we can make the next chapter for wildlife a happier one. Join us to put nature into recovery.**

What you can do

- Watch the *The Wind in the Willows* film trailer and join our Campaign for a Wilder Future at bbowt.org.uk/wilder

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'd like 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.



Matthew Stanton
Head of Planning, Policy and Advocacy
01865 775476 ext 3204
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Matthew leads on BBOWT's planning work and legal and political engagement. If you would like more information on BBOWT's advocacy or its detailed positions please get in touch.



Telsha Arora
Media & Campaigns Manager
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Telsha manages our media relationships and helps coordinate campaigning activities. Contact Telsha with details of your publications that could feature BBOWT's work.

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