



COMMUNITY TOWN AND PARISH GUIDE TO NATURE RECOVERY

Wild 
Oxfordshire



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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ABOUT THIS GUIDANCE

This guide is for communities and individuals interested in improving their local natural environment and looking after nature

Community Town and Parish Guide to Nature Recovery

This document provides useful information on biodiversity, nature recovery and looking after local spaces in Oxfordshire (although much of the information will be relevant in other counties too). It offers step-by-step advice on setting up environmental groups and protecting special sites, signposts relevant organisations, and outlines available help. There are handy sections on carrying out practical conservation work, sources of funding and advice, and examples of what other local communities have achieved.

Do bear in mind that this guide is not an exhaustive list, but is a snapshot in time and a starting point to finding out more. Much of the information will be relevant, but there may be new links, advice and funding to be found. There is a lot going on in Oxfordshire, so do check if there are any wildlife, environmental or community groups already set up in your area – there may be like-minded people close to hand.

Keep a close eye on the [Wild Oxfordshire](#) website for up-to-date information on local wildlife, nature recovery, volunteering, community spaces and environmental groups.



Sowing a wildflower meadow (Wild Kidlington)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

| | | | |
|----------|---|-------|---|
| BBOWT | Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust | NL | National Landscape (designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty [AONB]) |
| BNG | Biodiversity Net Gain | NPPF | National Planning Policy Framework |
| BTO | British Trust for Ornithology | NRN | Nature Recovery Network |
| CAG | Community Action Groups | OCV | Oxford Conservation Volunteers |
| CBCV | Cuttle Brook Conservation Volunteers | OWLS | Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study |
| CFO | Community First Oxfordshire | PTES | People's Trust for Endangered Species |
| CLP | Community-led Plan | RSPB | The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds |
| CTA | Conservation Target Area | RVNR | Road Verge Nature Reserve |
| GIS | Geographic Information System | SAC | Special Area of Conservation |
| FHT | Freshwater Habitats Trust | SSSI | Site of Special Scientific Interest |
| LGS | Local Geological Site | TCV | The Conservation Volunteers |
| LNR | Local Nature Reserve | TOE | Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment |
| LNRS | Local Nature Recovery Strategy | TVERC | Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre |
| LWS | Local Wildlife Site | WCA | Wildlife and Countryside Act |
| NERC Act | Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act | | |

GETTING STARTED

One of the best ways to get started is to find out about local groups where you can meet like-minded people

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is all the life on earth, from animals and plants to bacteria and fungi. Biodiversity is anything and everything alive in our beautiful landscape of woodland, hedgerows, meadows, rivers and lakes. You can find biodiversity in urban cities and rural villages, from red kites soaring over the Chilterns to bumblebees on the village green.

Why does biodiversity matter?

All life on earth has an intrinsic value which we, as our planet's dominant species, have a duty to protect. Although wildlife can exist without us, we cannot exist without wildlife, so by protecting our natural world we are improving life for ourselves as well as other species. A natural environment rich in wildlife delivers numerous benefits to Oxfordshire's communities including improved health and wellbeing, higher property values and flood prevention. Despite this, nature is still seriously declining across Britain. The data show that 1 in 6 species (16.1%) are now threatened with extinction ([State of Nature, 2023](#)). To allow nature to recover and adapt to a changing climate, we can all play our part.

How can I help?

Wildlife needs protecting and habitats need managing all over Oxfordshire. Communities can provide vital help by appreciating, protecting and enhancing biodiversity in their local area.

This guide will help you to set up a local conservation group, involve the local community, contribute to a Parish or Neighbourhood Plan, and find sources of help, information and funding to ensure your efforts will result in a better local environment and contribute to nature recovery in Oxfordshire. For more information on Oxfordshire's coordinated strategy for nature's recovery, see page 5.

Getting started

Deciding where to start can be a daunting prospect, but if you follow the four steps outlined below, you'll soon be well on your way to helping Oxfordshire's nature!

The **FOUR STEPS** to take are:

1. **Discover** what's in your area
2. **Protect** the most valuable areas
3. **Create** new habitat for wildlife
4. **Manage** areas to maintain and enhance biodiversity

Setting up a local group

[Wild Oxfordshire](#) holds contact details of all the local groups working in Oxfordshire. Before you set up a new group, check out their website to see if there is an existing local group you could join. If there isn't already a group in your area, you can set one up. You could also:

- Follow local environmental groups on social media.
- Join [Wild Oxfordshire](#) and get regular nature updates and to access advice.
- Join [CAG Oxfordshire](#) for guidance on the governance of local groups.
- Join nature conservation organisations, such as [BBOWT](#).



Wildflowers providing a pollen and nectar source for wild pollinators at a local green space (Wychwood Forest Trust)

Targeting nature recovery in Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire supports a wide variety of habitats, from chalk grassland and streams to beech woodland with bluebells, from pockets of fen and acid grassland to floodplain meadows. Defra has committed, through the Environment Act, to halt the decline in biodiversity loss by 2030. The aim is to create a Nature Recovery Network (NRN) of wildlife-rich places which will be expanded, connected and improved for nature, stretching across rural, urban, coastal and upland areas. There are 48 Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) areas which cover the whole of England with no gaps or overlaps. Oxfordshire is now working on its LNRS outlining where activities can be undertaken to support the ambition of the strategy. The [Nature Recovery Network](#) – a network of local people based in Eynsham and surrounding villages – is a good example of how connected communities can be successful in creating a nature recovery network on the ground.

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is the 'responsible authority' to lead nature's recovery through a LNRS for the county, with Natural England and the District and City councils as 'supporting authorities'. The LNRS will build on work already achieved, alongside representatives from local organisations involved in nature conservation. This targeted approach helps to concentrate the limited resources of the local authorities, government agencies and conservation organisations in Oxfordshire who are working jointly on the LNRS. Visit the [OCC](#) website for more information on the LNRS.

Oxfordshire has identified where the best places in the county are for focusing our efforts on protecting wildlife and improving habitats. These places are called Conservation Target Areas (CTAs). More information, including a map of the 39 CTAs is available on the [Wild Oxfordshire](#) website. Conserving and enhancing biodiversity is important, wherever it is. The CTA approach does not imply that areas outside the boundaries have no biodiversity or that biodiversity there should not be protected and enhanced.

Communities have the opportunity to positively influence their local area wherever they are. The [Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study \(OWLS\)](#) provides information on landscape character and biodiversity for the whole of Oxfordshire. OWLS can help people understand their local landscape. The 24 landscape types can be viewed at county, district or parish level.

The [State of Nature in Oxfordshire 2017](#) report is the most comprehensive review of Oxfordshire's wildlife and sits alongside the national *State of Nature* report. In this document, you can get an idea of the habitats and wildlife in our county, trends in local priority species, and the actions we can take to improve our landscapes.

STEP 1: DISCOVER

The first step to helping local nature is to find out what you already have on your own patch

Discover what's in your area

You can find out more about your local area via various means, such as looking at aerial photos, contacting the local environmental records centre, using online resources, and by carrying out field surveys. First, decide on the boundary of the area you'd like to look at; often this will be the town and parish boundary, which can be found on the [Oxfordshire County Council \(OCC\)](#) website.

Some areas of our landscape are valuable for wildlife because they include a large variety of habitats. Often the more 'natural' or 'untidy' an area looks, the better it may be for wildlife.

How to find out what is already known or recorded about your area

Before you get out and about, it is often useful to find out what is known or recorded about your area. There is a wealth of environmental information about Oxfordshire available for you to research.

Aerial photographs

Aerial photographs (from Google Earth) can give you an overview of the whole area and can be looked at without getting muddy boots! Although do remember that things may have changed on the ground since the photo was taken.

Base Maps

[Ordnance Survey](#) produce maps at various scales which can be useful, and maps produced more than 50 years ago are copyright free. The [Bodleian Library](#) in Oxford provides a copying service for old maps. You can access Ordnance Survey maps in paper format and on freely accessible computers at the [Oxfordshire History Centre \(OHS\)](#) in Cowley. The OHS has large-scale digital mapping from 1876 to 2011. You can also access historical maps online via [Old Maps Online](#). Do check the copyright conditions of any maps you use.

[Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside \(MAGIC\)](#) can also be used view national datasets of geographic information about the natural environment'.

Local Records Centres

Local Records Centres collect, collate and manage data about the environment in a given area. In Oxfordshire, the [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre \(TVERC\)](#) holds information on sites, species and habitats. TVERC can provide you with a map and report showing all the environmental

information held for your area and whether it's protected by law or planning policy. They also have a data search report for community groups and Parish Councils. Further information can be found on their website.

What is already known or recorded?

You can also access a range of information and maps about your local environment on the following websites:

Natural Environment

- Natural England publications, maps and data on the natural environment (via [UK Government](#) website)
- [MAGIC: Interactive map of environmental information](#)
- Guidance on biodiversity and planning in Oxfordshire (on [OCC](#) website)
- [BBOWT nature reserves](#)
- [TVERC](#)
- [National Biodiversity Network Gateway \(NBN Gateway\)](#)
- [Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership](#)
- [Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study](#)
- Protected landscapes: [Chilterns](#), [Cotswolds](#), and [North Wessex Downs](#) National Landscapes (designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty [AONBs])
- Public Registers of environmental permits and licences ([UK government](#) website)

Historic Environment

- [Historic sites and buildings](#)
- [Historic England](#)
- [National Heritage List for England \(NHLE\)](#)

Other Environment

- [Environmental data at a local level](#)
- Public Registers of environmental permits and licences ([UK government](#) website)
- [British Geological Survey map data](#)
- [Land Information System soils data](#)

Rights of Way

Many people already know and use the rights of way where they live. These can also be a good starting point for carrying out surveys. If you want more information about where the Public Rights of Way and open access land are within your local area, and don't have access to your own Ordnance Survey maps, Oxfordshire County Council has produced an [interactive map](#) of Oxfordshire's countryside. It is designed as a tool to help you explore the countryside and also make it easy to report rights of way issues you may find. You can also report a street issue to your local council via [Fix My Street](#).

Mapping the information

Once you've gathered together all this information, you may want to put it all onto a digital map. You can then add the results of any field surveys onto the map too. You could also hand annotate a map with the opportunities for enhancing, extending or rejuvenating habitat features (see page 9). It is always important to ground-truth mapped information to check it is still accurate and relevant. There are several types of open-source GIS software available from the internet which may be suitable, including [LandApp](#) and [QGIS](#).

Field surveys

Although you may have some information on your local area from aerial photos, websites and TVERC, carrying out field surveys is a great way to get even more localised information. Many habitats are on private land, so you should obtain permission from the landowner before carrying out a survey. For example, hedgerows can be surveyed to find out how many different types of shrubs and plants are growing within them and how old they might be.

Several organisations have website pages with good guidance on carrying out surveys for different types of wildlife and habitat. For example, see [People's Trust for Endangered Species \(PTES\)](#), [Freshwater Habitats Trust \(FHT\)](#), [Butterfly Conservation](#), [Bumblebee Conservation Trust](#), [British Trust for Ornithology \(BTO\)](#), [Buglife](#) and [Plantlife Meadows Hub](#). Some types of survey for protected species require a specific licence, so do check before making plans.

Examples of habitat surveys include:

- Hedgerows
- Grasslands and Verges
- Ponds, rivers, ditches and streams
- Orchards

Examples of species surveys could include:

- Butterflies
- Bumblebees
- Birds
- Mammals
- Invertebrates

Local environmental organisations may be able to help with habitat and species surveys. You could contact the Community Ecology Team at Wild Oxfordshire to discuss which areas you would like to assess.

TVERC has advice on wildlife recording and how to get started. You can either use their website to find out more about recording and submitting wildlife sightings, or register an account with iRecord. You can access [iRecord](#) via their website or a smartphone app to which you can upload observation details and photographs with your suggested identification. iRecord uses a system of automatic checks on records as they are entered and some records will require verification from experienced recorders.



© Dave Gasca

The following landscape features are most valuable for wildlife:

- Unimproved pasture (grassland used for grazing)
- Rough grassland/scrub/derelict land
- Meadows
- Wetlands (e.g. fens, marshes and reedbeds)
- Woodlands (deciduous and ancient woodland)
- Hedgerows and scrub
- Native trees (especially old trees with holes and rotten branches)
- Rivers, streams and ditches
- Lakes and ponds
- Older buildings
- Allotments
- Churchyards
- Disused quarries
- Railway embankments and disused railway lines
- Old roads and green lanes
- Traditional orchards

The following are less valuable (but everything has some value!):

- Arable fields (used for growing crops)
- Short-mown grass (on verges or village greens)
- Plantation woodland, especially conifers
- Newer buildings and surrounding areas designed without nature in mind

Checklist: finding out about your area

- ✓ Find out if there any other like-minded groups or people in your area that can help. You can check Wild Oxfordshire's Community Map.
- ✓ Find out what habitats and species are in the area by asking TVERC and searching the OWLS website for information or by using maps, records and archives.

Have you got all the key information about the town, parish or landscape? Can you answer the following?

- ✓ Are we in a protected landscape or Green Belt?
- ✓ What habitats are there?
- ✓ What green spaces are there? Including wildlife sites, green community areas, churchyards, playing fields, green school grounds, allotments, etc.
- ✓ What waterways are there?
- ✓ Are there any designated areas, e.g. SSSIs, LWS, or RVNRs?
- ✓ Are there any important species previously recorded?

What is most important to the group? (This may help prioritise particular projects or green spaces)

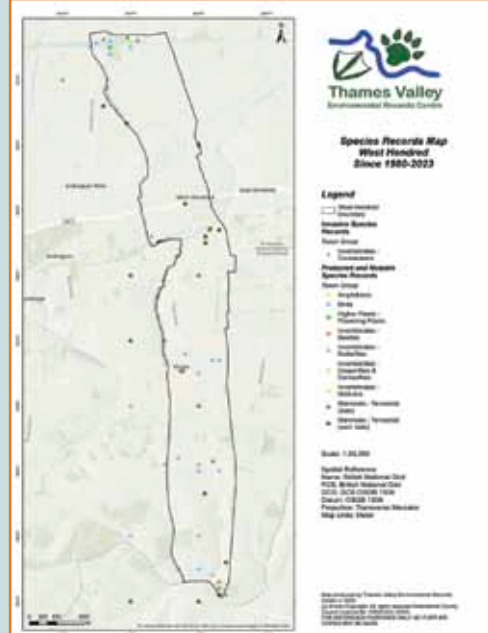
- ✓ Managing or enhancing a particular site?
- ✓ Talks or information about local wildlife?
- ✓ Practical work days?
- ✓ Wildlife gardening?
- ✓ Informing a Community-led Plan or other document?
- ✓ Recording species and conserving them?

Use the information you have and what you already know to form your plan of action. Consider:

- ✓ What are the most important habitats and other features in our area?
- ✓ What is important to local people?
- ✓ What can we do or change now?
- ✓ What might take a bit longer to solve?
- ✓ What do we need help with?
- ✓ Which sites can we get to and work on? Who owns it? Have we got landowner permission?
- ✓ What practical work can the group focus on?

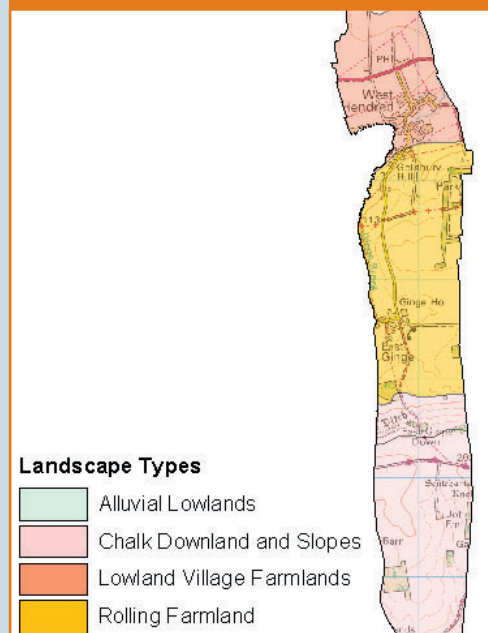
Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC)

TVERC can provide you with a map showing all the special sites, species and habitats in your area.

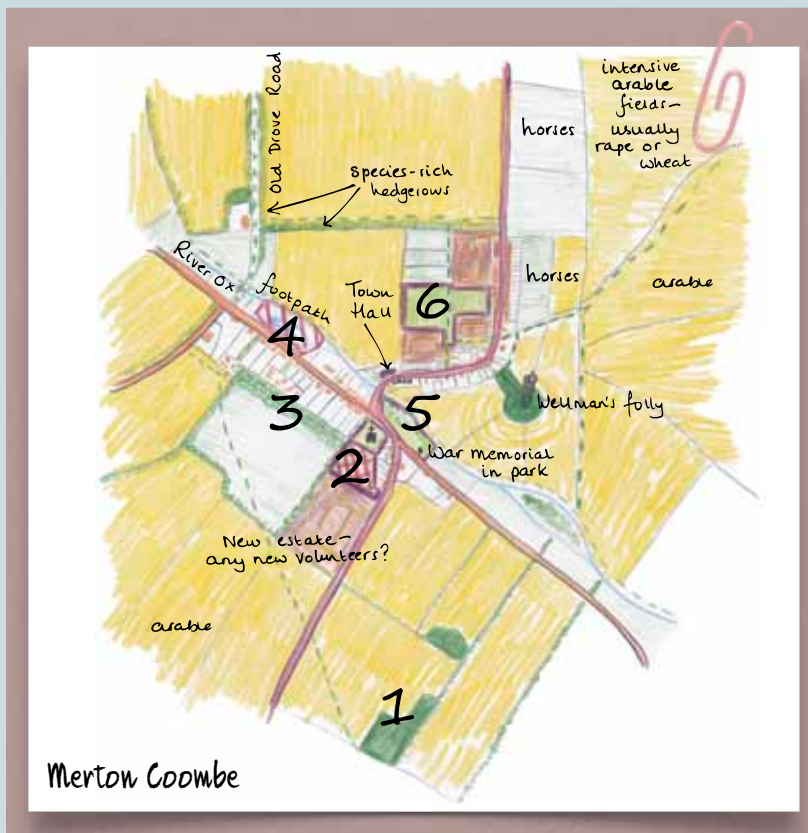


Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS)

The OWLS website provides information on the habitats and landscape character of each parish in Oxfordshire.



Example: taking notes to inform a plan



Map notes...

- 1 Merton Copse**
Any way of linking these two patches of woodland with a hedge? Would the landowner like any help with managing the woodland?
- 2 Church Yard and Norman's Piece (owned by Parish Council; LWS)**
Can we get designation info or surveys? Interpretation panels old and uninspiring. Any keen botanists in village to resurvey? Church Yard – wonder if we could get the church interested in a Bio-Blitz? Maybe we could mow patches of the grass less often to help biodiversity?
- 3 Old species-rich hedgerow and woodland with big gardens backing onto it**
Great for birds. See if any keen birdwatchers in village? Do the hedges need rejuvenating? Wildlife gardening? Can we get anyone to talk to village to see what we can all do? Any possible links with Merton Coombe Garden Club?
- 4 Docket's Fen (LWS; part of Tiney's farm)**
Bit overgrown – saw some Sycamore saplings in there. Think Mrs Thrupp knows Mr Tiney – wonder if he'd accept a bit of help managing the fen? The group could help control the sycamore, etc.
- 5 Merton Coombe Memorial Park (owned by local council)**
Zone by the river could be better for wildlife – talk to council. Any scope to create a riverside wildflower meadow?
- 6 Village sports grounds**
Only half used for sports. Can we arrange for PC to mow less frequently where not used for cricket etc. and along hedgerows?

Action list...

What do we want to do? Practical projects on local sites to improve biodiversity and regular work parties outdoors.

NEXT STEPS for the group

- Get a list of species and a map of site designations and habitats from TVERC and see if anything to add to map.
- Set up group more formally – we may need a constitution to fundraise for projects or insurance for work parties.
- Can a local group, Wild Oxfordshire, CTA Lead, Catchment Partnership, Protected Landscape or Farmer Cluster help?

QUICK AND EASY wins

- Talk to Parish Council about mowing and cutting on land in the village to improve it for biodiversity.
- See if Parish Council have any funding for new interpretation boards, or can we apply for a grant? Can we get the school involved?

Medium-term GOALS

- Talk to local landowners – see if we can get a programme of work for the group's monthly work party.
- Parish leaflet to promote wildlife walks (sponsored by pubs, shops?)

Longer term AMBITIONS

- Create wildflower meadow in riverside park
- Is there an opportunity to create some ponds in suitable areas?

STEP 2: PROTECT

Now you've found out what's in your area, you'll want to ensure it's protected or well-managed for biodiversity

Protect the most valuable areas

Your information hunt from Step 1 should be able to tell you whether an area is already protected or not (see page 12 for information on protected sites). If it is, you can skip to Steps 3 and 4 in this document for suggestions on managing sites, or creating new areas for biodiversity.

If your best sites are not already protected, you may be able to gain a local designation, such as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS), for your area. Site selection is carried out by TVERC. See information on page 12 about proposing a LWS.

If your town or parish council is writing a Parish or Neighbourhood Plan, your maps and field surveys can be

added to the plan. Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) and/or Wild Oxfordshire can help.

Town and parish councils also have responsibilities relating to biodiversity and planning, and a duty of care when working in sensitive habitats or where there are protected species. It is useful to know which pieces of legislation and planning policy offer protection to the natural environment. Check your relevant District or Local Plan for details on how your council is looking after biodiversity and the natural environment.

The importance of sharing species data with TVERC

The easiest way to make sure your records are used in local decision-making is to submit them direct to TVERC. All wildlife sightings are important and records of any wildlife that you have observed in Oxfordshire are welcome. Details of how you can share your records is provided on [TVERC's](#) website.

Biodiversity and planning in Oxfordshire

A Biodiversity and Planning guidance document produced by BBOWT, OCC and TVERC uses maps to illustrate the biodiversity resource within Oxfordshire. It combines information about wildlife sites and habitats and species to help identify where biodiversity should be protected. The guidance also gives advice on opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. See the [OCC](#) website to view this document and find guidance on biodiversity and planning in Oxfordshire.

Legislation, policies and planning

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a streamlined and easy-to-use document published in March 2012. New development plans must comply with the NPPF, in addition to any local plans and policies. See [UK Government](#) website.

Neighbourhood Planning

The Localism Act moved power from central government towards local people and encouraged communities to get more involved in decisions about planning in their local area. The Act allows 'neighbourhoods' to draw up their own Neighbourhood Plan. These plans must be aligned with national policy and the local planning authority's strategic view for the area.

Neighbourhood Plans are subject to a local referendum and if passed they have legal status forming part of the local authority's development plan. That means that planners have to



Threatened species, such as barn owls, may inhabit protected sites (Mike Pollard)



© Wild Oxfordshire

consider your plan when making recommendations or decisions on planning applications in your area. Biodiversity is an important component of neighbourhood planning, and enhancing biodiversity can improve local ecosystem services, health and education.

The Localism Act also gives communities other powers, such as the community right to build. Through this power, a community organisation will be able to bring forward local development (such as new homes and shops) provided it meets minimum standards and is supported by a local referendum. Further guidance on neighbourhood planning can be found on the [OCC](#) website and [UK government](#) website.

Biodiversity duty: parish and town councils

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC Act 2006) places a duty on all public bodies, including parish councils, to enhance biodiversity (Section 40). The NERC Act also lists the habitats and species which it is most important to conserve in England (Section 41, replacing S74 of the CRoW Act 2000). A revision of Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 strengthens the biodiversity duty on the public authorities to include the enhancement of biodiversity, not just conservation. This aligns with the Nature Recovery focus of the 25 Year Environment Plan and the Environment Act 2021.

With regards to biodiversity, town and parish councils should:

- Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance it.
- Agree policies and objectives based on their considerations.
- Act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.

To comply with the guidance, town and parish councils could as a minimum:

- Have biodiversity as an agenda item for a meeting.
- Note what action they are already taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree what further steps they should take to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

For more information on responding to the biodiversity duty, please see guidance on the [UK government](#) website.

The Environment Act and Biodiversity Net Gain

The Environment Act 2021 introduced a new condition that there must be a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 10% to all planning permission granted from November 2023. This means that applicants must be able to demonstrate the existing and proposed biodiversity value of potential development sites. If proposed development cannot ensure BNG, then habitat must be created on- or off-site.

BNG will apply if you are a land manager, developer or local planning authority (LPA), and may be relevant to parish councils with land which is appropriate to off-set. Communities working on a neighbourhood plan will need to be aware of the guidance on BNG. See the guidance on the [OCC](#) website.

Protecting biodiversity – a quick guide

Some wildlife and habitats are legally protected from harm as outlined below. You should ensure that any conservation work you carry out does not harm these sites or species. More comprehensive information is available from [UK government website](#).

Designated sites – Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

SSSIs are the country's very best wildlife and geological sites. Some of these are internationally important for their wildlife, so are also designated as SACs. They include some of our most spectacular and beautiful habitats – including beech forest, wetland fen, juniper scrub and flower-rich meadows in Oxfordshire. SACs and SSSIs are protected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Habs Regs), the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). More information about legislation is available on page 10.

You can find out where SSSIs and SACs are located from the MAGIC website. Owners of these sites have a responsibility to manage these sites, and Natural England has produced advice on the management of SSSIs.

Designated sites – Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)

LWS are areas that include important and rare habitats and species. The 43,000 LWS in England (covering 5% of land) are essential in conserving wildlife in the UK and halting the loss of biodiversity. LWS create a better connected landscape of wildlife buffers, corridors and stepping stones, so that the countryside is more resilient to the pressures of modern living and climate change.

Local authorities are required by central government to identify these sites and give due regard to their wildlife value through the planning system. Most sites are in private ownership, so their long-term survival depends upon the actions of their land managers and owners.

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) carries out the identification and designation of LWS on behalf of local authorities in Berkshire and Oxfordshire. You can find out where LWS are in your area by contacting TVERC.

How to propose a Local Wildlife Site

The LWS system is dynamic with new sites regularly being suggested for consideration. LWS have wildlife features of significant value for Oxfordshire in terms of

their naturalness or rarity, along with a combination of other criteria. Most sites accepted as LWS include:

- priority habitat (S41 Habitats of principal importance); and/or
- populations of rare species or important species assemblages.

If you know of sites that are important for wildlife and have features that may meet the criteria for selection, please send details of the site to TVERC. Existing information for the area will then be collated and considered in consultation with the local authority ecologist.

Designated sites – Local Geological Sites (LGS)

Some geology sites are recognised for their scientific, educational, historic and aesthetic value and are protected from harmful development by legislation and planning policy. These protected sites include geological SSSIs and LGS. LGS exhibit important geological and geomorphological features and are designated by Oxfordshire Geology Trust. You can find out where LGS are in your area by contacting TVERC.

Protected species

Some species of wildlife are protected by legislation and planning policy because of their rarity or historical persecution. These species are called 'protected and notable species'. This legislation applies to people managing land, as well as to developers, so you need to ensure that any practical work you carry out doesn't break the law. Natural England has produced advice on protected species.



Great crested newts are protected by law (Rod d'Ayala)

The environment within community-led planning

People are often passionate about their local environment. We can care deeply for the places we live and work, and the places close to home where we may go walking or riding, or have some quiet time and appreciate wildlife. A Community-led Plan (CLP) sets out a vision for your local environment and how your community wants to develop, and identifies the actions needed for you to achieve your aspirations.

A CLP can be undertaken by local community groups, such as Parish Councils, and gives everyone the chance to say what they think about the issues affecting their community. It celebrates the good things and highlights local needs, offering a detailed action plan to help the community meet those needs.

A CLP could take several forms, including identifying opportunities for new projects and improving the local area for local residents. You can use maps, information, and local knowledge to inform your community plans about biodiversity and the natural environment, and to agree actions and priorities that your community can achieve. To help shape your CLP, you could contact [Community First Oxfordshire \(CFO\)](#) or your local [National Landscape](#) to see what services and support they are able to offer your community.

STEP 3: CREATE

Now you've identified where the most valuable areas are to protect, you may also have spotted some places which could be improved

Enhance your local area

You will need the landowner's permission before you start any work, but there may be areas in your community, such as village or town greens, churchyards, road verges, allotments, schools or parks, which are owned by organisations who may be happy for you to enhance the area, for example, parish, town, district, city or county councils, churches, or community-led organisations.

Development can be an opportunity to enhance biodiversity by creating new habitats within and around the built environment. Start conversations early with developers. See the [Wild Oxfordshire](#) website for case studies where local environment groups have successfully worked with developers to achieve some positive outcomes for nature in their communities. In addition, the [Biodiversity Toolkit for Housing](#)

[Providers](#) helps inform housing providers how to manage their sites for wildlife.

There is guidance available to manage and create the important habitats listed on page 15. See also the case studies on pages 22-25 to find out how other communities in Oxfordshire have created wonderful wildlife spaces. When thinking about habitat creation, consider how areas could be linked, for example, hedgerows and verges. Even small projects can make a difference, such as the addition of bee borders in an urban setting. Some expert advice and guidance has been compiled in the Guidance Resources section of the [Wild Oxfordshire](#) website to help get people started.

Local knowledge of the site is key. It is always important to ground-truth the site against desktop information you have obtained during your project preparation stage.



Opportunities for creating or managing habitats for wildlife include hedgelaying and tree planting (Wild Oxfordshire)

Create and connect local habitats



© Wild Oxfordshire

WILDFLOWER MEADOWS

Plantlife's [Meadows Hub](#) provides advice and information on different types of meadows, making and maintaining them, and their importance for wildlife. See the Plantlife and Magnificent Meadows guidance on making a meadow using native wildflowers. The [Guidance Resources](#) on Wild Oxfordshire's website provide inspirational examples of meadow restoration and management projects in Oxfordshire.



© Wild Oxfordshire

CHURCHYARDS

[Caring for God's Acre](#) is a conservation charity for churchyards and burial grounds and their website includes information on biodiversity in churchyards and involving the local community in their management. See their Action Pack and other resources on their website. [ChurchCare](#), a Church of England organisation, has also produced a guidance note on wildlife in your churchyard.



© Wild Oxfordshire

WOODLAND

The Sylva Foundation runs the [Woodland Wildlife Toolkit](#) which includes species factsheets, management guidance and monitoring tools. They also provide the free online platform, myForest, which has resources for writing management plans and managing and creating woodland sustainably. The [Guidance Resources](#) on Wild Oxfordshire's website also offer advice on planting new woodland and trees.



© Wild Oxfordshire

HEDGEROWS

[Hedgeline](#) provides detailed information on hedgerow wildlife, legislation and creation and management. The Wychwood Forest Trust has a hedgelaying group which undertakes hedge restoration in the Wychwood Forest area. The [People's Trust for Endangered Species \(PTES\)](#) have developed two ways in which you can survey your hedgerows to find out what management they require.



© Ian Curtis

FRESHWATER HABITATS

The [Freshwater Habitats Trust](#) is a national charity (based in Oxford) protecting freshwater wildlife, particularly ponds. Their website provides free resources on creating and managing ponds and other freshwater habitats, as well as information on the Oxfordshire-Buckinghamshire Freshwater Network. Explore the [Evenlode Catchment Partnership](#) resources for useful information on Oxfordshire's river catchments.



© Wild Oxfordshire

VERGES

Plantlife's guidance documents for verge management and [Meadows Hub](#) are key resources for managing verges. These provide best practice advice on cutting regimes, monitoring and enhancement and new planting projects. Road verges are important wildlife corridors, and provide habitat and food sources for pollinators. [Buglife](#) have information on managing road verges for pollinators.



© Wild Oxfordshire

TRADITIONAL ORCHARDS

The [People's Trust for Endangered Species \(PTES\)](#) hosts an ongoing Traditional Orchards project, part of which has been to map and assess the condition of traditional orchards England and Wales. The webpage on the PTES website has a wealth of resources and practical guides. See also the [Orchard Network](#), which can be used by groups and community orchards to share knowledge and encourage best practice.



© Steve Cottrell

WILDLIFE GARDENING

There is plenty of information available on the subject of wildlife gardening, but a good place to start is the [Wildlife Gardening](#) section of The Wildlife Trusts' website. It has ideas for actions you can take for wildlife in your garden or community area, such as planting for pollinators. The [Wildlife Gardening Forum](#) is also an excellent source of advice and information, and includes a Garden Wildlife section.

STEP 4: MANAGE

With many areas, a small change in habitat management can make a big difference for nature



A-Level students looking at Natural Flood Management in the Evenlode Catchment (Jennifer Lanham/Cotswolds NL)

Manage areas to maintain and enhance biodiversity

Many biodiversity-rich spaces in your area are likely to be in private ownership, managed as part of a farm, business or other landholding. If you know the landowner, they may be able to tell you what they already do for biodiversity. Some may even welcome help with managing their biodiversity sites. Others may just want to be left in peace. Remember that we need to respect differing opinions about how land is managed – there will be lots of different ideas and solutions.

With many areas, a small change in management can make a big difference. For example, mowing grassland less frequently will result in more wildflowers to benefit bees, butterflies and other pollinators. But less frequent mowing can result in some concerns about untidiness. Clear communication to the wider public of the reason for changes in management is important.

Management Plans

If you are managing an area of land, you're more likely to achieve your aims if they're set out clearly for everyone to see. Your whole group will need to know what you want, and how you're planning to accomplish it. The best way to do this is to create a management plan, which will also help you prioritise your work.

The management plan will need to be more detailed for larger sites with lots of different habitats, and much simpler for

small sites with only one habitat, and may include information on improving access so the local community can enjoy and appreciate the site.

You may wish to base your plan on either a detailed or simple management plan template. There are examples of these on the [Wild Oxfordshire](#) website, along with guidance on habitats and species to help inform a plan. Contact Wild Oxfordshire to see what extra help they can provide you. There are plenty of good examples of five-year management plans online, for example, those drawn up for parks, open spaces and gardens on the [South Oxfordshire District Council](#) website, or the short, two-sided Land Management Plans on the [West Oxfordshire District Council](#) website.

If you are managing a woodland site, you could use the Sylva Foundation's [Woodland Wildlife Toolkit](#) which allow you to create a woodland management plan to help assess, record and manage woodland resources.

Managing habitats

While, in some cases, wildlife will thrive when left alone and undisturbed, many of our most valuable wildlife habitats need ongoing management in order to survive and thrive. Often, this will involve traditional methods, such as hay-cutting and low-intensity grazing on grasslands, coppicing in woodlands, and hedgelaying and willow pollarding along boundaries.

CARRYING OUT PRACTICAL WORK

Once you've decided what you want to do, you need the people to do it!

Practical work

There may already be enough people in your conservation group to carry out the work, but if you need some extra help you could contact a local Green Gym or Oxford Conservation Volunteers to see if they can help. Alternatively, you may wish to build up a base of volunteers in your community or from surrounding areas, although some training may be required for some practical management tasks. Some suggestions of groups to contact for help are below.

Oxford Conservation Volunteers

[Oxford Conservation Volunteers](#) is a group that carries out practical work conserving the wildlife and traditional landscape of the Oxford area. Their work parties come to your site by minibus to carry out habitat management (tools, volunteers and facilitator provided). They do charge, so check how much it would be by contacting them through their website. They also book up fast, so make sure you contact them well in advance. The group organises work parties every Sunday (and some Saturdays). Projects include traditional activities like hedgelaying, coppicing, pollarding, scything, and conserving grassland by scrub clearance. They can also construct fences using posts and wire or rails, improve footpaths with steps and revetments, build boardwalks, build and repair stone walls, carry out pond work, and maintain fens and reedbeds.

Green Gyms

Green Gyms are groups of volunteers which carry out practical conservation work in the outdoors. These groups were initially established by [The Conservation Volunteers](#) and are now run entirely by local volunteers. Habitat management tasks differ across sites but can include activities such as: vegetation

clearance, coppicing, reed cutting, path maintenance, tree planting, hedge laying, installing fences and gates, and clearing waterways. Green Gyms tend to have their own tools and are led by a trained leader. You could check the [Wild Oxfordshire](#) community map and directory to find out if there's a group near you who would be willing to work on your site. Green Gyms in Oxfordshire:

- [Abingdon Green Gym](#)
- [Bicester Green Gym](#)
- [Chipping Norton Green Gym](#)
- [Sonning Common Green Gym](#)
- [Wallingford Green Gym](#)

Look beyond your boundaries – partner up with other local groups

It can be worth contacting neighbouring environmental groups in other villages and Parishes nearby for support. You can look at Wild Oxfordshire's community group map and search your postcode to find groups near to you and their contact details. It can also be worth contacting local gardening/allotment groups, scout groups and schools to see if they're able to get involved with various habitat management opportunities. Think about what resources you have locally and where you can advertise your habitat management day(s) to attract volunteers and even ask to borrow tools.

Some companies will use habitat management days as staff team-building days, so it can be worth contacting local businesses too. You can contact Wild Oxfordshire to share opportunities through our social media accounts.


Habitat management on reserves:

If there are nature reserves in your Parish, make sure you know who manages them. Some are managed by volunteer groups, but many are owned and managed by organisations involved in nature conservation and land management. BBOWT, Earth Trust, Wychwood Forest Trust, Wild Oxfordshire and the National Landscapes sometimes offer training days, which can be good ways to up-skill your habitat management knowledge – see the Help and Advice and Useful Links sections of this document. There may also be opportunities to get involved with the practical management of your local nature reserve, either for yourself or to direct people to.

Use our checklist on page 18 to make sure you have the tools, resources and people to put your management plan into action!

VALUABLE GREEN SPACES

Local green spaces are often important for wildlife and offer valuable opportunities for people to enjoy and learn about the natural world. Involving children and families with their local habitats will help to ensure a better understanding of biodiversity in the wider community. Research shows that being in nature is also beneficial for our health and wellbeing.



Check you have what you need to take action

Once you've got a habitat management plan, you know what you want to achieve, and when it needs to be done, it's time to make sure you have all the resources to make it happen. Here is a suggested checklist to help you plan your practical management work:

- Appropriate time and date for the activity**
- Leader/Facilitator(s)**
- Appropriately skilled people to lead or carry out the tasks**
- Volunteers/people on the ground to help carry out the work**
- Tools and materials**
- Risk Assessment**
- Aftercare (e.g., watering, mowing and raking, etc.)**

If you're lacking in people or tools, there are groups out there that can help. See page 17 for more details.

Long-term resources may be required to continue managing some habitats. Some activities may only need a little research to undertake, such as clearing out and putting up bird boxes, but some may need input from experts, such as pond creation and hedgelaying.

FUNDING SOURCES

There are various grant schemes offering support for projects that enhance and protect local wildlife and habitats

Looking for funding

There are a variety of funding sources open to organisations, groups or individuals to improve biodiversity, or you can carry out your own fundraising activities, for example via Crowdfunder or sponsored activities. Some examples of funding streams are listed below, but this is not exhaustive.

Wild Oxfordshire

[Wild Oxfordshire's](#) email bulletins and website advertise funding opportunities for biodiversity and community projects in Oxfordshire.

Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE)

[TOE's Local Environment Fund](#) provides grants to support citizen science projects, and practical work which creates or enhances natural habitats to benefit biodiversity, or projects that improve access to the countryside and green spaces in urban areas. TOE welcomes applications for a Small Grant on a rolling basis and operates a quarterly funding cycle for standard grants. Applicants need to be community groups and not-for-profit organisations. See the dedicated page on their website for more details, including case studies, or contact TOE to discuss your ideas for a project.

Local Authority funding

Some local authorities provide grants to support biodiversity projects. Contact your county councillor regarding the Councillor Priority Fund and your local District Councils for further details.

- [Oxfordshire County Council](#)
- [Cherwell District Council](#)
- [South Oxfordshire District Council](#)
- [Vale of White Horse District Council](#)
- [West Oxfordshire District Council](#)
- [Oxford City Council](#)

Funding within Protected Landscapes

Grants are available within the three Protected Landscapes that include parts of Oxfordshire within their boundaries:

- [Chilterns National Landscape](#)
- [Cotswolds National Landscape](#)
- [North Wessex Downs National Landscape](#)

Biffa Award

[Biffa Award](#) gives grants to community projects near landfill sites with the aim of building communities and transforming lives. Funding is available for habitat improvements and community projects.

The Chestnut Fund

[The Conservation Volunteers' Chestnut Fund](#) provides grants to encourage and enable community groups to carry out conservation activities. There are start-up grants for groups in their first year of existence to enable them to begin practical work and cover administrative expenses; and support grants for existing groups to purchase tools, equipment and training.

The Co-operative Group

The [Co-operative Group's](#) Community Fund raises money to support local projects selected by Co-op members.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

The [Esmée Fairbairn Foundation](#) aims to improve people's quality of life by funding projects which conserve the natural environment and/or encourage community cohesion.

Government grants

Search the [Defra](#) website for current government grants that may help to fund community habitat creation projects.

International Tree Foundation

The [International Tree Foundation](#) provides grants and support to community groups interested in planting trees and hedges.

National Lottery Community Fund

The National Lottery Community Fund's [Awards for All](#) grants provide funding for projects that benefit the local community.

National Lottery Heritage Fund

The [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) distributes National Lottery grants for projects that sustain and transform the UK's heritage. Heritage can be anything from the past that you value and want to pass on to future generations, including biodiversity.

Oxfordshire Community Foundation

The [Oxfordshire Community Foundation](#) supports biodiversity projects which involve and benefit the local community.

STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH NEWS AND FUNDING

Find out about nature recovery, conservation, news, events, funding and job opportunities in Oxfordshire by signing up to [Wild Oxfordshire's](#) free e-bulletin.

A quick list of funding sources

| ORGANISATION | WEBSITE |
|---|--|
| Biffa Award | www.biffa-award.org |
| Blakemore Foundation | www.afblakemore.com/our-community/the-blakemore-foundation |
| Cherwell District Council | www.cherwell.gov.uk |
| Chilterns National Landscape | www.chilterns.org.uk |
| Cotswolds National Landscape | www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk |
| Esmée Fairbairn Foundation | esmeefairbairn.org.uk |
| FCC Communities Foundation | fcccommunitiesfoundation.org.uk |
| International Tree Foundation | www.internationaltreefoundation.org/uk-community-tree-planting |
| National Lottery Heritage Fund | www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding |
| North Wessex Downs National Landscape | www.northwessexdowns.org.uk |
| Oxford City Council | www.oxford.gov.uk |
| Oxfordshire County Council | www.oxfordshire.gov.uk |
| South Oxfordshire District Council | www.southoxon.gov.uk |
| The Conservation Volunteers' Chestnut Fund | www.tcv.org.uk/communities/chestnut-fund |
| The Nineveh Charitable Trust | ninevehtrust.org.uk |
| The Prince's Countryside Fund – Open Grants Programme | www.royalcountrysidefund.org.uk/how-we-help/rural-communities |
| Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment | www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk |
| TVERC recorders fund | www.tverc.org/cms/content/small-grants |
| Vale of White Horse District Council | www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk |
| Valencia | www.valenciacommunitiesfund.co.uk |
| Veolia | www.veoliatrust.org |
| West Oxfordshire District Council | www.westoxon.gov.uk |



A community hedgerow project (Wild Oxfordshire)

HELP AND ADVICE

There are several organisations in Oxfordshire which can provide you with a variety of help and advice

Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)

[BBOWT](#) provides advice on wildlife, planning, land and habitat management, wildlife gardening, and community work.

Local Authority advice

Some local authorities will be able to offer advice, contact your local District Council for further details.

Earth Trust

[Earth Trust](#) champions access and engagement with natural green spaces for all, to inspire action for people and planet.

Wild Oxfordshire

[Wild Oxfordshire's Community Ecology team](#) offers advice related to community projects. They can provide information and guidance on habitat management and funding opportunities, and can help connect you to other groups and organisations, CTAs and Oxfordshire's Local Nature Partnership.

Community First Oxfordshire (CFO)

[CFO](#) is a charity that brings together people who care about local areas, with a focus on 'helping people to help themselves'. They provide advice and training on community planning, the rural economy and sustainability.

Oxfordshire Country Council (OCC): Trees & Woodland advice

OCC has a Tree policy for Oxfordshire, which can be found on their [website](#), alongside a Trees and Woodlands section with information on contacts for specific issues.

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC)

[TVERC](#) holds a vast amount of species data and the highest quality habitat data for sites throughout Oxfordshire. They offer a wide range of data analysis services. They also hold boundary data for the CTAs. TVERC provide training services, which include specific training days.

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)

[TCV](#) supports people to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing by being outdoors, active and connected with others. TCV supports community groups across the UK to protect their local environment, connecting groups with each other and providing support, such as insurance, funding information and access to grants.

Community Action Groups (CAG) Oxfordshire

[CAG Oxfordshire](#) is a network of more than 100 community action groups working across the county to make it a safer, fairer, greener, more sustainable place to live, work and visit.

The CAG project team provide free day-to-day support for the network. There are opportunities for CAGs working on similar projects or themes to meet up and find ways of working together. Subscribe to their newsletter via their website.

Wychwood Forest Trust

[Wychwood Forest Trust](#) provide training for groups and individuals in traditional land management skills such as hedgelaying and dry stone walling. They also offer advice and on-the-ground guidance on progressive approaches to restoring low-value agricultural land for nature recovery, and maximising the biodiversity value of municipal spaces.

International Tree Foundation

In addition to funding, the [International Tree Foundation](#) can provide advice and practical support for community groups looking to plant and look after trees and hedgerows.

Looking for training?

There are lots of organisations in Oxfordshire that offer training from species identification to practical conservation and more; some of it for free! Check out the websites of the following (see pages 26-27):

- Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire
- BBOWT
- Catchment Partnerships
- National Landscapes
- Earth Trust
- Freshwater Habitats Trust
- Oxford Conservation Volunteers
- Oxford University – Department for Continuing Education
- Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action
- RSPB
- Shotover Wildlife
- The Conservation Volunteers
- TVERC
- Wild Oxfordshire
- Wychwood Forest Trust

COMMUNITY NATURE RECOVERY: CASE STUDIES

Discover what other communities are doing to create, restore and connect wildlife habitats. More inspiration can be found on the [Wild Oxfordshire](#) website.

BENSON AREA NATURE GROUP

A nature group has been running for more than 20 years in Benson and, in recent years, has been involved with community projects and neighbourhood planning. As a growing village, and with more housing development expected, neighbourhood planning offered an opportunity to make sure wildlife-rich green spaces for the public to enjoy was high on the priority list. Benson Nature Group, led by Edel McGurk, engaged with the Parish Council at an early stage to develop a People and Nature Strategy to help communicate ambitions and create plans.

Initially, it was essential to find out more about, and celebrate, the existing green spaces, even the small ones. Data was obtained from the local records centre (TVERC) as part of this study. Several other steps were taken to create a plan, including liaising with local experts and organisations who could provide advice to input into plans to connect and incorporate new green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancements in the village. Providing habitat for wild pollinators was one of the nature recovery themes adopted. The team found it was important to ensure that the wider importance of green spaces, both for the wider environmental and recreational and wellbeing benefits, was communicated. They had to be prepared to negotiate and make some compromises.

Once the plan was made, working with developers and the local planning authority continued to make sure results were seen on the ground. For more information about Benson's Neighbourhood Plan and the lessons learned, see the [Wild Oxfordshire](#) website.



Warwick Spinney

ST MARY AND ST JOHN CHURCH, EAST OXFORD

The churchyard of Ss Mary and John was abandoned for 30 years until 1999, resulting in an area largely full of brambles and self-seeded trees. This was beneficial to many species of bird but unfortunately became a site renowned for serious antisocial behaviour. After consultations, the decision was made to manage the churchyard for wildlife but with full public access.

The churchyard was selected as a Jubilee Wildlife Space for the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002. A woodland wildflower garden of Thanksgiving and Remembrance and a garden for pollinators were created, conservation hedges were planted round the periphery, and most of the grassland left unmown until August each year allowing meadow wildflowers to return – all part of plans to make the churchyard beneficial for wildlife and a welcoming space for the community.

The work is carried out by volunteers meeting weekly, and today the churchyard supports a variety of wildlife by providing food, refuge and connecting habitats within an urban landscape. A management plan to guide this work is updated every five years. See the [Ss Mary and John Churchyard](#) website.



Summer meadow

COMMUNITY NATURE RECOVERY: CASE STUDIES

ASTHALL LEIGH COMMUNITY WILDLIFE AREA

Although it had some wildlife value, this previous allotment area had become overgrown with brambles. Initial work included opening-up the site to allow public access and clear debris, the aim being to create a rich, wildlife-friendly community space that would be inexpensive to maintain. This is a recent project, with some funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Plans were drawn up in consultation with various local wildlife organisations, who will continue to provide advice as work continues.

The local community have been involved in the project through volunteer work parties. Mixed native hedging is to be planted along some of the boundaries. Once the hedges have reached an appropriate size, the [Wychwood Forest Trust](#) will provide support to ensure they will be properly laid and maintained. The Oxfordshire Owl Group has put up a barn owl box and the [Oxfordshire Bat Group](#) will be putting up three bat boxes. Future ideas include the creation of 'boggy' habitat to attract insects, log piles for invertebrates and leaving areas of fallen leaves for nesting hedgehogs. Plans to involve the local community include a bat walk and botanical and wildlife surveys. To further improve access, a grant from [Cotswolds National Landscape](#) will fund new steps leading to a seating area with signage.



Installing an owl box

THE NATURE RECOVERY NETWORK

The [Nature Recovery Network \(NRN\)](#), based in Eynsham and the surrounding area, has initiated a pioneering, local-network, approach to nature recovery that connects experts with enthusiasts in the place where they all live. It is Oxfordshire's first community-driven landscape-scale restoration and research project. It has over 600 members, including local schools, people with learning disabilities and health challenges, artists, farmers, ecologists and parish councillors.

NRN runs regular expert-led surveys and a plant propagation group. It has created numerous community meadows (some of which have received funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund), and planted nearly 2 km of hedgerow. In 2023, it acquired 50 acres along the Thames for landscape-scale restoration in association with [Long Mead's](#) Thames Valley Wildflower Meadow Restoration Project.

There are advantages of NRN's network approach over the conventional community organisation: (1) Facilitating nature recovery for people in their peer groups overcomes barriers to engagement, particularly among young people. (2) Bringing groups together for large projects addresses issues of scalability. (3) Connecting local experts with enthusiasts professionalises citizen science and restoration activities. (4) Sustainability: experts and enthusiasts are always available for monitoring and management, enabling projects to be carried between funding. (5) Connections with local landowners facilitate the acquisition of land.



Collecting wildflower seed

COMMUNITY NATURE RECOVERY: CASE STUDIES

CHERWELL SWIFTS CONSERVATION PROJECT

Swifts are summer visitors to the UK. They enliven even the grimmest urban landscape with their spectacular acrobatic flight and calls. British Trust for Ornithology data show that swift numbers in Britain have declined by about 60% since 1997. Fewer insects and increasingly erratic world weather patterns have contributed to this decline; but another important factor is that traditional nest places in buildings are easily lost when buildings are repaired, altered or demolished.

In 2008, Chris Mason set up the Cherwell Swifts Conservation Project, with support from Cherwell District Council. The aims of the project are to protect existing swifts' nest sites and to maintain a widespread distribution of swifts throughout Cherwell. Local people have been recording places where swifts nest. This helps monitor swift numbers but also assists with protection of nest sites. Dozens of nest boxes have been installed in towns and villages throughout the District, many of which are being used. In addition, nest bricks are now routinely being made a condition of new developments.

Nearly 70 Cherwell parishes still have nesting swifts and volunteers send in records from many of them. The worrying news is that about 50 these parishes have fewer than 10 nesting pairs, making them vulnerable to the above risks.

There are now several swift conservation groups in the county, including in Oxford, Abingdon and Harwell. We plan to work together to contribute to the county's Nature Recovery Plan. Find out more on the [Cherwell Swifts Conservation Project](#) website.



Swift nest box

THE TRAP GROUNDS TOWN GREEN & LWS

Small sites in urban areas can be teeming with wildlife and provide a tranquil place for people to escape the hustle and bustle. The Trap Grounds Town Green and Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is a 4-ha former rubbish tip, located between the canal and the railway line in north Oxford. Since 1995, local volunteers have redeemed it from dereliction and created a haven for wildlife which they now manage in partnership with the owner, [Oxford City Council](#).

The volunteers have gradually created or reclaimed a rich mosaic of habitats – ponds, stream, reedbed, woodland, scrubland, meadow, and marsh, which now host a wide range of species, among them water rail, water vole, weasel, and willow emerald damselfly. Of the 33 known species of dragonfly and damselfly in Oxfordshire, 22 have been recorded here. Major projects have included the installation of a boardwalk along the stream and the planting of hundreds of trees.

Walkers and birdwatchers are welcome at any time, and the site is used by local schools for nature projects, and by university students for research purposes. The Friends organise public events, such as dawn chorus walks and pond-dipping sessions. Find out more on the [Trap Grounds](#) website.



Trap Grounds Swan Pond

COMMUNITY NATURE RECOVERY: CASE STUDIES



Gravel spawning bed

CUTTLE BROOK LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

A neglected area of wasteland with a chequered history, including the old town tip site, is now a thriving, designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in the heart of Thame. Cuttle Brook LNR is a 14-ha mix of woodland, wet grassland, sedge and reed beds, and open water managed by an enthusiastic bunch of local volunteers in partnership with Thame Town Council, which owns the site.

Being in the floodplain of the Cuttle Brook, the volunteers have done lots of work to enhance the reserves original 'wet' features and to create additional ones: sedge and reedbeds have been re-watered and managed to protect them from drying out; ponds have been dug; fish refuges have been created off the main river channel; and gravel spawning beds have been installed.

Cuttle Brook Conservation Volunteers (CBCV) regularly monitor the brook's freshwater invertebrates and also the river water quality, particularly nitrates and phosphates.

Although CBCV has been developing the reserve for more than 30 years since it was first launched in 1993, there is still lots to do. The group is working with the River Thame Conservation Trust to plan scrapes in the low-lying grassland and in-river features to further improve conditions in the brook.

But it's not all about water; the group has planted thousands of trees, manages miles of hedgerows and maintains access for the hundreds of daily visitors to the reserve. Find out more on the [Cuttle Brook LNR](#) website.

FILKINS PLATINUM JUBILEE GARDEN

The garden is situated in the heart of [Filkins](#) village centre, along with other important and valued facilities, such as a community-run shop, allotments and playground. The project area had previously been a garden belonging to a flat that was no longer in existence, and had lain unmanaged for many years – resulting in it becoming overgrown and inaccessible.

The idea for the community garden was proposed at the time of the Queen Elizabeth Platinum Jubilee and the plans included creating an accessible garden for all within a nature-friendly environment.

A working group of volunteers was established, taking on activities such as re-establishing a path to provide better access to both the village allotments and the new garden, and the creation of raised borders.

Funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund has enabled the sowing of a seed mix containing grasses and wildflowers in the open part of the garden, with some areas left 'wilder' and others kept shorter to maintain access to different areas of interest. A native cherry, two guelder rose trees and a planted beech hedge will also support wildlife. Further plans include adding more plants to attract pollinators, installing bug hotels and information boards, creating new hedgehog habitat, and making a seating and picnic area.



Preparing to sow

USEFUL LINKS

A guide to organisations and website links to help you find the information you need

| ORGANISATION | INFORMATION | WEBSITE |
|---|--|--|
| Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main Society provides walks and talks Special interest groups include Oxfordshire Flora, Verges Survey, FloodPlain Meadows and an Education Group which provides identification courses | anhso.org.uk |
| Bat Conservation Trust | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take part in national bat surveys Information on bats | www.bats.org.uk |
| Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location/information about BBOWT nature reserves Advice on planning and wildlife for the public Advice on land management for the owners of LWS | www.bbowt.org.uk |
| Bodleian Library | Historic maps | www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk |
| British Owl Project | Owl conservation projects, research and workshops. Work with landholders on habitat restoration and connection projects. Installation of nest boxes and undertake monitoring and surveys | britishowlproject.co.uk |
| Butterfly Conservation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take part in national butterfly surveys Information on butterflies | butterfly-conservation.org |
| British Geological Survey | Geological survey map data via 'BGS Geology Viewer' | www.bgs.ac.uk |
| British Trust for Ornithology | Source of bird records and a way for communities to upload/store their own data | www.bto.org |
| Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Oxfordshire | Guidance on planning regarding landscape including hedgerow surveys | www.cpreoxon.org.uk |
| Caring for God's Acre | Managing churchyards and churches for biodiversity | www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk |
| Cherwell District Council | For biodiversity partnership and wildlife conservation project reports in the Cherwell area | www.cherwell.gov.uk |
| Chilterns National Landscape | Conservation and community projects and planning information | www.chilterns.org.uk |
| Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) | A service to help communities take the lead in managing assets such as green spaces | www.communityfirstoxon.org |
| Community Action Groups (CAG) Oxfordshire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A network of more than 100 community action groups working across the county Sign up to the newsletter via their website Hold a database of funding sources | www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk |
| Cotswolds National Landscape | Provides online guidance related to nature recovery and woodland management | www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk |
| Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive map of environmental information Nature, farming, countryside information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> magic.defra.gov.uk www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs |
| Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities | National Planning Policy Framework | www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-levelling-up-housing-and-communities |
| Earth Trust | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about Earth Trust managed green spaces Volunteering opportunities Family events, courses, walks and talks Environmental education programme | earthtrust.org.uk |
| Environment Agency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Registers of environmental permits and licences Neighbourhood Planning (Floodzones) | www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency |
| Floodplain Meadows Partnership | Advice and research on management of floodplain meadows | www.floodplainmeadows.org.uk |
| Forestry Commission | Information on pests and diseases, grants, felling licenses, forestry policy, tree planting and woodland management | www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission |
| Forestry England | Manage nation's public forests. Information about sites, routes, days out, arts, education and volunteering | www.forestryengland.uk |
| Forestry Research | Forestry and environmental research, publications, resources and services to the industry | www.forestresearch.gov.uk |
| Freshwater Habitats Trust (FHT) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on freshwater habitats How to survey, create and manage freshwater habitats Information about the Newt Conservation Partnership | freshwaterhabitats.org.uk |
| Hedgelink | Hedgerow survey, creation, management and legislation | hedgelink.org.uk |
| Heritage Gateway | Data on the historic environment (Heritage Counts, Heritage at Risk) | www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway |

| ORGANISATION | INFORMATION | WEBSITE |
|---|---|---|
| Historic England | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding and managing your local historic environment Guidance on heritage and community-led planning | historicengland.org.uk |
| International Tree Foundation | Supports community-led tree projects in the UK; runs Healing in Outdoors Programme in Oxfordshire | www.internationaltreefoundation.org |
| iRecord | Submit your records to the national recording schemes | irecord.org.uk |
| LandApp | Online app to create and customise your own maps for plans. Most functions are free | thelandapp.com |
| Land Information System | Soils data | www.landis.org.uk |
| Mammal Society | Guidance on the conservation of mammals | www.mammal.org.uk |
| National Biodiversity Network | Wildlife records | nbn.org.uk |
| National Archives | Full text of the following legislation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 | www.legislation.gov.uk |
| Natural England | Guidance on SSSIs and protected species | www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england |
| North Wessex Downs National Landscape | Has online biodiversity and farming and land management resources. Provides information about funding sources | www.northwessexdowns.org.uk |
| Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) | How to undertake various wildlife surveys | www.imperial.ac.uk/opal |
| Ordnance Survey | Base maps | www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk |
| Oxford Conservation Volunteers | Voluntary organisation carrying out practical work parties conserving the wildlife and landscape of the Oxford area | www.ocv.org.uk |
| Oxford University Department for Continuing Education | Provide some short and online courses on Natural Sciences and Environment and Sustainability subjects | www.conted.ox.ac.uk |
| Oxfordshire Amphibian and Reptile Group (OxARG) | Information on the frogs, toads, newts, snakes and lizards found in Oxfordshire | groups.arguk.org/OxARG |
| Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action | Supports volunteers, networks, partnerships and not-for-profit organisations | ocva.org.uk |
| Oxfordshire County Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance on biodiversity and planning Interactive map of Oxfordshire's rights of way PDF maps showing rights of way Parish Guide to Countryside Access Parish, District and County boundaries | www.oxfordshire.gov.uk |
| Oxfordshire Geology Trust | Information on local geology | www.oxfordshiregeologytrust.org.uk |
| Oxfordshire History Centre | Base maps and historic maps | www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/leisure-and-culture/history/oxfordshire-history-centre |
| Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) | Descriptions and locations of different landscape types in Oxfordshire | owls.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/wcm/connect/occ/OWLS/Home |
| People's Trust for Endangered Species | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to undertake various wildlife surveys Information on wildlife | ptes.org |
| Plantlife | Protecting wild plants and fungi, managing sites, volunteering, National Plant Monitoring Scheme | www.plantlife.org.uk |
| QGIS | Open Source GIS software | www.qgis.org |
| Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on birds and other wildlife Advice on managing habitats, protecting sites and planning | www.rspb.org.uk |
| Shotover Wildlife | Events and mosses and liverworts Identification support | www.shotover-wildlife.org.uk |
| Sylva Foundation | Managing woodlands for ecological and economic benefits | sylva.org.uk |
| Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) | Information on and the location of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LWS LGS Notable and protected species CTAs | www.tverc.org |
| The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to set up a local group How to carry out practical conservation work Green Gyms | www.tcv.org.uk |
| Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) | Information about TOE's original grant programme for community groups and other charitable or not-for-profit organisations throughout Oxfordshire | www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk |
| UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH) | Providing data and insights that researchers, governments and businesses need to create a healthy environment | www.ceh.ac.uk |
| UKCEH/Southern Housing Group Biodiversity Toolkit | Biodiversity Toolkit aimed at housing providers. Excellent guide for managing urban green spaces for wildlife | https://www.shgroup.org.uk/media/1023167/biodiversity-toolkit_23022021.pdf |
| West Oxfordshire District Council | Hedgehog Highway Scheme and climate action information | www.westoxon.gov.uk |
| Wild Oxfordshire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oxfordshire's CTAs List of existing Environment Groups Case studies of what local groups have done Sign up to the regular bulletin Information on Catchment Partnerships in Oxfordshire | www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk |
| Woodland Trust | Neighbourhood Planning and woodlands | www.woodlandtrust.org.uk |
| Wychwood Forest Trust | Work with local communities to protect and restore the spaces once part of the historic Wychwood Forest | www.wychwoodforesttrust.co.uk |

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LEVELLING — UP —

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Thames Valley
Environmental Records Centre