

Year 1 Progress Summary

Annex A

Organisation: Home Start Oxford & Witney + Home Start Banbury & Chipping Norton

Section	Details	
Organisational Overview	<i>Home-Start Oxford and Home-Start Banbury are voluntary organisations providing free, confidential support for families with at least one child under the age of 5. Together they serve Oxford, West Oxfordshire and Cherwell. They provide non-judgmental, compassionate support for parents facing a range of challenges including isolation, low self-esteem, physical and mental health issues. Both are independent charities affiliated to Home-Start UK</i>	
Funded Project Aims	<p>The two Home-Start charities, supported by a growing team of 20 volunteers, were expecting to deliver the following during the year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 1:1 home visiting service across West Oxfordshire - supporting at least 20 families with children under 5. • A raft of inclusive and nurturing weekly groups and summer activities in Witney for 500+ beneficiaries each year. 	
Agreed outcomes and progress in year 1	Agreed outcomes	Progress in year 1
	Reach over 550 beneficiaries each year in West Oxfordshire.	<u>Home visiting:</u> Number of families visited under this contract was 30. <u>Groups:</u> Number of beneficiaries from groups 901. Total 931 beneficiaries in year 1.
	Beneficiaries will increase their self-esteem and confidence in parenting.	<u>Home-visiting:</u> 95% of families receiving Home Visits had improved or maintained their 'Parent Wellbeing: Self Esteem' scores <u>Groups:</u> 100% of families who took part in a group snapshot survey said they felt more confident in supporting their children's learning and development due to attending a Home-Start group
	Beneficiaries will increase their support networks reducing isolation.	<u>Home-visiting:</u> 93% of families receiving Home Visits had improved or maintained their 'Parent Wellbeing: Coping with feeling isolated' score 41% of families receiving Home Visits had improved or maintained their 'Use of other services' score <u>Groups:</u> 91% of families who took part in a group snapshot survey said they felt more confident to access the community or other services due to attending a Home-Start group
Key Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reached an additional 381 beneficiaries 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointed new employee leading on Family Group Support which has freed up the Family Group Co-ordinator to focus on targeted outreach support with families and for planning the wider offer. The decision to reduce the number of summer events to avoid overstretching the team resulted in increased attendance rates and more efficiently delivered events.
Challenges Faced and Actions Taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff changes have interrupted progress but with no shortages of referrals. Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEP) groups: attempted to deliver speech and language focussed PEEP group in the summer which didn't result in enough referrals. Identified the need to run a longer and consistent programme to build trust with the referrers. Volunteer recruitment remains a challenge. In response, a shortened training programme has been introduced, a hybrid delivery model to reduce the face-to-face time involved which can act as a barrier has been adopted, a 'fast track for professionals' route has been introduced and approaching large organisations to target pre-retirement staff with tailored volunteer messaging has begun.
Focus for Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In response to identified needs through groups and health visitor feedback, a new invitation-only SEND group will be established in Witney called 'Daises'. This group will run weekly, excluding the summer holidays. Focus will be given to support families experiencing isolation in rural villages as this has been a key trend over the last year.
Support Needed (if any)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support with the promotion of recruitment to attract new volunteers to lead the 1:1 support with families and spread their reach across the district. Any support with securing a venue in Witney for volunteer training programme would be welcome.
Officer comments	<p><i>The programme has benefitted far more residents than expected which is really positive. Home-Start's monitoring and evaluation processes are well developed and able to communicate impacts in a powerful way. WODC was complimented on the way in which the SLA process has been managed. The organisation has felt trusted by the Council and the process of review has not been onerous. Volunteering remains a challenge for the organisation.</i></p> <p>Quote from beneficiary of Home-Start: "Everything feels like it is starting to lift – some days are still tough but not everyday like it used to feel. M is wonderful she is not judgy and makes me laugh. Her visit mid-week makes such a difference as it boosts me through to the weekend when Dad is about to support." - Mum experiencing peri-natal mental health issues, isolation and loneliness.</p>

Organisation: Chipping Norton Theatre

Section	Details	
Organisational Overview	<p>The Theatre Chipping Norton is a vibrant rural arts hub with a clear mission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create and host inspiring performances that enrich lives across Oxfordshire and beyond. To make the arts accessible to everyone—offering support, fostering belonging, and ensuring no one is left out. <p><i>In times of change, the theatre plays a vital role in the community. It offers escapism, connection, and shared experiences, while promoting inclusivity and creating lasting memories. It is more than a theatre, it is a catalyst for social change that champions community cohesion, whilst creating a joyful space for both those taking part in performances and the audience.</i></p>	
Funded Project Aims	<p>The funding from the Council enables 'a programme of socially impactful arts, entertainment and cultural activities with a particular focus on Chipping Norton and surrounding rural communities, by providing activities for beneficiaries across the district. The programme gives particular focus to work with young people, improving health and wellbeing in older and vulnerable people, engaging with disabled people and marginalised groups, and those experiencing social, economic or cultural disadvantage'. Funding is not directed to the mainstream professional programme of performances in the main venue.</p>	
Agreed outcomes and progress in year 1	Agreed outcomes	Progress in year 1
	Work with partners to support vibrant local economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employed a range of self-employed creative practitioners on the programme Delivered 2 large scale community plays attracting large audiences and visitors to the town Provided low cost and free opportunities for young people and adults to support working parents and carers
	Support retention of existing and development of new services and facilities that contribute to the local economy, community wellbeing and cohesion.	<p>The community programme has provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 168 children provided with free arts activities every school holiday 200 Places in Parent Mental Health Support Groups 10,920 free school lunch funding provided 2 large scale community plays performed and produced by 118 individuals 866 Community Theatre Tickets 77 attendees at free school holiday family fun days 52 places in School Holiday Workshops 990 youth theatre places available via bursaries (25%)
	Support the Voluntary and Community Sector to continue to undertake activity which serves the needs of residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convened the Chipping Norton Creatives network bringing together a range of voluntary sector community organisations to discuss challenges and find creative solutions.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked closely with the Branch on the development and provision of activities for vulnerable groups. • Developed a Free School Meal offer during the summer holidays for local school children working in partnership with a range of local support organisations
	Make a dedicated effort to further understand and meet the needs of our young people and support their mental health, including children, teenagers and young adults leaving school, entering the world of work and/or seeking to set up home in the District.	Youth outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Mental Health groups have been a huge success. • Accessible and additional needs Youth Theatre programme provided ahead of schedule to meet the need within the community. • KS3 Cultural days and panto workshops good progress. • Work Experience and Duke of Edinburgh good progress. • Music and Drama sessions for Early years through new provider Little Limelight's up and running.
Key Successes	<p>Creative Mental Health Support Programme including mental health groups and workshops is in place to respond to a high level or need in local schools. The theatre has expanded their work with Chipping Norton School to support years 7, 8, 11 and SEN children with high anxiety, and begun a new partnership with Park School (local special educational mental health school) supporting young people who cannot access mainstream education.</p> <p>The 50th anniversary productions of Lark Rise and Bance Dance saw <i>'ambitious performances transform the auditorium into an Oxfordshire barn, blending local, community actors with professional cast and crew. 118 people were engaged in the creation and performance of these two productions. 42 creatives and community volunteers, 29 community actors, 15 Morris dancers, 11 Chippy choir members, 8 professional actors, 7 Great Company members (adults with additional needs) and 7 local musicians'</i>.</p>	
Challenges Faced and Actions Taken	<p><i>'Additional funding has not yet received via CATS (Cotswold Arts Through Schools) to deliver this Primary School Anti-Bullying Workshops programme but the offer has now gone out to schools in Spring 25. It was decided to put the anti-bullying project materials onto an open-source format and multiple primary schools have reported using the free workshop plans and handouts in schools.'</i></p> <p>Development in some areas of West Oxfordshire, such as Carterton, has been challenging in Year 1.</p>	
Focus for Year 2	<p><i>As part of its commitment to inclusivity and community cohesion, the theatre will expand its core strategy to include dedicated work with older people. A key focus for Years 2 and 3 will be the development of former Highlands Day Centre on Burford Road which will be developed by The Theatre. 'This programme will enable the creation of a new programme aimed at addressing social isolation and enhancing mental wellbeing among older adults. Recognising this as a new area of work, the theatre will actively seek to build meaningful partnerships with organisations within the District that have expertise in engaging older communities. These collaborations will be central to co-hosting and co-developing the programme, ensuring it is shaped by best practice, lived experience, and community needs.'</i></p>	

Support Needed (if any)	<p>The Council can help with getting the message out about the type of work delivered by the Theatre to a wider health/social care audience. Promoting the two short films would be helpful. The Theatre is keen to engage with Councillors, see here for a video that shares The story of social impact at The Theatre.</p> <p>The Council can help to connect with services and support organisations in Carterton.</p>
Officer comments	<p><i>The Theatre has performed well in Year 1 – delivering a really diverse range of socially impactful and inclusive arts activity led by a dedicated and highly creative team– notably the mental health and free school meals programmes. The Theatre team report feeling supported by the Council and that the reporting regime is manageable. The survey of participants has not proved to be a valuable addition in year 1 so we have agreed not to conduct it in year 2 but instead focus on case studies and stories of change.</i></p> <p><i>The Theatre has created two further films hearing from young people taking part in both Mental Health Programme and the Theatre Youth Programme.</i></p>

Organisation: Age UK Oxfordshire

Section	Details	
Organisational Overview	<i>Age UK Oxfordshire is a leading charity that believes every older person should be included and valued. They work locally, nationally and internationally to make that happen. Through campaigning, local support, advice and friendship, their mission is to change the experience of ageing within society.</i>	
Funded Project Aims	The grant is to part-fund the cost of a Community Development Worker for 3 years, to deliver activities and support community development for older people in West Oxfordshire. The role dovetails with the Oxfordshire County Council funded Community Links Oxfordshire contract, which connects people to services, support, activities and opportunities that enable them to maintain their independence, stay healthy, feel less lonely and have opportunities to contribute through volunteering.	
Agreed outcomes and progress in year 1	Agreed outcomes	Progress in year 1
	Having a better understanding of the needs of older people and of what is available for older people locally.	12 pop-up events delivered in towns and villages including Brize Norton, Cassington, and Fulbrook have been delivered. These events provided information, advice, and a friendly face in familiar settings like village shops and community fridges.
	Increasing engagement of local communities in developing solutions to locally identified needs.	Age UK has ‘conducted consultations using resilience-based questions to better understand how older people cope with stress and isolation were carried out across the district. The insights gathered are informing future service design, with plans to focus efforts on Carterton after high levels of need were indicated.’
	Increasing amount of locally, accessible and sustainable support and activities for older people, ultimately building strong resilient and self-supporting communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 groups set up/sustained • The six sessions targeting loneliness and isolation engaged with 140 people and the 10 pop up sessions in local communities engaged with 220 people. • 122 sessions delivered • 2000+ people attending across all sessions
	Increased opportunities for and support of the use of social capital.	In year 1, Age UK report they ‘have expanded opportunities for residents and local groups to build and activate social capital—networks of trust, mutual support, and collaboration that are essential to thriving communities. Through targeted facilitation, they have fostered cross-sector partnerships working with, Local area coordinator and Chipping Norton Theatre, local bus and travel providers and Charity shops and created inclusive spaces for connection at groups and events’

	Formal and informal volunteering opportunities across the generations to support enhanced community cohesion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report does not set out details of this being cross generational. They did reference a very powerful example of the development of a volunteer for whom volunteering has been very impactful. They hope to build this into a case study in Year 2.
	Continued and ever developing partnership working across statutory, voluntary and commercial sectors with reduction in replication or duplication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A partnership event was delivered in April 2025 bringing together colleagues from 12 West Oxfordshire organisations to share local insights and best practice. Collaboration with Carers Oxfordshire and Scam Awareness team at the Celebrating Age event This work continues to build in year 2 as Age UK plan to link in with Witney gospel for nations (GFN) group. <p>They reference a concern that there could be some duplication of effort around partnership meetings and are seeking to explore this further in Year 2</p>
Key Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the national the Age Without Limits campaign, the Age UK Oxfordshire <i>'West Oxfordshire team hosted a joyful and inclusive Celebrating Age Activity Day at Cogges Farm which was a huge success. Over 60 people joined for a day filled with connection, learning, and laughter.</i> <i>'Age UK brought the community together for a Duck Race and Family Fun Day in one of West Oxfordshire's areas of greatest need. Held in collaboration with a local pub, the event welcomed over 100 people of all ages to enjoy a riverside duck race, delicious BBQ, and a host of family-friendly activities.'</i> 	
Challenges Faced and Actions Taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several adults seeking internet support are unable to read or write. This has made it significantly more difficult to provide effective digital assistance, highlighting a need for support or alternative approaches for those with low literacy levels. There have been a series of staff changes across the year which has meant some challenges and interruptions in service. 	
Focus for Year 2	There is an ambition to start Age-Friendly towns initiative in Year 2 but it's unclear from the report of the scale intended and therefore what might be achievable. <i>The report states 'With some initial barriers to start this work (Age UK) are now working with partners to develop age-friendly towns across West Oxfordshire. Meetings with Age UK Hertfordshire and discussion with WODC have laid the groundwork for this long-term vision. Using the Community Insights and speaking to experienced link workers they are going to select one Town and test a pilot.</i>	
Support Needed (if any)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of the Age-Friendly towns initiative would require the engagement and contribution of partners – including WODC. Would like to work with Age UK to build more meaningful measurement reporting into their Year 2 report to show impact including stories of change. 	
Officer comments	<i>During Year 2 we plan to meet more regularly to keep in touch with developments and explore collaborations including the Age Friendly town plans which requires further detail. The staffing changes have obviously been challenging for the team in year 1 but things appear to have settled down and this should be helpful moving forward.</i>	

	<p>Quote from beneficiary of Age UK - <i>“I go to many AUKO groups I live alone and I try to go out as often as possible, I travel to several different AUKO groups around the county as they are friendly and enjoyable, we have fun. I know I can always come to AUKO if I have a problem or need help with anything.”</i></p>
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Organisation: Volunteer Link Up

Section	Details	
Organisational Overview	<p><i>Volunteer Link Up links people who want to help others with those in their community who need the type of support they provide. Their core business is the Community Transportation Service, Befriending/Practical Help Service and Witney Land Army activities. They do not provide a general volunteer brokering service. The grant is solely for the Community Transportation Service element to support the annual cost of delivering the 'core business' to residents of West Oxfordshire. They work alongside a number of village befriending schemes to assist with transportation where required.</i></p>	
Funded Project Aims	<p>The Community Transportation Service supports individuals who cannot travel to urgent appointments, either because they cannot drive or because they have difficulty using public transport. Volunteer drivers use their own cars and are directly paid expenses by the client (currently 45p per mile). They prioritise medical, dental and well-being appointments, therefore supporting improvements in physical, psychological and emotional health, drivers will wait for up to 2 hours for a client at a medical or wellbeing appointment.</p>	
Agreed outcomes and progress in year 1	Agreed outcomes	Progress in year 1
	Number of return journeys	In 2024-25 there were 2399 return journeys completed. This is a 17% increase from 2022-23.
	Number of clients	916 clients are registered for the Community Transport Service
	Number of volunteers	127 volunteers
	Geographical spread of clients	<i>'Witney is the busiest with 32% of our clients living in the town, followed by Carterton with 12.5%, Charlbury with 8.5%, Chipping Norton with 6% and Bampton with 3%. The remaining clients live in the many rural areas of West Oxfordshire.'</i>
	Age of clients	70% are in the 75+ age bracket with 14% aged 66-75.
	Hours delivered by volunteer drivers	<i>'The average journey takes 4 hours of a volunteer's time. Setting aside the many 'on costs' of employing a paid driver, the minimum wage is currently £12.21 per hour. To carry out the 2399 journeys, volunteers gave 5116 hours of their time. If services in West Oxfordshire had to employ these drivers, it would cost £62,466.36 in wages'.</i>
	Cost of journeys	<p>The average journey cost to the client is £11.25. An equivalent taxi fare would be £55.00 rising to £91.00 for a 2 hour wait.</p> <p>The 2399 journeys during this financial year would cost VLU clients £26,988.75 in which Taxi fares would have cost our residents £131,945.00 to £218,309.00.</p>
	Purpose of journey	The majority of journeys are related to health and wellbeing – primarily GP and dental appointments with some trips to attend groups or for shopping
Challenges Faced and Actions Taken	<p>Volunteering is by far the greatest challenge facing Volunteer Link Up. The by-product of advertising for volunteers is increased demand which make things difficult.</p>	

Focus for Year 2	The recruitment and development of volunteers will be a main focus for VLU
Support Needed (if any)	Help with promoting volunteering would be appreciated. Help with digital solutions to map services would also be valuable
Officer comments	<i>VLU is a small and very dedicated team and has continued to deliver a reliable and valued service for which demand has grown over the past 2 years. There is scope for them to be more visible and make better use of digital to demonstrate their reach and impact.</i>

Organisation: Wild Oxfordshire: Grant 1 - Nature Recovery

Section	Details	
Organisational Overview	<p><i>'Wild Oxfordshire is a charity seeking to create a more natural, resilient and biodiverse Oxfordshire for the benefit of all. We catalyse change by identifying conservation need supporting nature recovery action across the County. We collaborate with numerous individuals, communities and organisations, offering expertly curated and inspiring information, bespoke advice, and nature-based solutions. We offer a range of services within West Oxfordshire to enable nature recovery; Community Ecology, Landscape Ecology, and the Evenlode Catchment Partnership.'</i></p>	
Funded Project Aims	<p>The Community Ecology Programme in West Oxfordshire District delivers nature recover working with local communities to enable residents to improve green spaces for wildlife. <i>'The programme will empower local communities to improve spaces for wildlife and help people connect with wildlife on a local scale. The work will not only benefit nature and nature recovery but will also have a positive impact on the wellbeing of individuals and the communities.'</i></p> <p>The funding will contribute to the funding of 0.4 FTE Nature Recovery Specialists - the remaining funding of this FTE is to be covered by matching-funding through a variety of sources.</p>	
Agreed outcomes and progress in year 1	Agreed outcomes	Progress in year 1
	Increased number of greenspaces being managed for nature in West Oxfordshire with an increase in biodiversity.	<p>Worked with the following groups to give advice on enhancing and managing their greenspaces;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bladon Parish Council / Environment Group • Ducklington Parish Council • Kelmscott Manor • Asthall Leigh Parish Council • Stonesfield Environment Group • St Christopher's school in Langford • Witney landowner • WODC Biodiversity Officer <p>All advice given has been put into action, bar one location.</p> <p>Wild Oxfordshire has also given funding and biodiversity policy advice via email and phone to various WODC-based environmental groups, and sign posted to external organisations when appropriate.</p>
	Increased knowledge, confidence, and skills about wildlife within West Oxfordshire's communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 x community group training sessions in Witney on bat and reptile surveying, 90% of attendees reported they would continue to carry out surveys as a result of the training. • Wild Oxfordshire's Local Environment Groups Conference took place and focussed on 'Local to Landscape Nature Recovery Action'.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wild Oxfordshire presented at a Councillor Local Nature Recovery Briefing meeting in November to showcase work taking place across the district.
	Increased nature connectedness for West Oxfordshire's residents which improves community cohesion, health and wellbeing, and sustainable shopping choices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended a total of 7 nature recovery events/talks. • The Hedgerow Heroes project, worked with 10 local groups and parishes across Oxfordshire to plant 3,330m of new hedge this planting season and supported management of 610m of existing hedgerows through gapping up, coppicing and hedge laying. • 1176 volunteer hours were put towards the project, and 10,100 hedgerow whips were planted.
	Continued support and facilitation of county partnerships working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature Recovery Lead and other staff are involved in Oxfordshire's LNRS and associated working groups • Continued to support all Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership (OLNP) working groups, facilitate the Oxfordshire Biodiversity Advisory Group (an OLNP working group). • 2 x Conservation Target Area (CTA) Leads and Friends meetings – this is a forum for conservation groups and land managers in Oxfordshire to exchange ideas, knowledge and information about the management of priority habitats and species within the county's CTAs. • Engaging Communities Round Table meeting with organisations who work with community groups around nature and the environment in Oxfordshire, to foster better collaboration and increase our joint positive impact. • Engagement and training with WODC's Nature Recovery Officers and teams. • Advice to the Lower Windrush Valley Project's new Project Manager.
Key Successes Needed (if any)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of green spaces being managed for nature = 6 (Bladon, Ducklington, Kelmcott, Asthall Leigh, Stonesfield and Witney). These include village greens, roadside verges, schools and other publicly-owned and accessible land, including a chalk grassland, riverside area and copse. • Number of community training events conducted = 2 (bats and reptiles). These were well attended and feedback was very positive. • Number of community events attended in West Oxfordshire = 7, including the Local Environment Groups Conference on 9th November 2024 in Burford, 'Wild about the Wychwoods', Brize Norton's 'Big Bash' and Charlbury's Nature Day • Number of partnership meetings attended and facilitated = 47 • As an example of a project, Hedgerow Heroes totalled 1,176 volunteer hours and 10,100 hedgerow whips being planted in West Oxfordshire. 	

Challenges Faced and Actions Taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wild Oxfordshire community ecology team provide advice to community groups, but it is up to them whether they choose to implement that advice or not. They did have a good response to the survey at the end of 2024 and all but one of the respondents had put their advice into practice at that time. • Advice is also given on funding and biodiversity policies via email and phone to various WODC-based environmental groups, who are signposted to relevant organisations where more specialist or local advice can be found.
Focus for Year 2 Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar work for 2025-26 – ongoing provision of advice to community groups as and when it is requested. • Wildflower survey training session at Kilkenny Lane Country Park and reptile survey training at North Leigh Common. • Storytelling training event
Support Needed (if any)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following-up on statutory biodiversity duty with town and parish councils/meetings and offering Wild Oxfordshire community ecology team for further advice • Regular catch-up meetings with the Wild Oxfordshire team will be set up for 2025-26.
Officer comments	<i>The Wild Oxfordshire Community Ecology team and other members of staff are a vital piece of the jigsaw for providing advice and support for biodiversity and nature recovery projects in the District, including the preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.</i>

Organisation: Wild Oxfordshire: Grant 2 - Evenlode Catchment Partnership

Section	Details	
Organisational Overview	<i>'Wild Oxfordshire is a charity seeking to create a more natural, resilient and biodiverse Oxfordshire for the benefit of all. We catalyse change by identifying conservation need supporting nature recovery action across the County. We collaborate with numerous individuals, communities and organisations, offering expertly curated and inspiring information, bespoke advice, and nature-based solutions. We offer a range of services within West Oxfordshire to enable nature recovery; Community Ecology, Landscape Ecology, and the Evenlode Catchment Partnership.'</i>	
Funded Project Aims	Wild Oxfordshire will be delivering the Evenlode Catchment Partnership (ECP)- a hosting and coordination role to facilitate the delivery of the ECP catchment plan over the next three years with the ECP Project Manager, ECP Project Officer and ECP engagement officer.	
Agreed outcomes and progress in year 1	Agreed outcomes	Progress in year 1
	Provide support and co-ordination for delivery of the catchment plan	Co-ordination and project management by Wild Oxfordshire to ensure the partnership runs as a cohesive unit, without which the partnership would quickly fragment. In 2024-25 they have <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Held frequent working group and steering group meetings to facilitate plan delivery and partnership wide meetings every quarter. The ECP collectively engage with and provide constructive comment on planning issues and policy, water quality and environmental matters. Held quarterly ECP partnership meetings. 120 attendees at the Thames Water SWC celebration and exhibition event 15th March. Held at FarmED, chance to thank all our volunteers and see the work we have delivered over the project 4 years.
	Provide Engagement officer time to assist with community events:	Wild Oxfordshire's Engagement and Project Officers attended local community events, promoted projects through the website and assisted the Education, Recreation and Access team deliver community projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the Local Environment Groups Conference in Burford, ECP Project Manager - Ann Berkeley delivered a webinar as part of the 'Voices of the River' and gave a talk on the ECP.
	Obtain funding and deliver natural flood management, river restoration and wetland creation projects.	Project Manager and Project Officer secured/led on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured £46,000 for river restoration projects from Thames Water; £55,000 for NFM projects from Thames Water and £100,000 for Wetland Creation Grant Scheme from Thames Water. Ascott under Wychwood projects - dependent on landowner buy in. Similar project delivered at Fairspear Hill Farm creating areas where surface water flows can be stored to reduce flood risk

		<p>and to settle out sediments. A further scheme was designed at Fernhill Farm but the landowner pulled out at the last minute.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of an ECP film to help encourage landowners, farmers and communities to engage in NFM - A River Sings. • 4 Wetland Creation Grant Schemes delivered in this period. • Construction of a fish spawning bed at Cornwell, reconnection of a brook at Rynehill.
	Provide support and training for Riverfly Monitoring and other surveys.	Wild Oxfordshire's ECP Project Officer assisted in training and surveying in both riverfly and other surveys (river form and nature) carried out in Cornwell, encouraging locals to monitor their river reaches and increasing the knowledge and records of the river environment and health training. These surveys are very helpful in showing water quality status in terms of river improvement or decline. It is also filling in the gaps in regulatory EA monitoring which there is now far less compared to past decades.
	Provide Engagement Officer time to create 4-5 walks showcasing project work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 walks that take in many ECP projects on their routes have been created and are on the website. • The other route at Wootton was not progressed further because it was discovered that no clear views of our river restoration project were possible from public rights of way.
	Prepare for new governance arrangements as agreed by the Partnership to be in place for the 2025 financial year (year 2 of the Service Level Agreement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interim Terms of Reference are now in place • New Steering group not quite agreed, will be in place by the beginning of May. • New Chair of ECP to be in place by the beginning of May
Key Successes Needed (if any)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination and management of large environmental improvement projects on behalf of partners, including working group and steering group meetings, and fundraising. • River restoration and natural flood management projects, e.g. Bledington • Water Restoration Fund – Ascott under Wychwood focus for river restoration and natural flood management delivery, including the creation of surface water flow storage areas to reduce flood risk at Fairspear Hill Farm • Continued support for Earthwatch riverfly surveys and training of volunteers – key focus on monitoring individual sewage treatment works to get more detailed information on water quality and pollution incidents. • Big Give Green Match Fund – a week of fundraising with the launch of the film 'A River Sings' in Chipping Norton to encourage farmers, landowners and communities to engage in natural flood management • Wetland Creation Grant Scheme (£100k funding obtained): engaged with landowners to provide assistance in designing projects and applying for consents; four schemes delivered, e.g. construction of fish spawning bed at Cornwell and reconnection of brook at Rynehill. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education: attendance at community natural flood management events – e.g. Moreton in Marsh community day and talks provided, e.g. Local Environment Groups Conference in Burford
Challenges Faced and Actions Taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water restoration fund awarded, which meant that lots of partnership and working group meetings were held to establish where this would be spent, so overhaul of catchment plan had to be postponed. ELMS knowledge exchange was not delivered, as DEFRA had not published the required details.
Focus for Year 2 Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New whole catchment plan Steering group rejuvenated with new Chairperson – new governance arrangements to be put in place
Support Needed (if any)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation on planning applications within the catchment to highlight where development proposals may impact on projects and habitat creation, e.g. natural flood management schemes – system to be set up.
Officer comments	<p><i>It is amazing how much the ECP team have been able to deliver in the first year of the SLA and 'A River Sings' is a great showcase for the types of environmental projects that have come to fruition. These provide multiple benefits for nature, climate and people. It is a testament to the dedication of the ECP Project Manager and the rest of the team. We are very grateful for their hard work and look forward to hearing more about what they've been able to achieve in Year 2.</i></p>

Organisation: Wychwood Forest Trust LTD

Section	Details	
Organisational Overview	<p>Wychwood Forest Trust LTD (WFT) work with local communities to protect and restore the spaces once part of the historic Wychwood Forest - 120 square miles and 41 parishes of West Oxfordshire. They acquire land considered degraded and give it the space it needs to become a nature reserve of tomorrow. The organisation also run projects promoting the Wychwood's unique cultural identity. With a wide array of events - from traditional rural skills courses and regular volunteering opportunities to a bustling Forest Fair - engage diverse local groups with the natural world around them.</p>	
Funded Project Aims	<p><i>'WFT manages a diverse range of countryside and habitat conservation and restoration activities that provide the residents of West Oxfordshire with both high-quality, accessible places to enjoy the numerous benefits of contact with the natural world, and also offer broad choice of opportunities to genuinely and constructively be involved in effecting positive change – the impact of their work couldn't be reached without the support of hundreds of volunteers each year.'</i></p>	
Agreed outcomes and progress in year 1	Agreed outcomes for year 1	Progress in year 1
	Submit development grant application to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for Windrush in Witney project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed relationships with further cultural partners for the project, including the surviving Witney/Burford woollen mill, and through the SLA process have had positive discussions with Chipping Norton Theatre. Both new contacts and potential collaborations have the potential to strengthen the social heritage aspects of the project. Most of the required consultation for this stage of the application has been undertaken. The project has been the subject of two public engagement talks during the year and been used as a proposal landscape repair case study for more technically informed audiences. Currently working towards the August deadline for submission of the development grant application to NLHF, although deadlines are rolling and quarterly, have no bearing on assessment, and the application will not be submitted until we are confident that it is ready. <i>'It's thought there has been some confusion over the mechanics, application stages and lifespan of a NLHF project such as this. These are the early stages of a minimum five-year, c.£2m commitment, where WFT as the applying non-profit will shoulder all the reputational and financial risk. It is also one that WFT would be doing without inclusion in the SLA.'</i>
	Promote Gibbets Hill as a vanguard nature recovery research project for West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the year the site has been visited by the LNP team, most of the key regional representatives of the DEFRA agencies, and by many professional and community groups active across West Oxon and beyond seeking knowledge and inspiration.

	Oxfordshire within the emerging county Local Nature Recovery Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Oxford University ecosystem restoration research collaboration at the site is now operational and recording data across four research plots. A suite of physical, chemical and bioacoustics monitoring is under way. Expert-led tours of the project for the public have been held regularly throughout the year, averaging two per month and 25 people each time.
	Wetland creation at Gibbets Hill and tour of site for WODC Councillors and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wetland habitat repair project assessed and designed with the Freshwater Habitats Trust. 9 substantial wetland habitats created. Rapid early colonisation by pioneer invertebrate and amphibian species has occurred.
	Agree Heads of Terms for a management agreement with WODC for Barnes Meadow in central Witney. Convene a public meeting to establish an acceptable and agreed set of site management principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After initial informal discussions about WFT involvement in the future management of Barnes Meadow following WODC/community purchase, draft Heads of Terms (HoT) were supplied. Whilst broadly acceptable in principle, as outlined previously the land has some public sensitivities, and needs to dovetail with the broader landscape management principles of the NLHF project in the future. A public meeting in November gathered views on future management of Barnes Meadow, with strong opinions expressed over internal stock fencing. Around 40 responses informed draft management principles. Subject to agreeing a management approach the HoT will be revisited and address the boundary and other responsibility considerations.
	Oversee management and support volunteer groups at Kilkenny Country Park during recruitment for WODC Nature Recovery Officer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WFT coordinated and oversaw work parties for the local group during the interim period at the beginning of the year. When in post the two new officers were introduced to the group and then supported for several months as they gained confidence. The group is now under the supervision of the remaining WODC officer, with logistical support, equipment and advice provided as required from WFT.
Key Successes Needed (if any)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gibbets Hill Nature Reserve – good promotion with various partners and other organisations, including regional representatives from DEFRA agencies and community groups seeking knowledge and inspiration; and ongoing academic research collaboration, wetland habitat creation Barnes Meadow – agreed to take on the management of this new WODC-owned area which is located next to Grimes Meadow (owned and managed by WFT); public meetings and consultation carried out; initial management approach agreed with WODC. Support for volunteer group at Kilkenny Lane Country Park provided, including habitat management advice and leading work parties. 	
Challenges Faced and Actions Taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff turnover – 3 key people involved in project development within WODC, Lower Windrush Valley Project and at Wychwood Forest Trust – slow progress with the Windrush in Witney development bid application to the National Lottery. Bid will be 	

	submitted slightly later than hoped, but the aim is to make sure that it is robust and thorough. Work will continue on this project in Year 2.
Focus for Year 2 Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windrush in Witney project development bid application to National Lottery • Site visit to Gibbetts Hill Nature Reserve for WODC Members and Officers • Barnes Meadow management – removal of fence, ongoing community liaison and initial management implemented • Continued advice and support for biodiversity enhancements at Kilkenny Lane Country Park
Support Needed (if any)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windrush in Witney Project – support from WODC ecology team with the initial application
Officer comments	<i>Wychwood Forest Trust are one of the council's key partners and they carry out a wide range of actions that respond to the nature and climate emergencies, as well as supporting local people. The rewilding of Gibbetts Hill Nature Reserve is an inspiration to us all about what can be achieved by letting nature do what it does best and the Council is proud to support this project.</i>

Organisation: Low Carbon Hub IPD LTD

Section	Details	
Organisational Overview	<p>Low Carbon Hub is a social enterprise committed to demonstrating that it is possible to meet energy needs in a way that benefits both people and the planet. Recognising the decline of fossil fuels and the accelerating shift toward renewable energy, Low Carbon Hub advocates for the development of a new energy system that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritises renewable generation and energy efficiency to reduce carbon emissions • Ensures that energy spending delivers greater value for communities and strengthens the local economy • Encourages the growth of locally-owned community energy projects, empowering local people • Enhances the health and comfort of homes, businesses, and community buildings • Embraces smart and flexible technologies to maximise future innovations 	
Funded Project Aims	<p>The funding will go towards resourcing a project team at the Low Carbon Hub to deliver the first plan period for the Cuckoo Lane CAPZero. The team includes: a project manager; a community engagement manager; an administrator; and oversight from Dr Barbara Hammond the Senior Responsible Officer for the project.</p>	
Agreed outcomes and progress in year 1	Agreed outcomes	Progress in year 1
	<p>Governance: Establish governance structure and delivery model to enable the long-term implementation of a 'Community Action Plan for Zero-Carbon Energy'.</p> <p>Domestic retrofit; 50 homes in Cuckoo Lane Primary Substation Area to effective whole house retrofit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAPZero initiative has built broad community representation into its governance system through membership of the Stewardship Group and working groups with proposed improvements to the system as they progress into the second year. Terms of reference, minutes, risks, issues and learning logs are maintained for the project. • The approach to domestic retrofit engagement in Year 1 relied upon close collaboration, in particular with RetrofitWorks, who deliver the Cosy Homes Oxfordshire service in partnership with Low Carbon Hub, and Oxfordshire County Council, who were responsible for the delivery of the 'HUG2' affordable warmth funding for domestic energy efficiency improvements to eligible properties • Analysis of Low Carbon Hub and wider activities in the area shows that the target of at least 50 households beginning their retrofit journey has been exceeded. • Three case studies of properties in the CAPZero area, two of which have had a Cosy Homes Oxfordshire Whole House Plan and implemented measures, have been published on the website and promoted in the CAPZero newsletter and community communications. One further case study is in progress.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low Carbon Hub worked with Oxfordshire County Council to identify properties that were likely to be eligible for HUG2 funding and created tailored communications with the aim of increasing take up of this publicly funded scheme. They have ended year 1 with more clarity about what residents want and need to enable retrofit locally; good progress in collecting accurate monitoring data; enthusiastic participation from Cosy Homes Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire County Council and local community groups; and ideas and positivity about a calendar of domestic-retrofit-focussed engagement in Year 2.
	Engagement of non-domestic; recruit 10 businesses to develop an energy strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Year 1, the focus was on engaging local businesses with free energy assessments offered by Energy Solutions Oxfordshire (ESOx), promoted through partner channels and direct outreach. Whilst energy assessments and carbon reduction reports have not been produced in Year 1, foundations have been laid for this work to build in Year 2. In addition, 9 x businesses/organisations in the Primary Substation Area (PSA) have taken action.
Key Successes	A key success from Year 1 has been the formation of two new community groups, formed explicitly with the purpose of supporting net zero in the local area through CAPZero implementation. Freeland Energy Group formed early in the year, as an offshoot of Freeland Parish Council, and Go Green Hanborough, led by WODC Executive Member for Environment, Lidia Arciszewska, launched in March 2025.	
Challenges Faced and Actions Taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging residents and businesses to take up greener practices, for example retrofit their homes and premises. A range of engagement methods have been tried and tested, with the aim of identifying barriers and finding creative solutions to remove these. 	
Focus for Year 2	<p>Existing domestic demand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All households eligible for funding are supported in securing it. Inspire and motivate households to retrofit by sharing tangible examples and “how to”. Build the capability of community groups to support households. Enable and encourage behaviour change to reduce demand reduction/peak demand. Enable and encourage access to privately funded retrofit delivery. <p>Non-domestic demand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to financial support. Encourage and enable small businesses and non-domestic organisations to access ESOx and other support. Normalise measuring and proactive reduction in energy demand. Proactive engagement to support realisation of solar and battery potential. <p>New build and planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage press and developers regarding LETI standards. Ensure LETI standards included in Local Plans and wider planning regulations. Support active community engagement in planning. 	

	<p>Large-scale clean energy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend the 12 Acre Farm money, create benefit, tell everyone about it. • Influence to maximise community benefit from Botley West. <p>Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support LCWIP development • Promotion of active transport, car clubs and shared transport • Support private and public EV charge points • Watching brief of the P&R <p>Nature recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with the Nature Recovery Network, support the work of local actors and promote opportunities for involvement in existing activities. • Include nature recovery in events, for example open homes and gardens. • Join up all nature recovery threads within CAPZero. • Collect data and develop a method for monitoring nature-based activities in the area. • Clear guidance for all new developments.
Support Needed (if any)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WODC officers will continue to be involved in the project Steering Group and working groups and facilitate the link between CAPZero and the Oxfordshire local area energy planning, wider retrofit work, the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041, and the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
Officer comments	<p><i>CAPZero is a groundbreaking project that is modelling how a cluster of communities in West Oxfordshire can create a zero-carbon energy system in their local area, in a way that works for them. It is a plan developed by community representatives together with experts. Good foundations have been laid in Year 1, and it is now hoped that the project implementation phase will start to accelerate climate action across residents and businesses in the PSA. Further work is also needed to develop a robust CAPZero model for other PSAs so that there can be more CAPZeros in Oxfordshire within the next year.</i></p>