



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Biodiversity Duty Report 2026



Biodiversity Duty Report 2026

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Contents page photograph: Common centaury © M. Dodd

Foreword

As Leader and Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery at West Oxfordshire District Council, we are proud to introduce the Council's first Biodiversity Duty Report.

This report marks an important milestone for the Council and demonstrates our commitment to nature recovery and climate resilience through the work we undertake within the Council, on our land, with partner organisations and in our local communities.

Our vision is one of a radically enhanced natural world that has a positive impact on our climate and helps to make West Oxfordshire a place where people and nature thrive side by side.

We are living in one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world¹. It is essential that we fully recognise nature as our life support system.



Photo: Gatekeeper butterfly © M. Dodd

Nature cleans the air we breathe, purifies the water we drink and enables the food we eat to grow and flourish. Spending time in nature also improves our health and wellbeing, whether listening to the birds, exercising outdoors, or experiencing its beauty and tranquillity. Beyond this, nature underpins our economy and strengthens our communities through natural materials, pollination, storing water, providing shade and 'doing what nature does best'.

Over the past two years we have strengthened partnerships, managed land to enhance its value for wildlife such as bees, butterflies, hedgehogs and great crested newts, embedded statutory Biodiversity Net Gain within the planning system and seen the publication of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. We have also installed wildlife features at our council offices and continue to support farmers and landowners in creating and restoring habitats across the wider landscape.

The actions outlined in this report reflect the practical steps we are taking to reverse nature loss and support climate resilience, as set out in our Nature Recovery Plan 2024-2030 and Climate Strategy 2025-2030.

¹ From State of Nature Report 2023: <https://stateofnature.org.uk/> and Natural England's article: <https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2023/09/29/state-of-nature/>

We would like to thank everyone involved in ensuring that the Council continues to consider biodiversity conservation, enhancement, and nature recovery as part of the work we do, including our staff, partners and communities.

Looking ahead, we will continue to learn, adapt and invest in a better future for nature and people. We encourage residents and stakeholders to join us in this work. Together we can protect and enhance West Oxfordshire's important natural heritage for future generations.

With thanks and determination,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Graham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Cllr Andy Graham, Leader

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Prosser". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Cllr Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery

24th March 2026

1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction to West Oxfordshire

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) is a district authority in Oxfordshire which covers an area of 71,494 hectares. The district is characterised by a rich natural environment with approximately 34% of its area lying within the Cotswolds National Landscape.

The landscape and biodiversity of West Oxfordshire are interlinked. Just as the district boasts a rich and diverse landscape, it also supports a wide variety of habitats that sustain legally protected species, priority species and other wildlife. This diversity reflects the underlying soils and geological diversity of the area.

West Oxfordshire is the most wooded district in Oxfordshire encompassing the Wychwood Forest, Blenheim Estate and several other estates containing areas of ancient woodland, which in turn are important for associated species such as birds and bats.

According to the recently published Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS²), 'Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity' make up 5.6% of West Oxfordshire and the broader nature recovery network, which includes opportunity areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity, accounts for around 40% of the district as shown in Figure 1. This network of connected habitats will be vitally important for many species, including dormice, improving their ability to disperse, colonise new habitats and become more resilient to climate change.

1.2 What is the Biodiversity Duty?

Biodiversity refers to the variety of all life forms, including plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms. A landscape that is rich in biodiversity provides the essential necessities for the survival of humans, including fresh water, clean air, climate regulation, food and medicines. It also contributes towards our physical and mental wellbeing. The benefits of conserving and enhancing biodiversity are therefore well known. For example, the planting of more trees and the restoration of grassland areas can not only lead to the sequestration of more carbon but can also mitigate against flooding events³. Every wetland restored, every hedge planted, every soil improved, and every river reconnected delivers simultaneous climate and biodiversity benefits.



Photo: West Oxfordshire Landscape © M. Dodd

² <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/local-nature-recovery-strategy-lnrs>

³ <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/enhancing-our-natural-capital/>

The biodiversity duty is a legal obligation for all public authorities in England to consider the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity across all their functions. Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (as amended)⁴ originally placed a specific duty on public authorities to conserve biodiversity when exercising their functions, which was strengthened by the addition of the word “*enhance*” in the Environment Act 2021⁵. The conservation and enhancement of biodiversity is often referred to as the “biodiversity objective”.

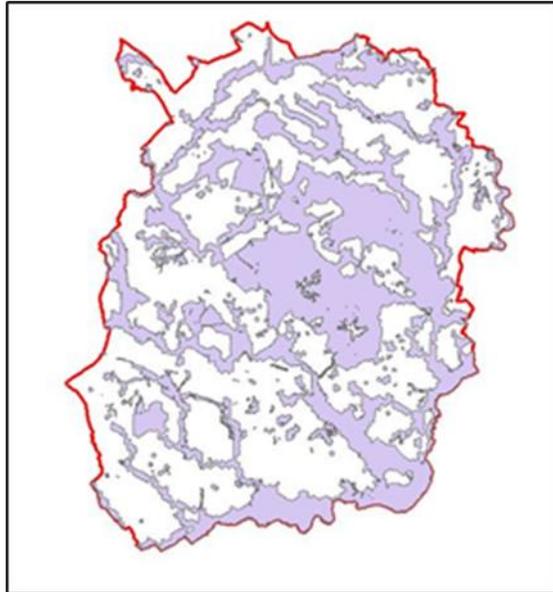


Figure 1 – the priority nature recovery network in West Oxfordshire

1.3 The Biodiversity Objective

The NERC Act (as amended) states that “*the action which may be taken by the authority to further the general biodiversity objective includes, in particular, action taken for the purpose of:*

- a) *Conserving, restoring or otherwise enhancing a population of a particular species, and*

⁴ NERC Act: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

⁵ Environment Act: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted>

b) Conserving, restoring or otherwise enhancing a particular type of habitat.”

While the NERC Act allows public authorities to conclude that no further action is needed, if it determines that action is required, S40 1(A) requires the public authority to:

- a) Determine such policies and specific objectives as it considers appropriate for taking action to further the general biodiversity objective, and*
- b) Take such action as it considers appropriate, in the light of those policies and objectives, to further that objective.*

Section 40 (1B) clarifies that revising existing policies and objectives can satisfy point a) above. Meanwhile, Section 40 (1E) requires that the determination of policies and objectives must be made as soon as practicable after consideration.

1.4 The Biodiversity Duty Report

Under the new Section 40 (A) of the NERC Act, public authorities are required to produce a Biodiversity Duty Report (BDR) to evidence actions taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Guidance from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)⁶ states:

- *The end date of your first reporting period should be no later than 1 January 2026.*
- *After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period.*
- *You must include the start and end dates of your reporting period in each report.*
- *You must publish all reports within 12 weeks of the reporting period end date.*

By law, the biodiversity duty report must include:

- *a summary of the action you’ve taken to comply with the biodiversity duty.*
- *how you plan to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period.*
- *any other information you consider appropriate.*

Reports from local planning authorities must also include the following Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) information:

⁶ Defra guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reporting-your-biodiversity-duty-actions>

- *the actions you've carried out to meet BNG obligations.*
- *details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans you've approved.*
- *how you plan to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period.*

1.5 Reporting compliance with the biodiversity duty in West Oxfordshire

This report demonstrates how WODC complies with the biodiversity duty. The report is structured as follows:

- Policies, objectives and current actions
 - Policies and objectives established to meet the biodiversity duty
 - Actions completed (or ongoing), either individually or in partnership, that benefit biodiversity
- Future Actions
 - How WODC plans to fulfil the biodiversity duty over the next five years
- Biodiversity Net Gain Information
 - Actions carried out to meet BNG obligations
 - Details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from approved Biodiversity Gain Plans
 - How WODC plans to fulfil BNG obligations over the next five years

1.6 Contribution towards national commitments

The actions taken by WODC to comply with the biodiversity duty will also contribute towards achieving national goals and targets.

In January 2023, the Government published the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP23)⁷ which sets out specific actions and targets to improve and restore natural environment and halt the decline in biodiversity. Under the Apex Goal of improving nature, the plan outlines commitments to protect land and sea for nature through the Nature Recovery Network delivered via Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) initiatives.

Key commitments include:

⁷ EIP 2023: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64a6d9c1c531eb000c64ffa/environmental-improvement-plan-2023.pdf>

By 2030:

- Halting the decline in species abundance
- Protecting 30% of land in the UK

By 2042:

- Increasing species abundance by at least 10% from 2023 levels
- Restoring or creating at least 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitats
- Reducing the risk of species extinction
- Restoring 75% of one million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition

The EIP was updated in December 2025⁸ to build on its vision and goals, providing further detail on required actions. The updated plan sets ten overarching goals, including:

- Restoring nature
- Improving environmental quality
- Driving forward a circular economy
- Achieving environmental security
- Increasing access to nature

1.7 The Reporting Period

This report covers the period 12 February 2024 to 1 January 2026. The start date fits in with the introduction of statutory Biodiversity Net Gain and the publication of the Council's Nature Recovery Plan on 14 February 2024, and the end date aligns with Defra guidance.

⁸ EIP 2025: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/692d8d9cce50d215cae962a5/Environmental_Improvement_Plan_EIP_2025.pdf

2 Policies, Objectives and Current Actions

2.1 Existing relevant policies, strategies and plans

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031⁹

A key function of the Council in terms of the biodiversity duty is its role as a Local Planning Authority. The Council has legal obligations relating to important wildlife sites, habitats and species; and requirements under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to conserve and enhance the natural environment. Conserving and enhancing biodiversity is achieved through the relevant policies of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 as set out below.

The following policies are most relevant with specific extracts taken from the adopted plan to summarise their connection with biodiversity. This overview does not include site-specific or place-based policies.

Core Objective CO14: *“Conserve and enhance the character and significance of West Oxfordshire’s high quality natural, historic and cultural environment, including its geodiversity, landscape, biodiversity, heritage and arts.”*

Policy OS4 High quality design: *“New development should... conserve or enhance areas, buildings and features of historic, architectural and environmental significance, including... habitats of biodiversity value... Enhance local green infrastructure and its biodiversity...”*

Policy E4 Sustainable tourism: *“Proposals in the Cotswolds AONB should conserve and enhance the landscape quality and biodiversity of the area... In the Lower Windrush Valley, the Council will continue to work with the Lower Windrush Valley Project and the County Council... proposals which complement... nature conservation benefits will be supported.”*

Policy EH2 Landscape character: *“The quality, character and distinctiveness of West Oxfordshire’s natural environment, including its landscape, cultural and historic value, tranquillity, geology, countryside, soil and biodiversity will be conserved and enhanced. Special attention and protection will be given to the landscape and biodiversity of the Lower Windrush Valley Project, the Windrush in Witney Project Area and the Wychwood Project Area.”*

⁹ <https://westoxon.gov.uk/media/fejmpen/local-plan.pdf>

Policy EH3 Biodiversity and geodiversity: *“The biodiversity of West Oxfordshire shall be protected and enhanced to achieve an overall net gain in biodiversity and minimise impacts on geodiversity, including by:*

- *Protecting designated sites*
- *Requiring Habitats Regulations Assessments for any development proposal likely to have a significant adverse effect, either alone or in combination, on the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC)*
- *Protecting and mitigation for impacts on priority habitats, protected species and priority species, individually and as part of a wider network*
- *Avoiding loss, deterioration or harm to locally important wildlife and geological sites and sites supporting irreplaceable habitats (including ancient woodland)*
- *Ensuring development works towards achieving the aims and objectives of the Conservation Target Areas and Nature Improvement Areas*
- *Promoting the conservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations*
- *Taking all opportunities to enhance the biodiversity of the site or the locality, especially where this will help deliver networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure and UK priority habitats and species targets*
- *Ensuring that all applications that might adversely affect biodiversity are accompanied by adequate ecological survey information in accordance with BS42020:2013*
- *Demonstrating a net gain in biodiversity where possible.*
- *All developments will be expected to provide towards the provision of necessary enhancements in areas of biodiversity importance.”*

Policy EH4 Public realm and green infrastructure: *“The existing areas of public space and green infrastructure of West Oxfordshire will be protected and enhanced for their multi-functional role, including their biodiversity... value and for the contribution they make towards combating climate change. New development should:*

- *Avoid the loss, fragmentation and loss of functionality of the existing green infrastructure network*
- *Maximise opportunities for urban greening such as through appropriate landscaping schemes and the planting of street trees*
- *Provide opportunities for improvements to the District’s multi-functional network of green infrastructure (including Conservation Target Areas) and open space*
- *Demonstrate how lighting will not adversely impact on green infrastructure that functions as nocturnal wildlife movement and foraging corridors.”*

Policy EH6 Decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy development (excepting wind turbines): *“Renewable or low-carbon energy development should be located and designed to minimise any adverse impacts... In assessing proposals, the following local issues will need to be considered and satisfactorily addressed:*

- *Impacts on landscape, biodiversity...*

- *Opportunities for environmental enhancement... will be sought, especially where they will contribute to Conservation Target Areas and Nature Improvement Areas...*

Policy EH7 Flood risk: *"In assessing proposals for development...*

- *Land required for flood management will be safeguarded from development and, where applicable, managed as part of the green infrastructure network, including maximising its biodiversity value."*

West Oxfordshire District Council Plan¹⁰ 2023 – 2027

The Council Plan includes three corporate priorities that support the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity; these are:

1. Enabling a good quality of life for all – for example, through the development and maintenance of green infrastructure that supports health and wellbeing, fosters community cohesion and delivers a high quality of life through access to nature and outdoor spaces.
2. Creating a better environment for people and wildlife – for example, by ensuring that land, air and water support biodiverse habitats, reduce pollution and promote nature recovery and supporting public engagement by improving understanding of, and access to, green spaces and the countryside.
3. Responding to the climate and ecological emergency – for example, by encouraging the use of nature-based solutions to sequester carbon and address climate-related risks at a river catchment scale such as restoring meadows and planting trees to reduce flooding and improve water quality.

West Oxfordshire Design Guide¹¹

The Design Guide was adopted in April 2016 as a Supplementary Planning Document. Chapter 13 covers biodiversity and protected species and sets out how local plan policies EH2 and EH3 should be considered and applied, including what information should be provided with a planning application.

¹⁰ <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/z2ijlocw/west-oxfordshire-council-plan-2023-to-2027.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents/>

Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP)¹²

This new policy document contains policies on biodiversity, including a requirement for at least a 25% net gain in biodiversity. Public Examination of the document has been completed. This document is scheduled for formal adoption by the Council in February 2026.

Local Plan Review (current and ongoing)¹³

Currently under review with a target of submission towards the end of 2026. The Preferred Policy Options Paper was consulted publicly during the summer of 2025¹⁴ and included a core policy on the natural environment (CP12), place-based policies included for Cotswolds National Landscape (PL1), Windrush Valley (PL3) and Wychwood Forest (PL4), as well as development management policies for green infrastructure (DM2), Biodiversity Net Gain and nature recovery (DM8) and trees and hedgerows (DM11). A separate consultation took place in autumn 2025 on the Preferred Spatial Options Paper¹⁵, including specific references to ecological enhancements within development sites that contribute towards the Oxfordshire LNRS. Preparation of the Regulation 19 version of the plan for public consultation in summer 2026 is ongoing.

Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030¹⁶

West Oxfordshire declared a Climate Change and Ecological Emergency in 2019 and approved the strategy in 2025. The strategy's vision states, "*Nature recovery solutions play a crucial role in mitigating climate change and enhancing resilience from its impacts.*" A key theme within this strategy is the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems, including sharing knowledge by engaging with specialists and local environmental groups on how to increase biodiversity, accelerate nature recovery and build natural capital. Environment co-benefits to climate and nature actions include improving air quality, protecting biodiversity and conserving water.

Nature Recovery Plan 2024 – 2030¹⁷

This plan was released on 14 February 2024 as the Council's first considerations and policy and objectives report in line with the biodiversity duty (as set out in section 1.3 above). It takes forward some of the Council's Climate Change Strategy's objectives and outlines the specific objectives and actions the council will take to support nature recovery across the district to 2030. Biodiversity conservation and enhancement are part of nature

¹² <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/salt-cross-garden-village/salt-cross-area-action-plan-examination/salt-cross-area-action-plan-examination-2024-2025/>

¹³ <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2043/>

¹⁴ <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/qf3bnn0n/wodc-local-plan-preferred-policy-options-consultation-paper-june-2025.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/ae0jcxni/local-plan-preferred-spatial-options-consultation-october-2025.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/unnbqcd0/climate-change-strategy-2025-2030.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/nvtbk0ob/nature-recovery-plan-2024-to-2030.pdf>

recovery – the new term coincides with government policy and the introduction of the LNRS approach (see next item below). The Nature Recovery Plan incorporates three main aims: 1) facilitating communities and partnerships for landscape-scale nature recovery; 2) protecting and improving existing biodiversity on sites owned and managed by the Council; and 3) safeguarding biodiversity through policies and new development.

Oxfordshire LNRS¹⁸

The LNRS is a spatial strategy for nature recovery, the main purpose of which is to identify locations where the creation and/or enhancement of certain habitats would provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment, including reconnecting habitats as part of an ecological network. It encourages the delivery of targeted actions for nature recovery as opportunities for funding and investment arise. It comprises four key 'documents': 1) Description of the Strategy Area, 2) Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, 3) Species Priority List and 4) Local Habitat Map (an online interactive map tool). While many species and habitats are identified as priorities at the national level, the LNRS enables these priorities to be specifically identified and linked to local landscapes, ensuring that actions are relevant to the specific ecological needs of Oxfordshire.

The Oxfordshire LNRS was published by Oxfordshire County Council (the “Responsible Authority”) in November 2025. As a supporting authority the Council has been involved in all stages of its preparation and contributed to its development through representation on the steering group committee, at technical workshops, draft reviews, consultation and advocating for local priorities. The publication of the Oxfordshire LNRS was endorsed by the Council at an Executive meeting on 10th September 2025¹⁹ ²⁰. The LNRS is a key consideration in the Council’s approach to the biodiversity duty and will be used to inform priorities for action in the Nature Recovery Plan and the Local Plan review. The Council is represented on the new LNRS Delivery Advisory Group through which it shares expertise, strategic guidance, review strategic projects and helps guide the delivery of nature recovery objectives in line with national requirements and local priorities.

2.2 Objectives

The Council’s Nature Recovery Plan sets out the policies and objectives that will be implemented to meet the statutory biodiversity duty. Progress reports on the implementation of the Nature Recovery Plan were presented to the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 April 2025 and 4 February 2026. These progress reports provide the foundation for this Biodiversity Duty Report, particularly with regard to key projects and actions undertaken.

¹⁸ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/local-nature-recovery-strategy-lnrs>

¹⁹ <https://meetings.westoxon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MIId=2568>

²⁰ <https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/25461043.oxfordshire-nature-recovery-plan-backed-district-council/>

2.3 Current Actions

WODC declared an ecological and climate emergency in 2019²¹ and is therefore committed to conserving and enhancing biodiversity through a range of approaches. These include strategic partnerships, planning policy, development management, land management and stakeholder engagement.

West Oxfordshire is rich in biodiversity, and its diverse habitats include ancient woodland, hedgerows, species-rich grasslands, ponds, lowland fens, rivers and streams.

The Council currently employs five in-house ecologists who provide specialist advice and support across the planning process, nature recovery, and other council service areas, including climate action, green space management and community engagement. Of these, three full time equivalent (FTE) ecologists focus on ecological input into the planning process, including development management and policy, and two FTE ecologists focus on nature recovery, including the implementation of the Council's Nature Recovery Plan and the Oxfordshire LNRS.

The Council works in partnership many organisations at local, county and national levels to support biodiversity conservation and nature recovery, including the following:

- Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)
- Community Action Groups Oxfordshire
- Cotswold National Landscape Board
- Environment Agency
- Evenlode Catchment Partnership
- Forestry England
- Long Mead Foundation
- Lower Windrush Valley Project
- Natural England
- NatureSpace Partnership
- Newt Conservation Partnership
- Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership
- Oxfordshire town, parish, district and county authorities (and of other neighbouring counties, particularly Gloucestershire)

²¹ <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/climate-action-and-what-we-are-doing/>

- Public Health
- Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC)
- Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment (TOE)
- Wild Oxfordshire
- Windrush Catchment Partnership
- Wychwood Forest Trust

The Council also supports other organisations and groups in a variety of ways to further biodiversity conservation and enhancement, including the Northeast Cotswolds Farmer Cluster and local community groups.

A summary of actions currently undertaken by the Council is set out in Table 1 below.

Where “*Ecology*” is identified as the responsible team, this refers to the ecology sub-team within the Planning Policy department.

Where “*Planning*” is identified as the responsible team, this includes development management, planning policy, planning enforcement and planning administrative support (including validation).

Table 1: Current actions being carried out by West Oxfordshire District Council

Theme	Key Activities	Departments	Timeline
A. Strategic approach to biodiversity	Publication and implementation of a new Climate Change Strategy with biodiversity commitments.	Climate	2025 – ongoing
	Contribution to Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Route Map with natural environment actions.	Climate, Ecology	2025– ongoing
	Integral role in the preparation, launch and delivery of the Oxfordshire LNRS.	Ecology, Climate	2025 – ongoing
	Regulation 18 Local Plan Review Preferred Policy Options Paper including proposed policies on BNG and nature recovery – public consultation undertaken.	Planning Policy	2025
	Participation in an Innovate UK nature-based carbon sequestration project with the other Oxfordshire local authorities. Final report: Enabling Nature-Based Carbon Sequestration includes: 1) A review of nature-based carbon methodologies and routes to market, 2) Developing a High Integrity Nature-based Carbon Market Framework for Oxfordshire and 3) Implementation of nature-based markets in Oxfordshire.	Climate, Ecology	2025

Theme	Key Activities	Departments	Timeline
	Community Action Plan for Zero-Carbon Energy project biodiversity targets set and monitored.	Climate, Ecology	2024 – ongoing
	Three-year Service Level Agreements with Wild Oxfordshire, Wychwood Forest Trust and Evenlode Catchment Partnership to support action for nature recovery.	Communities, Ecology	2024 – 2027
	Ongoing membership of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership and its various subgroups, including BNG.	Ecology	2021 – ongoing
B. Integration into decision-making	Ensuring the submission of adequate and robust ecological information in planning applications in line with the local validation checklist.	Ecology, Planning	Ongoing
	Reviewing ecological information submitted in planning applications to ensure biodiversity impacts are properly considered.	Ecology, Development Management	Ongoing
	Applying the mitigation hierarchy and securing appropriate mitigation and/or compensation in line with relevant legislation, and national and local planning policies.	Ecology, Development Management	Ongoing
	Obtaining and managing relevant environmental data on habitats and species, designated sites, Biodiversity Net Gain and other features through a Service Level Agreement with the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) – this is reviewed and updated annually. Data is used to identify constraints, inform the assessment of planning applications and for specific projects. TVERC 2024-25 annual report confirms that 270,102 new records were added to their database, of which 16,268 were in West Oxfordshire, and 113 data search enquiries were processed.	Planning	Ongoing
	Part-funding the Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Sites Project and sitting on the project steering group to oversee the selection of sites, the re-survey of existing sites and the provision of management advice to landowners. The project is delivered in partnership with the other Oxfordshire local authorities, TVERC and BBOWT. In West Oxfordshire there are 102 Local Wildlife Sites totalling 1,761.8 hectares and 48% are in positive management (including local geological sites).	Planning	Ongoing
	Carrying out Habitats Regulations Assessments as part of the planning process where required.	Planning	Ongoing

Theme	Key Activities	Departments	Timeline
	Assessment of pollution, contamination, flood risk and water quality and management, including sewage infrastructure, in planning decisions.	Planning, Environmental Health, Lead Local Flood Authority	Ongoing
	Applying a Grampian condition to planning permissions where relevant to secure either the required sewage infrastructure improvements (e.g. foul water network upgrades) before developments can be occupied or a development and infrastructure phasing plan in consultation with the water company to allow development to be occupied, which will indirectly benefit biodiversity through cleaner rivers.	Planning	2025 – ongoing
	Securing biodiversity mitigation, compensation and/or enhancement through planning conditions.	Planning	Ongoing
	Hold a great crested newt district licence as part of the NatureSpace District Licensing Scheme to provide an alternative licensing option for developers. Aquatic and terrestrial habitat compensation is delivered via The Newt Conservation Partnership as part of a strategic species conservation strategy; 22 ponds and 60.6ha terrestrial habitat have been created in West Oxfordshire as part of this scheme.	Planning	2019 – ongoing
	Participation in a 12-month pilot scheme for priority species (skylark, linnet, yellowhammer and hedgehog) compensation to secure better outcomes from developments through NatureSpace Partnership since December 2025. Given the nascent nature of the pilot, no developments have yet entered into the scheme.	Planning	2025 - 2027
	Using LNRS mapping to inform the assessment of strategic development sites.	Planning Policy	2025
	Application of the Sustainability Impact Assessment Tool (SIAT) to Council projects to assess impacts on climate and nature.	All	Ongoing

Theme	Key Activities	Departments	Timeline
	Using the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 ²² as a material consideration in the planning process.	Planning	Ongoing
	Sustainable Tourism Grants Scheme to support visitor economy businesses to improve sustainability with nature recovery included as an assessment criterion.	Tourism Services, Ecology	2025
	Mini-business case review on street cleansing and grounds maintenance in April 2025, including consideration of biodiversity and nature recovery.	Waste and Environmental Services, Ecology, Climate	2025
C. Actions to improve biodiversity	Supporting the Lower Windrush Valley Project and Windrush Catchment Partnership.	Ecology	2025–ongoing
	Managing council-owned green spaces informed by updated land management plans, ecological surveys and BNG baselines.	Assets, Ecology, Climate	2025–ongoing
	Mapping, protecting and managing sensitive road verges for biodiversity. Carrying out a review of Road Verge Nature Reserves in conjunction with Oxfordshire County Council to explore the potential for more of these to be managed by the Council.	Assets, Ecology	Ongoing
	Installation of biodiversity features at the council offices in Woodgreen, Witney (bird, bat and bee boxes, wildflower meadows, bulbs, lavender and hedgerows). Provision of wildflower meadow management information to staff and visitors.	Assets, Ecology	2024–2025
	Reduction in herbicide use and cessation of peat products.	Assets, Ecology	2025–2026
	Running the Coronation Community Orchard Scheme locally to provide funding to community groups for the planting of fruit trees, including schools. 206 trees planted to date and scheme finishes on 31 March 2026. Funded by the Coronation Living Heritage Fund (CLHF).	Ecology, Climate	2023–2026
	Delivery of the Windrush Valley landscape recovery project in partnership with the Wychwood Forest Trust.	Ecology	Ongoing

²² <https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/our-work/cotswolds-national-landscape-management-plan/>

Theme	Key Activities	Departments	Timeline
D. Engagement, education and partnerships	Delivery of a Local Environment Groups Conference through Wild Oxfordshire.	Communities, Ecology	2024–2025
	“Tackling inequalities through nature recovery” programme supporting communities facing socio-economic barriers in Chipping Norton, Carterton and Witney.	Communities, Ecology	2025–ongoing
	Leadership of the conservation volunteer group at Kilkenny Lane Country Park and providing support to other “Friends” groups.	Ecology, Assets	2024–ongoing
	Attendance at community nature events: 6 events in 2024 and 9 events in 2025, including ‘A River Sings’ film screening in Chipping Norton Town Hall on 22 April 2025 and Witney Town Council’s first Eco Fair on 9 October 2025.	Ecology	Ongoing
	Biodiversity guidance for parishes and district-wide survey of parish climate and nature activities.	Ecology, Climate	2025
	Delivery of the Waterways Fair to promote water management and nature recovery.	Executive Member for Environment, Ecology	2025
	Communications strategy for the orchard scheme and wider nature recovery projects.	Communications, Ecology	Ongoing
	Continued operation of ‘Westhive’, the Council’s Spacehive ²³ fundraising programme supporting community projects such as the therapeutic Bridewell Gardens and community floodplain restoration projects in Swinford and Eynsham.	All	Ongoing

²³ <https://www.spacehive.com/movement/westhive>

3 Future Actions

The Council will meet the biodiversity duty over the next five-year reporting period primarily through the continued implementation of its Nature Recovery Plan, which covers the period 2024 to 2030. In addition to the actions set out in the Nature Recovery Plan, further actions may be identified, assessed and implemented during the reporting period as opportunities and priorities evolve. It has been assumed that relevant ongoing actions identified in Table 1 will continue throughout this period. A summary of the Council’s key future actions is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Future actions to be taken forward in next five-year reporting period

Theme	Future Action	Lead Departments	Timeline	Notes / Additional Detail
A. Strategic approach to biodiversity	Continued involvement in the delivery of the Oxfordshire LNRS, including transition to delivery, strategic project identification, funding and implementation.	Ecology, Climate	2026	WODC representation on the new LNRS Delivery Advisory Group (from February 2026).
	Liaison with partners on Phase 2 of carbon sequestration project and contribute to the development of a carbon code.	Ecology, Climate	2026	Ongoing county-wide collaboration.
	Continued implementation of the Council’s Nature Recovery Plan 2024–2030.	Ecology, Communities, Climate	Ongoing	Actions prioritised by urgency and capacity.
	Review and update of the Nature Recovery Plan, including the roadmap, BNG-specific actions and LNRS references.	Ecology	2026	Some elements require updating.
	Progression of the Local Plan Review, including biodiversity and nature recovery policies.	Planning Policy, Climate	Ongoing	Submission for examination expected by the end of 2026.
	Continued support and funding for the Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Sites Project.	Planning	Ongoing	The project is run in partnership with the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) and BBOWT

Theme	Future Action	Lead Departments	Timeline	Notes / Additional Detail
	Support for the designation of new Local Nature Reserves.	Planning	Ongoing	
	Green infrastructure study for selected settlements.	Planning Policy, Climate	2026–27	Long-term aspiration to develop a district-wide strategy.
	Review of the Ubico Service Plan/Schedule to embed biodiversity considerations.	Ecology, Environmental Services & Waste	2026	
	Publication of additional biodiversity specifications and guidance as new topics arise.	Planning	Ongoing	
B. Integration of biodiversity into decision making	Continued review of ecological reports submitted with planning applications.	Planning	Ongoing	Ensures policy compliance.
	Continued provision of ecological training for planning officers.	Planning	Ongoing	Delivered as required.
	Biodiversity audit of Council service areas.	Ecology	2026-2027	Identifies gaps and opportunities.
	Continued reduction of glyphosate use.	Assets	Ongoing	Focused on Council-owned land and contracts.
	Maintenance of access to accurate wildlife data through the TVERC Service Level Agreement, incorporating mapping of BNG sites and habitats.	Planning	Ongoing	Supports ecological and wider decision-making, and monitoring of BNG.
	Publication and implementation of the Council's Tree Management Policy.	Planning Policy	2026	Includes requirements for biodiversity enhancement and nature recovery.

Theme	Future Action	Lead Departments	Timeline	Notes / Additional Detail
	Identification of additional Road Verge Nature Reserves for management by the Council and support ecological monitoring.	Ecology, Assets	2026 - ongoing	In partnership with Oxfordshire County Council.
	Embedding the Oxfordshire LNRS into Council decisions to support nature recovery.	Planning, Climate	2026 – ongoing	Ensuring that the LNRS is widely used to inform decisions.
	Integration of species conservation strategies and protected site strategies into local policy and development management decisions as and when these are progressed by Government	Planning	2026 – ongoing	
C. Actions to improve biodiversity	Promotion of wildflower meadows and best practice verge management with councils and landowners.	Ecology, Assets, Communications	2027	In partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and Wild Oxfordshire.
	Management and enhancement of council-owned land for nature and climate.	Ecology, Assets	Ongoing	
	Review and update of land management plans with volunteer groups (initial five sites).	Ecology, Assets	2026-2027	Informed by 2025 ecological assessments.
	Preparation of riparian management plans for Council-owned watercourses.	Ecology, Assets, Flood risk	2026/7	
	Delivery of biodiversity enhancement projects with five schools.	Ecology, Communities	2026	Subject to funding.
	Integration of climate and ecological emergencies into the Community Infrastructure Levy – infrastructure spending schedule and project design criteria for allocating funding to projects.	Planning Policy	2026	Approach aligned with Cotswold District Council.

Theme	Future Action	Lead Departments	Timeline	Notes / Additional Detail
	Continued support for the Local Environment Groups Conference.	Communities, Ecology	2026-27	Two further events under current Service Level Agreement with Wild Oxfordshire.
D. Engagement, education and partnerships	Continued delivery of bioblitz events across the district.	Ecology	Ongoing	2026 event planned with TVERC and Wild Oxfordshire.
	Support for Plantlife's No Mow May initiative.	Assets	2027	Identification of suitable sites and public engagement.
	Promotion of research opportunities with academic partners, including Oxford University.	Ecology	2026 and ongoing	Focus on biodiversity monitoring.
	Support for town and parish councils in developing biodiversity and climate policies.	Ecology, Climate, Communities	Ongoing	In partnership with Wild Oxfordshire.
	Establishment of a nature and climate group for staff.	Ecology, Climate	2026	Supports training, shared learning and volunteering opportunities.
	Identify available town and parish land for nature and climate action.	Ecology, Climate, Communities	2026	Including mapping local growing spaces and encouraging a more sustainable approach.

4 Biodiversity Net Gain Information

4.1 Current Biodiversity Net Gain Actions

Under the Environment Act 2021, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory for major developments on 12th February 2024 and for minor developments on 2nd April 2025. This legislation requires developers to deliver a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity as part of development proposals.

This requirement can be achieved via the following mechanisms, either alone or in combination:

- On-site habitat creation and/or enhancements within the development, for example as part of public open space or green infrastructure.
- Off-site habitat creation and/or enhancements outside the development site boundary, such as on land owned by the developer.
- Purchase off-site biodiversity units from a suitable provider such as a habitat bank or broker.
- Purchase statutory biodiversity credits from the Government as a last resort.

The BNG requirement is underpinned by amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, including a defined list of exemptions. Guidance published by Defra supports developers, local planning authorities and others involved in implementing BNG²⁴.

To meet the new statutory BNG obligations, WODC has undertaken a set of actions as set out in Table 3 below.

In addition, a BNG working group was established across three local planning authorities, WODC, Cotswold District Council and Forest of Dean District Council through Publica. This group supported the initial preparation for statutory BNG and the development of consistent processes, including validation checklists across all the Publica authorities.

Table 3: Actions taken to implement and meet BNG obligations

Action	Lead Departments	Timeline	Notes / Additional Detail
Application of the biodiversity gain hierarchy to all non-exempt developments across the district.	Planning	2024	Ensures compliance with statutory BNG requirements.

²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-net-gain>

Action	Lead Departments	Timeline	Notes / Additional Detail
Attendance at Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership BNG focus group meetings to share best practice.	Planning, Ecology	2024	Supports shared learning across the county.
Update of planning validation checklists to incorporate BNG requirements.	Planning	2024	Applicants are now required to submit BNG-compliant information.
Creation and publication of a BNG Statement form for planning applicants to summarise their approach.	Planning	2024	Developed in partnership with Publica authorities.
Update of the Council website to include BNG information, including links to Government guidance, definitions and planning application requirements.	Planning	2024-2025	Includes definitions for onsite significant enhancement and strategic significance.
Investment in Mycelia software to support assessment of BNG metrics at the planning application stage and for ongoing monitoring.	Planning, Finance	2023	Improves accuracy and efficiency of metric calculations.
Delivery of BNG training to ecologists and planning officers, including enforcement.	Planning	2024, 2025 and ongoing	Ensures staff remain up to date with processes and legislation.
Training for planning validation team, including use of Mycelia.	Planning	2024	Supports correct validation of BNG submissions.
Recruitment of three FTE planning ecologists to support BNG advisory work.	Planning	2025	Ecology team provides advice to officers, applicants and agents.
Review of planning applications to ensure BNG information is accurate, realistic and achievable.	Planning, Ecology	2024	Ecology team reviews technical details of BNG proposals.
Separation of Biodiversity Gain Plan discharge applications from other compliance applications to support effective monitoring.	Planning	2024	Improves oversight and tracking of BNG delivery.
Delivery of a Developer and Agents Forum session, including an introduction to BNG and follow-up advice.	Planning	Sept 2024	Supports awareness and compliance among developers.

Action	Lead Departments	Timeline	Notes / Additional Detail
Preparation of the first Section 106 agreement for a habitat bank.	Ecology, Legal	2022–2025	Establishes mechanisms for off-site BNG delivery.
Executive decision to delegate authority to Head of Planning for future habitat bank Section 106 agreements.	Planning	Feb 2025	Streamlines approval of habitat banks.
Inclusion of a BNG informative on planning permission decision notices.	Planning	2024	Ensures applicants are aware of their ongoing BNG responsibilities.
Initiation of a BNG monitoring strategy to understand how best to monitor on-site delivery and habitat banks.	Ecology	Ongoing	Development of a long-term monitoring approach.
Participation in Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership BNG focus group discussions on off-site market integrity and habitat bank quality assurance, contributing to the development of the Oxfordshire 'NatureMark' ²⁵ .	Ecology	2025 and ongoing	<i>NatureMark</i> provides optional quality assurance for habitat banks.
Publication of BNG monitoring fees for significant on-site enhancements and off-site habitat banks.	Planning, Finance	Nov 2025	Establishes a charging mechanism for monitoring duties
Collaboration with Oxfordshire County Council and the other supporting authorities on the LNRS delivery and its functions relating to BNG.	Ecology	2024-25	Supported development of guidance for planning officers and Local Plan policy.

²⁵ <https://www.olnp.org.uk/biodiversity-net-gain-bng-sites-in-oxfordshire>

4.2 Approved Biodiversity Gain Plan Outcomes

The outcomes from the approved Biodiversity Gain Plans are summarised in the tables below. This data has been generated using the Verna Earth Ltd 'Mycelia' software, which the Council uses to support effective screening of biodiversity metrics submitted within planning applications and to enable ongoing monitoring of compliance with approved Biodiversity Gain Plans. The information is presented in a series of summary tables aligned with the specific data outputs from Mycelia.

Table 4: Biodiversity Gain Plans approved in the reporting period

Measure	Number	Proportion (%)
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period	19	Not applicable
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through on-site units only	13	68.42
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through off-site units only	0	0.00
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through statutory credits only	0	0.00
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site and off-site units	6	31.58
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site units and statutory credits	0	0.00
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of off-site units and statutory credits	0	0.00
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site, off-site units and statutory credits	0	0.00
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period where the on-site change negatively impacts irreplaceable habitats	0	0.00

Table 5: Overall expected gains and losses in approved Biodiversity Gain Plans

Measure	Area habitats	Hedgerow	Watercourse
Total number of pre-development biodiversity units approved on-site	33.17	4.11	0.00
Total number of post-development biodiversity units approved on-site	46.80	7.61	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units, on-site	13.63	3.50	0.00
Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, on-site	41.09	85.14	0.00
Total number of baseline biodiversity units approved off-site	1.61	0.00	0.00
Total number of post-intervention biodiversity units approved off-site	4.23	0.13	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units, off-site	2.62	0.13	0.00
Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, off-site	162.82	0.00	0.00
Total number of biodiversity units offset using statutory credits	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units (including any units offset using credits)	16.25	3.63	0.00
Average percentage (%) change (including statutory credits)	46.73	88.20	0.00

Table 6: Location of off-site biodiversity units

Measure	Total	Proportion (%)
Number of off-site biodiversity units located inside LPA boundary or NCA of impact site	1.46	34.71
Number of off-site biodiversity units located outside LPA or NCA of impact site, but in neighbouring LPA or NCA	1.35	32.06
Number of off-site biodiversity units located outside of LPA or NCA of impact site and neighbouring LPA or NCA	1.40	33.23

Table 7: Composition of biodiversity gains for area habitats

Habitat Type – Area	Total baseline biodiversity units	Total hectares at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total hectares post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in hectares
Cropland	2.47	1.21	1.89	1.08	-0.57	-0.13
Grassland	22.76	7.07	28.99	5.16	6.23	-1.90
Heathland and shrub	0.04	0.01	1.54	0.21	1.50	0.20
Lakes	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sparsely vegetated land	0.38	0.19	0.00	0.00	-0.38	-0.19
Urban	0.91	1.74	0.88	2.68	-0.03	0.94
Wetland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Woodland and forest	0.92	0.21	6.66	1.28	5.74	1.07
Intertidal sediment	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Coastal saltmarsh	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Rocky shore	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Coastal lagoons	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Intertidal hard structures	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse footprint	Not applicable	0.00	Not applicable	0.00	Not applicable	0.00
Individual trees	7.18	0.78	10.93	1.83	3.75	1.05

Habitat Type – Area	Total baseline biodiversity units	Total hectares at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total hectares post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in hectares
Total	34.65	11.22	50.89	12.25	16.23	1.03

Table 8: Composition of biodiversity gains for hedgerows and lines of trees

Habitat type - hedgerows and lines of trees	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total kilometres at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total kilometres post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in kilometres
Species-rich native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Species-rich native hedgerow with trees	0.97	0.08	1.26	0.08	0.29	0.00
Species-rich native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Species-rich native hedgerow	0.00	0.00	6.09	0.53	6.09	0.53
Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Native hedgerow with trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Habitat type - hedgerows and lines of trees	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total kilometres at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total kilometres post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in kilometres
Ecologically valuable line of trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Ecologically valuable line of trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Native hedgerow	3.02	0.59	0.28	0.13	-2.74	-0.46
Line of trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Line of trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	0.12	0.12	0.10	0.11	-0.02	-0.02
Total	4.11	0.79	7.74	0.85	3.63	0.06

4.3 Local Biodiversity Net Gain market support

The Council has supported the establishment of habitat banks within West Oxfordshire.

Habitat banks are sites where habitats are created or enhanced to generate off-site biodiversity units. These units can be purchased by developers to meet the statutory 10% BNG requirement, where it cannot be fully delivered within the development site (“onsite”). To legally sell biodiversity units, habitat bank owners or operators must secure a legal agreement – either a Section 106 agreement planning obligation with a local planning authority or a Conservation Covenant with a Responsible Body – and register their site with Natural England so that it appears on the National Gain Site

Register²⁶. The register is a publicly accessible platform to record, allocate and monitor the sale of biodiversity units and link them to specific planning permissions.

In West Oxfordshire, there are three habitat banks. Two of these have been secured through Section 106 agreements and one through a Conservation Covenant.

In line with the Council's Scheme of Delegation, the Development Control Committee approved the first habitat bank Section 106 agreement and resolved to delegate authority for future habitat bank agreements to the Head of Planning thereafter at its meeting on 24th February 2025²⁷.

- Pudlicote Farm habitat bank S106 agreement signed and sealed in February 2025²⁸.
- Radford Farm habitat bank S106 agreement signed and sealed in February 2026²⁹.
- Cornwell Estate habitat bank: although a Section 106 agreement was in progress, this site was registered separately under a Conservation Covenant³⁰

In addition, three other potential habitat banks are under consideration with initial discussions having taken place with landowners and relevant organisations.

4.4 Meeting BNG Obligations in the next reporting period

A summary of the actions to be undertaken over the next five-year reporting period to meet statutory BNG is provided in Table 4 overleaf. This includes the publication of a habitat bank establishment procedure to ensure that consistent due diligence checks and consultations are carried out for all future requests.

²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/search-the-biodiversity-gain-sites-register>

²⁷ <https://meetings.westoxon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1141&MId=2546&Ver=4>

²⁸ <https://news.westoxon.gov.uk/news/council-helps-to-establish-new-habitat-bank-at-pudlicote-farm>

²⁹ <https://trustforoxfordshire.org.uk/biodiversity-net-gain/our-habitat-banks/>

³⁰ <https://www.environmentbank.com/habitat-banks/cornwell-habitat-bank/>

Table 9: Actions to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period

Future Action	Team Responsible	Timeframe
Continue to assess and support the establishment of new habitat banks in the district as and when they are submitted to the Council.	Planning	2026
Publication of a habitat bank establishment procedure to ensure due diligence and consistency for all future requests.	Ecology	By end of 2026
Assessment and review of new habitat banks in accordance with the new procedure.	Planning	2026 and ongoing
Continue to support staff to undertake relevant training, including ecology, planning, validation and enforcement.	Planning, Legal	Ongoing
Continue to review planning applications to ensure BNG information is accurate, realistic, achievable and appropriate.	Ecology, Development Management	Ongoing
Continue to review Biodiversity Gain Plans, metrics and associated discharge of condition information to ensure accuracy and appropriateness.	Ecology, Development Management	Ongoing
Continue to ensure that the biodiversity gain hierarchy has been considered in all applications subject to BNG.	Ecology, Development Management	Ongoing
Continue to review Biodiversity Statements and ensure that at least 10% BNG can be achieved before granting planning permission.	Ecology, Planning (including validation)	Ongoing
Review and update BNG guidance on the Council's website, particularly in response to new and emerging guidance and legislation.	Planning, Ecology	2026
Incorporate BNG and nature recovery policies into the new Local Plan, including feasibility of increasing the BNG objective to 20% for major developments within the LNRS mapped network and consider policies to improve the quality of BNG design and effective delivery.	Planning Policy	2026
Create BNG maps showing on-site and off-site BNG delivery (with TVERC), and add to the constraints layer in Uniform, and use to support ongoing monitoring and reporting.	Ecology, ICT, GIS	2026 and ongoing

Future Action	Team Responsible	Timeframe
Assess applications to ensure that LNRS opportunities are incorporated into BNG proposals within planning applications and for all new habitat banks.	Planning, Ecology	2026 and ongoing
Review Biodiversity Gain Plans and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans (HMMPs).	Ecology, Planning Enforcement, Legal	2026 and ongoing
Prepare and publish a BNG monitoring strategy for on-site significant enhancements and habitat banks.	Ecology, S106 monitoring team	2026–27
Continue to monitor all development sites with on-site significant enhancements.	Planning, Legal	Ongoing
Consider new software and project management systems to enable effective monitoring of BNG through development management and for the 30-year statutory period.	Planning	Ongoing
Consider adding a BNG-specific pre-application advice service which will enable developers to better understand the potential implications of delivering BNG through their proposed developments.	Planning	2026-27
Report to Defra in accordance with published guidance.	Planning	2030/31

5. Getting involved in biodiversity and nature recovery in West Oxfordshire

The Council's Ecology Team can provide advice and support to town and parish councils/meetings and community groups who would like to create, restore and enhance habitats for wildlife, particularly where this contributes towards the delivery of the Oxfordshire LNRS, in partnership with the Community Ecology Team at Wild Oxfordshire³¹. If you would like to find out more, please contact ecology@westoxon.gov.uk



Photo: English bluebell © M. Dodd



Photo: Common lizard © M. Dodd



Photo: Pond © M. Dodd

If you are interested in learning more about or becoming involved with biodiversity and nature recovery in West Oxfordshire, please visit:

- <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/nvtbk0ob/nature-recovery-plan-2024-to-2030.pdf>
- <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/guidance/community-groups>
- <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/local-nature-recovery-strategy-lnrs>
- <https://www.olnp.org.uk/nature-recovery>
- <https://www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk/oxfordshire-nature-project>
- <https://www.bbwt.org.uk/team-wilder/community-groups>
- <https://www.tverc.org/get-involved>

Back cover photo: Apple blossom © M. Dodd

³¹ <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/projects/community-ecology>



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