**Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire**

THE wildlife TRUSTS

Pledge for Nature

About the pledge

On 6th May 2021 elections will take place in the following local authorities in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

- Buckinghamshire Council (all seats)
- Oxfordshire County Council (all seats)
- Cherwell District Council (1/3 of councillors)
- Milton Keynes Council (1/3 of councillors)
- Oxford City Council (all seats)
- Reading Borough Council (1/3 of councillors)
- Slough Borough Council (1/3 of councillors)
- West Oxfordshire District Council (1/3 of councillors)
- Wokingham Borough Council (1/3 of councillors)

BBOWT is asking councillors and candidates for elections to make the following pledge:

I pledge that if elected I will work to ensure that my council adopts a target of 30% of land being well managed for nature by 2030

Steps to achieve this include:

- council to declare an ecological emergency
- council to maximise opportunities for wildlife on road verges and green spaces
- council to stop routine and unnecessary use of chemicals harmful to nature
- council to influence landowners, developers, business and communities to maximise opportunities for nature

The natural world is the foundation of our health, wellbeing and prosperity. Evidence shows[1] that a thriving, wildlife-rich environment benefits both physical and mental health. People with nature on their doorstep are more active, mentally resilient and have better all-round health.

---

[1] In 2019, Leeds Beckett University undertook a Social Return on Investment analysis of Wildlife Trust programmes. They found that: Targeted programmes designed for people with a health or social need, showed a return of £6.88 for every £1 invested. This value was generated from health gains such as improved mental wellbeing. For those attending general volunteering programmes, the value was even higher with a return of £8.50 for every £1 invested. The research showed a range of benefits, such as increased feelings of positivity and levels of physical activity.

Prior to this, an evaluation of the health and wellbeing impacts of volunteering for 12 weeks with Wildlife Trusts found:

- 60% reported becoming more physically active;
- New volunteers trebled the number of days they were physically active;
- 83% improved their mental wellbeing.

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire

THE wildlife
TRUSTS

According to the 2019 State of Nature report, between 1970 and 2013 56% of UK species declined, and 15% are now threatened with extinction. Of the 218 countries assessed for "biodiversity intactness", the UK is ranked 189. We are among the most nature-depleted countries in the world.

The Wildlife Trusts are calling for at least 30% of our land and sea to be connected and protected for nature's recovery by 2030[2]. Making more space for nature to become abundant once again will give our struggling wildlife the chance to recover and also restore beautiful wild places - places that store carbon and help to tackle the climate crisis.

30% is the bare minimum that nature needs to start recovering but we are far short of this - at the Wildlife Trusts we estimate only five per cent of land is currently in good state for wildlife. Our call for 30% of land to be in a good state for nature is not a call for 30% of land to be designated a SSSI – instead it is a vision for 30% that's better protected, better connected, better managed and put into recovery for nature.

This will require improving the condition of many of our already designated sites, increasing protection for local wildlife sites and using the opportunities that biodiversity net gain and nature recovery networks will present. At BBOWT we are working on habitat banking projects as a way of ensuring that biodiversity net gain funds generated by developments are used in a way that best contributes to delivering the ambition of 30% of land being well managed for nature. Nature Recovery Networks will be key to ensuring such investment is targeted in the places that will have the biggest impact for nature. Both biodiversity net gain and Nature Recovery Networks will be mandatory once the Environment Bill becomes law and we are working with local authorities to help them deliver both. Please get in touch to learn about how we can help your local authority create its Nature Recovery Network.

We believe that the climate and ecological emergencies we face are inextricably linked. Many councils have taken the step of declaring a climate emergency and have started to work on climate change strategies and action plans. Fewer have acknowledged the threat of the ecological emergency or started to address it.

In our three counties, South Oxfordshire District Council has declared an ecological emergency (as well as a climate emergency) and West Oxfordshire declared a climate and ecological emergency whilst Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has declared environment and climate emergency. We would like all councils to declare an ecological emergency and start to embed climate action and ecological initiatives within all council work areas, including COVID-19 recovery projects and programmes.

BBOWT provides a professional Land Advice Service which supports farmers and land managers to transition to environmentally sustainable and wildlife friendly land use, using evidence-based and locally-tailored advice, planning, and implementation. Sustainable agriculture is at the heart of a healthy countryside and is key to delivering Local Nature Recovery Strategies and addressing both the climate and ecological emergencies.

---

[2] The Wildlife Trust campaign takes its lead from The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). This is an agreement between countries based on natural and biological resources, with 3 main goals: to protect biodiversity; to use biodiversity without destroying it; and, to share any benefits from genetic diversity equally. The CBD has proposed that at least 30% of the world's land and seas should be protected in the next decade to prevent the destruction of the planet's biodiversity, as part of a global framework to protect the Earth's plant and wildlife