



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

CLIMATE ACTION for West Oxfordshire

Managing our green spaces with nature in mind

In June 2019, West Oxfordshire District Council declared a climate and ecological emergency. In 2020, our “Your Views” survey told us that residents placed great value in biodiversity and so “The Protection and Restoration of Natural Ecosystems” became a leading theme in the Council’s Climate Change Strategy published in 2021. In our bid to build back greener following the pandemic, the Council’s local recovery plan gave resource to developing Land Management Plans for sites within our stewardship.

We have an estimated 106ha of green space which includes parks, fields greens and public open spaces within estates. Twelve sites have been selected for their wildlife value and are the focus of our Land Management Plans which outline upcoming changes in our management approach, aimed at benefitting wildlife and access to nature across the District.



Who manages our green spaces?

Our grounds maintenance contractor, Ubico, manage our sites for us. They carry out activities such as grass cutting, cutting back encroaching vegetation from footpaths and litter picking sites to keep them clean and tidy.

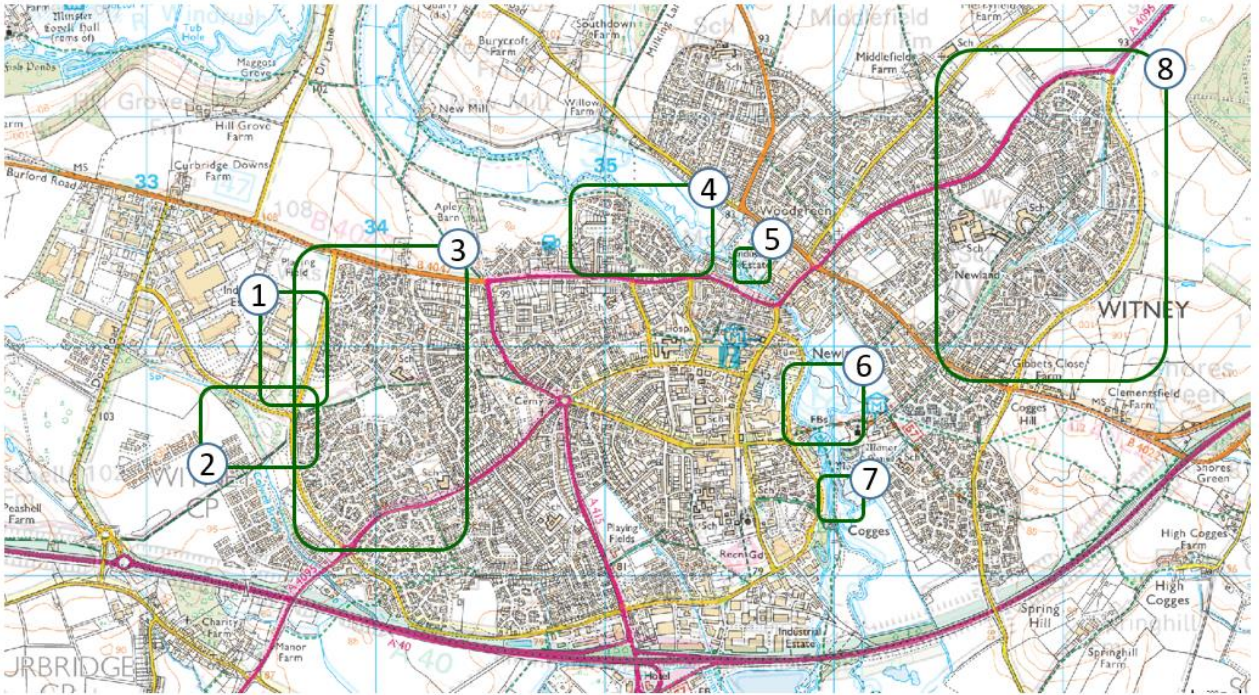
We also have two fantastic teams of volunteers that work alongside Ubico – the Witney Woodland Volunteers who work at Deer Park Wood and the Friends of North Leigh Common who manage their namesake.

We will continue to work with all of these teams, and would like to set up a new volunteer group to make sure our land is being well managed for local wildlife and those visiting the sites.

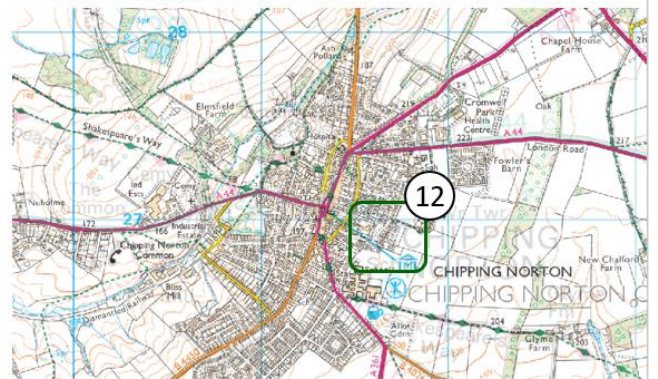
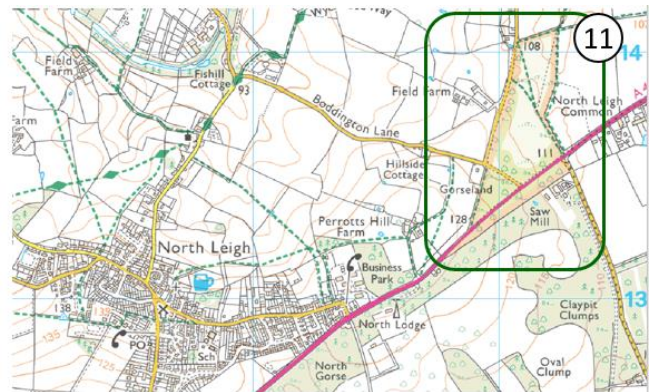
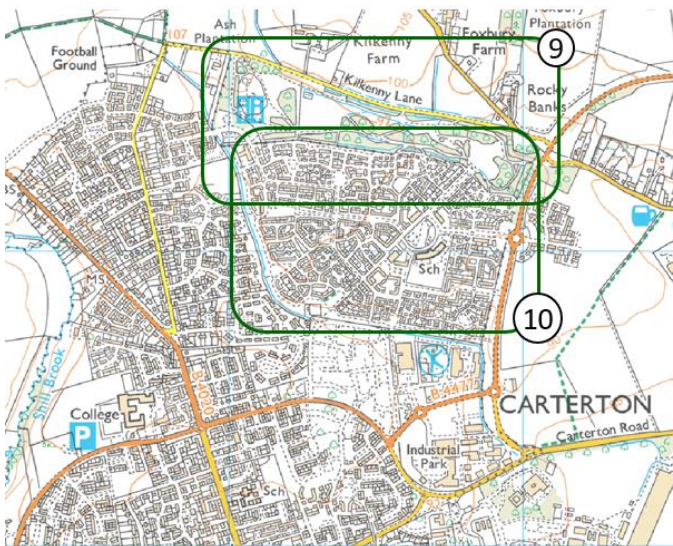
Tell us your thoughts...

We want to keep you both informed of our future Land Management Plans and provide you with an opportunity to send us your feedback. [CLICK HERE](#)

Key Council owned and managed green spaces

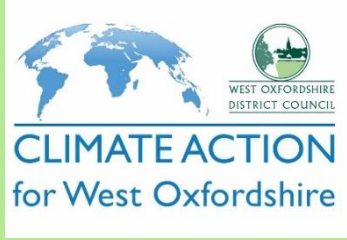


1	Deer Park Wood	3	Deer Park estate	5	Millers Mews	7	Bishops Farm Mill
2	Deer Park South	4	Bathing Place estate	6	Langel Common	8	Madley Park Estate



9	Kilkenny Lane Country Park	11	North Leigh Common
10	Shilton Park	12	Rowell Lane estate

Deer Park Wood



WODC site number: 1
Grid reference: SP336100
Land area: 3.7ha

What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Continue working with the Witney Woodland Volunteers to maintain the site's habitats
- Improve the quality of the site's central grassland area and road verges
- Restore areas where ash dieback works have occurred



Site description

Deer Park Wood is made up of a mosaic of habitats: a linear area of grassland runs north-south through the site, with mature woodland around its edge. There are also hedgerows, hazel coppice, a small orchard, and wildflower meadow areas, all of which provide excellent breeding and foraging opportunities for local wildlife. This site is managed by the Witney Woodland Volunteers, who run regular work parties to ensure it is well maintained for both people and wildlife.

We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is the largest area of woodland within Witney, a habitat that is scarce in the area. It is a remnant of the royal deer park that was present until the mid 16th century.
- It is home to many species with declining populations, such as hedgehogs, bats and a wide variety of birds.
- There are many interesting flora, with several species of orchid seen both within the site and just outside it on the road verge.
- It is well used by the public: its circular path is used by residents and Witney Parkrun, its central area is used by the local Forest School group.



Deer Park Wood

We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Removing the grass clippings after the grassland's central area is cut to reduce the soil fertility and encourage further wildflower diversity.
- Reducing the number of grass cuts from seven to four along the road verge, with the aim of timing cuts to allow common and bee orchids to grow.
- Removing internal areas of redundant rabbit fencing, to aid the movement of larger mammal species such as hedgehogs and badgers across the site.
- Giving the Witney Woodland Volunteers additional support with members from the WODC grounds maintenance team to complete larger works such as tree management.



We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Replace trees affected by ash dieback with new saplings in keeping with the site's existing tree stock.
- Install a new information panel for visitors to the site about its wildlife, habitats and management.
- Install a box for tawny owls, to increase nesting habitat availability for this species.
- Provide the Witney Woodland Volunteers with new equipment and ecological training.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Wood production – Carbon storage – Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation – Nature education



Deer Park South

WODC site number: 2
Grid reference: SP335096
Land area: 6.7ha

What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Work with the Witney Woodland Volunteers to maintain the site's habitats, whilst keeping a wild feel
- Enhance the habitats along Colwell Brook for species such as water vole and fish
- Improve the condition of the site's woodland areas



Site description

The site is made up of a mosaic of habitats: a balancing pond is located in the middle of the site (not owned by WODC, owned by...), and is surrounded by woodland, scrub and grassland habitats. Colwell Brook runs north to south through the site, and goes on to join the River Windrush. The habitats have received little maintenance attention in recent years, and there are no formalized footpaths around the site. The site has a 'wild' feel as a result with several overgrown areas.

We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is home to many species with declining populations with its overgrown and unmanaged habitats, such as hedgehogs, invertebrates and a wide variety of birds.
- It contains a range of interesting flora, with orchids having previously been recorded on the road verge to the north.
- Colwell Brook is an important freshwater habitat where water voles have previously been recorded along its length.
- These habitats provide a number of ecosystem services, such as improving and regulating water quality, mitigating flood risk and increasing carbon storage.



Deer Park South



Before



After

We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Reducing the number of grass cuts from seven to four along the road verge, with the aim of timing cuts to allow common and bee orchids to grow.
- Removing internal areas of redundant rabbit fencing, to aid the movement of larger mammal species such as hedgehogs and badgers across the site.
- Giving the Witney Woodland Volunteers formal access to manage the site, with a management plan to follow and support from members of the WODC grounds maintenance team on larger works such as tree thinning.

We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Change the site's levels for improved water discharge from Colwell Brook into the balancing pond, to reduce floodwater volumes in the brook and improve the pond for wildlife.
- Install a new information panel for visitors to the site about its wildlife, habitats and management.
- Manage the grassland in the small eastern glade of the site, and plant orchard trees within the newly managed space.
- Restore the dry stone wall along the southern boundary of the site, to create foraging habitat for birds and encourage reptiles to inhabit the site.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Flood protection – Carbon storage – Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation – Water supply



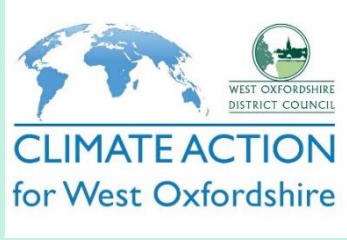
Before



After

Deer Park estate

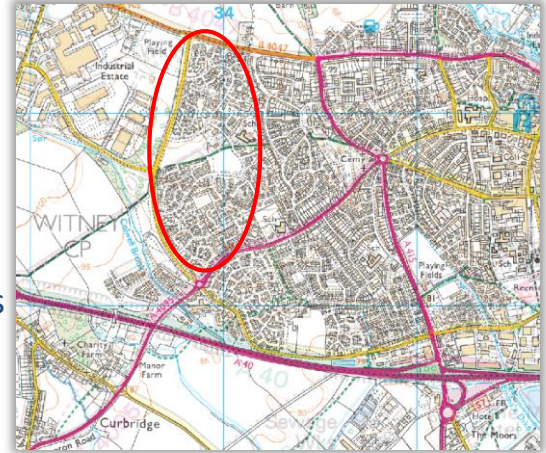
WODC site number: 3
Grid reference: SP338094
Land area: 11.6ha



What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Maintain the site in a way that can be enjoyed by people and wildlife alike
- Manage grassland areas to improve the floral resources for pollinators such as bees and butterflies
- Improve the site's connectivity with new habitat features



Site description

The land owned by WODC at Deer Park consists mostly of short grassland areas and road verges: some of these areas are planted with trees and shrubs in places. Two large recreation grounds are located centrally within the Deer Park. Trees planted when the estate was built form woodland areas along the site's boundary and in pockets within the site. Its proximity to Deer Park Wood to the west makes it likely visited by a wide range of bird and insect species.

We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is well used by the public, with paths through the green spaces around the site used by local residents.
- The woodland and shrub areas provide breeding and foraging habitat for local bird and invertebrate populations, and provide shelter for mammals such as hedgehogs.
- The estate's vegetation corridors extend in several directions from the site, providing habitat connectivity towards Witney and the wider countryside and allowing wildlife to travel safely across the landscape.



Deer Park estate



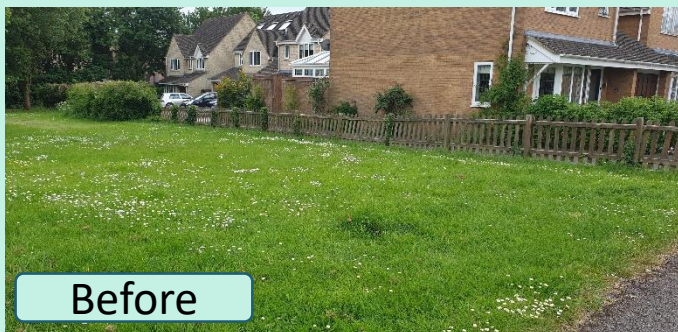
We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Reducing the number of grass cuts across the estate from ten to seven, to allow flowers such as daisies, clover and buttercups more opportunities to fully grow and act as pollen and nectar sources for foraging pollinators.
- Creating “mini meadow” areas in strategic locations, allowing grass and existing flowers to grow longer over the summer before cutting and collecting the clippings.
- Embedding regular checks and maintenance activities of areas that have been affected by subsidence due to vegetation growth into the grounds maintenance schedule, to prevent future damage occurring.

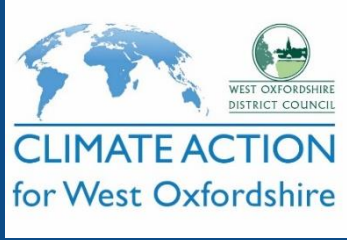
We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Enhance the new meadow grassland areas with wildflower seed mix or plug plants for increased floral diversity, encouraging more pollinators to visit.
- Plant native hedgerows in strategic locations to increase berry and nut provision for bird and mammal populations, and increase habitat connectivity for species such as bats and birds to travel safely across the estate.
- Coppice trees within the woodland areas to diversify woodland age structure and accommodate different invertebrate and bird species.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Wood production – Carbon storage – Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation



Bathing Place estate



WODC site number: 4
Grid reference: SP351104
Land area: 6.2ha

What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Maintain the site in a way that can be enjoyed by people and wildlife alike
- Create new habitats to improve the floral resources for pollinators such as bees and butterflies
- Improve the site's woodland and riverside areas for priority species

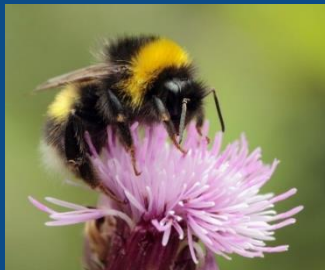


Site description

The land owned by WODC at the Bathing Place Estate consists primarily of woodland areas, which extend along the western boundary and then along the southern bank of the River Windrush. These habitats, although generally currently under-managed, are important breeding and foraging areas for birds, mammals and insects. The historic Bathing Place, once an open air swimming spot, sits in the north west of the estate. A path runs east to a footbridge over a weir and towards the Windrush's floodplain meadows.

We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is well used by the public, with paths through the green spaces around the site used by local residents.
- The riverbank and woodland provide natural habitats for many plant and animal species, many of which have UK BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) priority status such as water vole and otters.
- It sits within the "recovery zone" of Oxfordshire's Nature Recovery Network, an area identified to have importance for landscape connectivity.



Bathing Place estate



We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Reducing the number of grass cuts across the estate from ten to seven, to allow flowers such as daisies, clover and buttercups more opportunities to fully grow and act as pollen and nectar sources for foraging pollinators.
- Creating “mini meadow” areas in strategic locations, allowing grass and existing flowers to grow longer over the summer before cutting and collecting the clippings.
- Coppicing trees within the woodland areas to diversify tree age structure and accommodate a wider variety of insect and bird species.

We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Enhance the new meadow grassland areas with wildflower seed mix or plug plants for increased floral diversity, encouraging more pollinators to visit.
- Remove the redundant tree guards within the recently planted woodland areas.
- Re-cover the exposed artificial badger sett within the riverside woodland to encourage this priority species to the site.
- Formalize the path within the riverside woodland to allow better resident access.
- Clear the balancing pond within the riverside woodland area to re-instate its function as a drainage feature, improving its value for wildlife.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Flood protection – Carbon storage – Cooling and shading – Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation



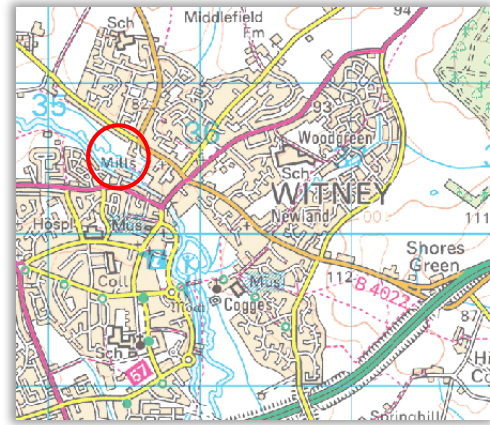
Millers Mews

WODC site number: 5
Grid reference: SP356103
Land area: 0.7ha

What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Maintain the existing wildlife value of the site
- Attract nature’s pollinators by creating new areas of flower-rich meadow habitat
- Enhance the natural riverside environment as a wildlife haven



Site description

The site is part of a network of floodplain meadows that runs north and east of Witney - the River Windrush runs along the southerly edge of the site. Riparian and floodplain meadow are valued natural features of the existing landscape attracting UK priority species such as water vole and kingfishers. Trees and native hedgerows provide a natural boundary that surrounds the site, enclosing an area of tall grassland.

We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is part of an important network of floodplain meadows in Witney.
- The riverbank and floodplain meadows provide natural habitats for many plant and animal species, many of which have UK BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) priority status.
- It sits within the “core zone” of Oxfordshire’s Nature Recovery Network, of county importance.
- There is potential to conserve and restore further an important habitat that offers a number of ecosystem services which include improving and regulating water quality, mitigating flood risk, increasing carbon storage and providing habitats for biodiversity.



Millers Mews



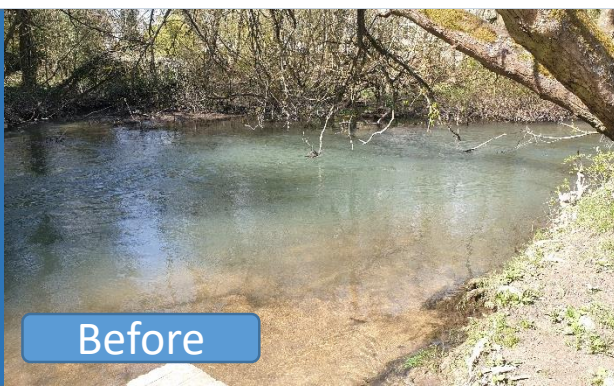
We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Increasing the number of times we cut the grass each year, from one to three, collecting and removing these cuttings to maximise flower diversity over time. This is designed to mimic historic techniques of floodplain meadow management and help restore the quality of natural habitat over time.
- Cutting back hedgerow lines and encroaching brambles to increase the total area of grassland.
- Clearing larger deadwood dropping from the bankside trees so we are reducing the chance of deadwood entering the river and becoming a flood risk.

We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Manage the trees along the River Windrush to create willow pollards, emulating a historical landscape feature.
- Introduce locally-sourced wildflower seeds from high-quality floodplain meadow sites to increase floral diversity and establish rare plant communities. This can be done by a practice called “green hay spreading”.
- Restore the quality of natural habitat within the ditches connecting with the River Windrush to attract greater numbers of wetland flora and fauna.
- Establish reed beds in the River Windrush as new water vole and waterfowl foraging and breeding habitat.

Co-Benefits: Carbon storage – Improved local air quality – Reduced flood risk - Access to nature – Health & wellbeing



Langel Common

WODC site number: 6
Grid reference: SP359097
Land area: 3.7ha



What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Attract nature's pollinators by restoring the grassland to a flower-rich meadow habitat
- Enhance the natural riverside environment as a wildlife haven and eradicate invasive species
- Improve the tree management within woodland areas



Site description

The site is part of a network of floodplain meadows that runs north and east of Witney - the River Windrush runs along the eastern edge of the site. Riparian and floodplain meadows are valued natural features of the existing landscape attracting UK priority species such as water vole and kingfishers. The grassland is currently low in diversity, and invasive Himalayan balsam is present along the river bank. The path through the riverside woodland is well used by the public, and is an important habitat for nesting birds.

We value this site as a natural asset because:

- The large grassland area forms an important part of the network of floodplain meadows in Witney.
- It is of county importance, sitting within the "core zone" of Oxfordshire's Nature Recovery Network and has habitats for many UK priority species.
- The site is a key green space in Witney, with thousands of visits a year from local residents and tourists to the town.
- Restoring the habitats enhances a number of ecosystem services, such as improving and regulating water quality, mitigating flood risk and increasing carbon storage.



Langel Common



We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Increasing the number of times we cut the grass each year, from one to three, collecting and removing these cuttings to improve floral diversity over time. This is designed to mimic historic techniques of floodplain meadow management and help restore the quality of natural habitat over time.
- Letting the short grass to the north of the footpath grow back and cutting back bankside scrub to maximize the grassland restoration area.
- Reducing the area covered by the invasive Himalayan Balsam plant, in order to allow native riparian vegetation to flourish.

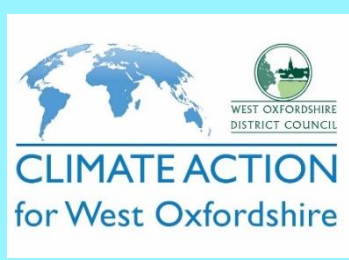
We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Introduce locally-sourced wildflower seeds from high-quality floodplain meadow sites to increase floral diversity and establish rare plant communities. This can be done by a practice called “green hay spreading.”
- Manage the woodland along the River Windrush to create willow pollards, and coppice areas to diversify woodland age structure to attract difference insect communities.
- Improve the Riverside Walk footpath and install a new information panel.
- Completely eradicate Himalayan Balsam from the site, restoring the ditches along the northern and eastern boundaries for small mammals and invertebrates.
- Establish reed beds in the southern area of the sites as water vole and waterfowl foraging habitat.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Reduced flood risk – Pollination – Flood water storage – Habitat connectivity – Recreation – Nature education



Bishops Farm Mill



WODC site number: 7
Grid reference: SP360092
Land area: 0.7ha

What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Maintain the existing wildlife value of the site
- Attract nature’s pollinators by creating new areas of flower-rich meadow habitat
- Enhance the natural riverside environment as a wildlife haven and eradicate invasive species



Site description

The site is part of a network of floodplain meadows that runs north and east of Witney - the River Windrush runs along the eastern and southerly edge of the site. Riparian and floodplain meadows are valued natural features of the existing landscape attracting UK priority species such as water vole and kingfishers. The grassland is currently relatively low in diversity, and Himalayan balsam, an invasive species, is present along the scrubby river bank.

We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is part of an important network of floodplain meadows in Witney.
- The riverbank and floodplain meadow provide natural habitats for many plant and animal species, many of which have UK BAP status.
- It sits within the “core zone” of Oxfordshire’s Nature Recovery Network, of county importance.
- There is potential to conserve and restore further important habitats that offer a number of ecosystem services which include improving and regulating water quality, mitigating flood risk, increasing carbon storage and providing habitats for biodiversity.



Bishops Farm Mill

We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Increasing the number of times we cut the grass each year, from one to three, collecting and removing these cuttings to improve floral diversity over time. This is designed to mimic historic techniques of floodplain meadow management and help restore the quality of natural habitat over time.
- Cutting back encroaching scrub and brambles to increase the total area of grassland.
- Reducing the area covered by the invasive Himalayan Balsam plant, in order to allow UK native riparian vegetation to flourish.



Before




After


We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Introduce locally-sourced wildflower seeds from high-quality floodplain meadow sites to increase floral diversity and establish rare plant communities. This can be done by a practice called “green hay spreading”.
- Manage the trees along the River Windrush to create willow pollards, emulating a historical landscape feature.
- Liaise with local landowners to review maintenance activities on adjoining sites, for a joined up and consistent approach to managing the floodplain meadows.
- Completely eradicate Himalayan Balsam from the site, to stop its spread south of the River Windrush.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Reduced flood risk – Pollination – Flood water storage – Habitat connectivity



Before



After

Madley Park estate

WODC site number: 8
Grid reference: SP370104
Land area: 18.6ha



What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Maintain the site in a way that can be enjoyed by people and wildlife alike
- Manage grassland areas to improve the floral resources for pollinators such as bees and butterflies
- Improve the site's connectivity with new habitat features



Site description

The land owned by WODC at Madley Park consists mostly of short grassland areas and road verges – some of these areas are planted with trees and shrubs in places. A strip of woodland runs down the middle of the estate, sheltering Madley Brook that flows north to south and feeds into River Windrush at its end. Several other woodland areas are present along the estate's boundaries, providing important breeding and foraging habitats for birds, mammals and invertebrates.

We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is well used by the public, with paths through the green spaces around the site used by local residents.
- Freshwater habitats such as Madley Brook and the balancing ponds are particularly valuable to wildlife; otters have previously been recorded along the watercourse. The woodland areas also support a wide range of priority species such as birds and bats.
- The estate's vegetation corridors extend in several directions from the site, providing habitat connectivity towards Witney and the wider countryside and allowing wildlife to travel safely across the landscape.



Madley Park estate

We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Reducing the number of grass cuts across the estate from ten to seven, to allow flowers such as daisies, clover and buttercups more opportunities to fully grow and act as pollen and nectar sources for foraging pollinators.
- Creating “mini meadow” areas in strategic locations, allowing grass and existing flowers to grow longer over the summer before cutting and collecting the clippings.
- Managing the reed bed and scrub surrounding the balancing pond, to ensure safe access to the water when required and control willow tree growth.



Before



After

We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Enhance the new meadow grassland areas with wildflower seed mix or plug plants for increased floral diversity, encouraging more pollinators to visit.
- Plant native hedgerows in strategic locations to increase habitat connectivity for species such as bats and birds to travel safely across the estate.
- Remove the redundant tree guards within the recently planted woodland areas of the site, to reduce the risk of wildlife consuming plastics.
- Coppice trees within the woodland areas to diversify tree age structure and accommodate a wider variety of insect and bird species.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Flood protection – Carbon storage –
Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation



Before



After

Kilkenny Lane Country Park



WODC site number: 9
Grid reference: SP284084
Land area: 20ha

What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Maintain the existing wildlife value of the site
- Attract nature's pollinators by creating restoring and diversifying areas of flower-rich meadow habitat
- Improve the condition of the mature scrub areas



Site description

The site consists of a mix of habitats, with large areas of grassland making up most of the site; dense scrub/woodland, hedgerow, scattered trees, ditches and ponds are also present, making the site suitable for a wide range of species.

A playground is located in the east of the site with an associated carpark. The grassland areas are cut once a year, and the cuttings removed to allow more wildflowers to grow.

We value this site as a natural asset because:


- The site is home to many species with declining local populations, such as hedgehogs, bats and a variety of birds such as woodpeckers and goldcrests.
- The site's grasslands contain a range of interesting flora, with several species of rare wildflowers and orchids present in the summer months attracting many insects.
- It is well used by the public - paths around the site are used by local residents, dog walkers and those who come to visit the play park.
- The site acts as a drainage feature for the neighboring Shilton Park estate— as well as capturing floodwater runoff, the balancing ponds are also valuable wildlife habitats.




Kilkenny Lane Country Park

We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Enhancing an area of grassland with wildflower seeds, to increase its floral resources for pollinators.
- Increasing and decreasing cutting regimes in different areas of grassland, to create a diverse mosaic of flowers for a wide range of insects to use.
- Removing internal areas of redundant rabbit fencing, to aid the movement of larger mammal species such as hedgehogs and badgers across the site.
- Clearing vegetation from the site's balancing ponds to ensure they continue to function as sustainable drainage features.



Before



After


We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Set up a new volunteer group, and organize regular habitat maintenance work parties, for tasks such as coppicing, litter picking, tree guard removal and scything.
- Install a nature trail with associated activity pages for children, to inform visitors to the site about its wildlife, habitats and management.
- Introduce locally-sourced wildflower seeds from high-quality floodplain meadow sites to increase floral diversity and establish rare plant communities. This can be done by a practice called “green hay spreading.”
- Undertake soil surveys to better inform how to maximize the wildflower growth within the grassland areas.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation – Nature education – Flood prevention

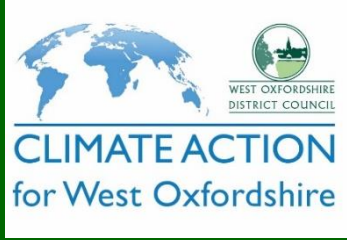


Before



After

Shilton Park estate

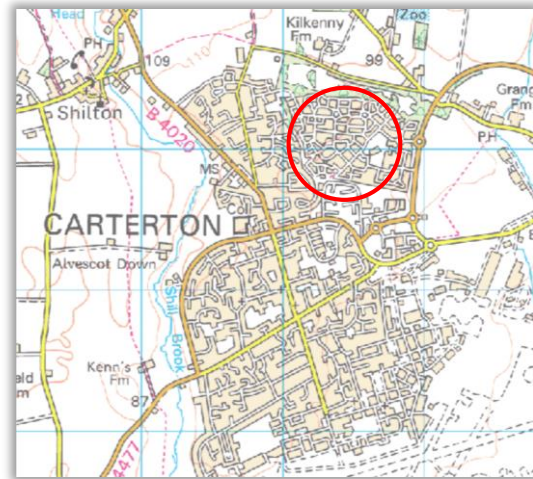


WODC site number: 10
Grid reference: SP285080
Land area: 10.6ha

What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Create new habitats to improve the floral resources for pollinators such as bees and butterflies
- Improve the site's connectivity with new habitat features
- Maintain the site in a way that can be enjoyed by people and wildlife alike



Site description

The land owned by WODC at Shilton Park consists primarily of short grassland areas and road verges with trees and shrubs planted in places for visual interest. A stream runs along the estate's western and southern boundary, which is shaded by recently planted woodland. Dense tree planting is also present along the eastern boundary. The site's proximity to Kilkenny Lane Country Park makes it likely visited by a wide range of bird and invertebrate species.

We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is well used by the public, with paths through the green spaces around the site used by local residents.
- The water quality in the stream that runs around the west and south of the site is in good condition, and able to support amphibians such as frogs and toads.
- The greens, parks and road verges link into green vegetation corridors that extend in several directions from the site, providing habitat connectivity across Carterton and into Kilkenny Lane Country Park and the wider countryside, and allowing wildlife to travel more safely across the landscape.



Shilton Park estate

We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Reducing the number of grass cuts across the estate from ten to seven, to allow flowers such as daisies, clover and buttercups more opportunities to fully grow and act as pollen and nectar sources for foraging pollinators.
- Creating “mini meadow” areas in strategic locations, allowing grass and existing flowers to grow longer over the summer before cutting and collecting the clippings.
- Coppicing trees within the western woodland areas to diversify woodland age structure to accommodate different invertebrate and bird species.



Before



After

We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Plant native hedgerows in strategic locations to increase berry and nut provision for bird and mammal populations, and increase habitat connectivity for species such as bats and birds to travel safely across the estate.
- Remove the redundant tree guards within the recently planted woodland areas of the site, to reduce the risk of wildlife consuming plastics.
- Enhance the new meadow grassland areas with wildflower seed mix or plug plants for increased floral diversity, encouraging more pollinators to visit.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Wood production – Carbon storage –
Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation



Before



After

North Leigh Common

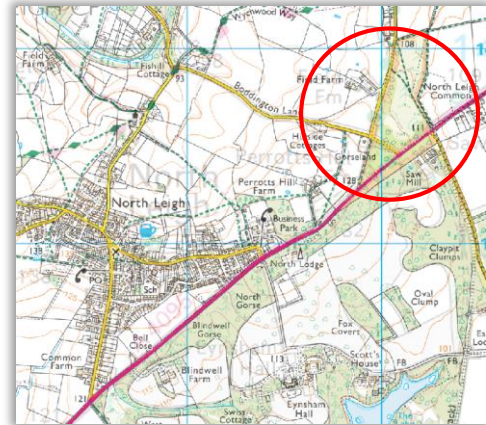


WODC site number: 11
Grid reference: SP400136
Land area: 17ha

What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Continue working with the Friends of North Leigh Common to maintain the site's habitats
- Restore areas of rare acid grassland
- Create a diverse woodland age structure



Site description

This site is designated an Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Site, and is comprised primarily of woodland habitats. Grassland areas are present over a mix of underlying geologies, with acidic soil areas of particular importance. Bracken is prevalent through the woodland, and freshwater ponds and a small spring can additionally be found. The site is managed by the Friends of North Leigh Common, who run regular conservations work parties to ensure the site is well maintained for people and wildlife.

We value this site as a natural asset because:

- The majority of the site is made up of one of the few areas of woodland within Oxfordshire, along with acid grassland habitat that is locally rare. It sits within the "core zone" of Oxfordshire's Nature Recovery Network, making it of county importance.
- The site's habitats contain a range of interesting flora and fauna, with species of rare plant such as trailing St. John's-wort and orchids present in the summer months. Common lizards are frequently spotted on the grassland's boundaries, and the nearby ponds have recently been restored for the endangered great crested newts.
- The Common has historic value, having being used for grazing since 1759 and as a source of sand and clay for brick making since the 1800s.



North Leigh Common



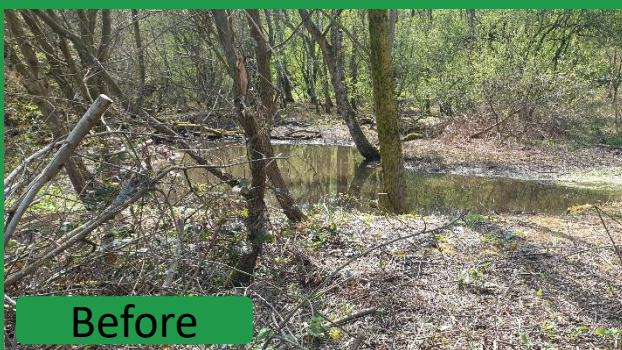
We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Giving the Friends of North Leigh Common additional support with members from the WODC grounds maintenance team to complete larger works such as tree management.
- Removing the grass clippings after the central grassland's annual cut from the site, to reduce the soil fertility and encourage further wildflower diversity.
- Cutting back additional areas of bracken to create glades and rides, encouraging the growth of acid grassland species and their associated butterflies.
- Following the new pond management plan provided by the Newt Conservation Partnership e.g. preventing bramble encroachment on ponds.

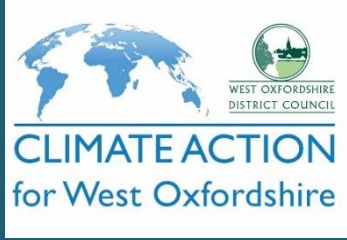
We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Restore areas affected by ash dieback by planting trees and/or creating new heathland habitat where trees are removed.
- Carry out larger tree thinning works with an arboricultural contractor to diversify the age structure of the woodland.
- Provide the Friends of North Leigh Common with new equipment and ecological training opportunities.
- Install a new interpretation panel to inform visitors to the site about its wildlife, habitats and management, and update the leaflet associated with the site.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation – Nature education – Cooling and shading – Carbon storage



Rowell Way estate



WODC site number: 12
Grid reference: SP316271
Land area: 4.4ha

What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Maintain the site in a way that can be enjoyed by people and wildlife alike
- Create new habitats to improve the floral resources for pollinators such as bees and butterflies
- Improve the site's woodland areas for priority species

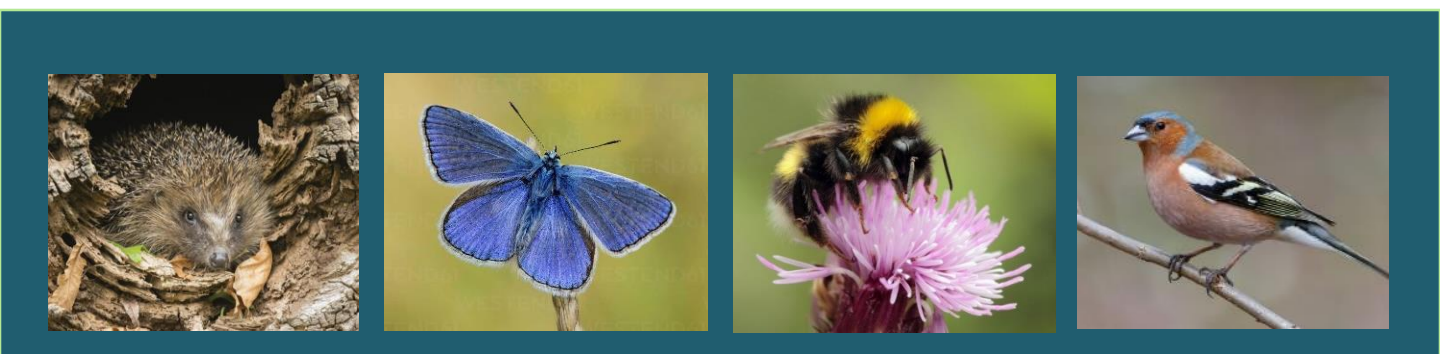


Site description

The land owned by WODC at Rowell Way consists mostly of short grassland areas and road verges: some of these areas are planted with trees and shrubs in places. A small linear woodland is also present in the south-east of the estate, which contains a range of native shrubs and trees that currently provides some floral resources for pollinators, and berries and nuts for local birds and small mammals.

We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It contains one of the few areas of woodland within Chipping Norton, a habitat that supports a wide range of invertebrate, bird and mammal species.
- It is well used by the public, with paths through the green spaces around the site used by local residents.
- The greens, grass alongside footpaths and in particular the linear woodland area link into green vegetation corridors that extend in several directions from the site, providing habitat connectivity across Chipping Norton and into the wider countryside, allowing wildlife to travel more safely across the landscape.



Rowell Way estate

We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Reducing the number of grass cuts across the estate from ten to seven, to allow flowers such as daisies, clover and buttercups more opportunities to fully grow and act as pollen and nectar sources for foraging pollinators.
- Creating “mini meadow” areas in strategic locations, allowing grass and existing flowers to grow longer over the summer before cutting and collecting the clippings.



Before



After

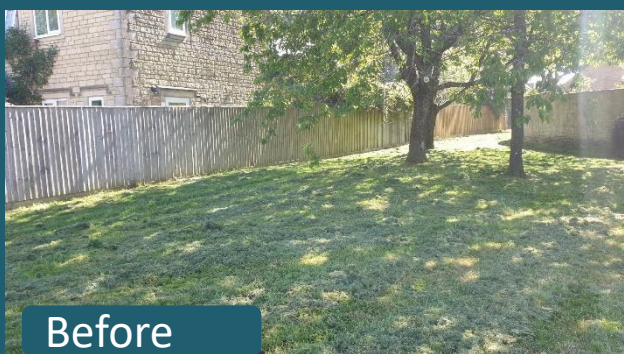


Location for a mini meadow

We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Enhance the new meadow grassland areas with wildflower seed mix or plug plants for increased floral diversity, encouraging more pollinators to visit.
- Plant native hedgerows in strategic locations to increase berry and nut provision for bird and mammal populations, and increase habitat connectivity for species such as bats and birds to travel safely across the estate.
- Coppice trees within the eastern woodland area to diversify tree age structure and accommodate a wider variety of insect and bird species.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Wood production – Carbon storage – Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation



Before



After

Site-wide projects

We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity across our sites in the longer term and will actively seek funding to implement the following:

- Wildflower meadow signs - create signage in connection with the newly created meadow areas within the estates. This will mark out the areas to local residents, so they know to keep an eye out for newly blooming wildflowers.
- Hedgehog highways – make it easier for hedgehogs to travel across our estates by encouraging residents to cut small holes in their fences to create ‘hedgehog highways.’
- Swift boxes – provide subsidised swift boxes to residents on our estates to boost the nesting opportunities for this species at risk.
- Ash dieback – a highly destructive disease of ash affecting 80% of trees across the UK - work will identify current and future areas where the risk of ash dieback is highest and commission tree works and replacement planting where appropriate.
- Subsidence strategy – work to identify current and future subsidence risks caused by trees across our estates, to reduce the risk of damage to residents’ houses in the future.



Thinking to the future...

Larger projects we would like to undertake in future years include:

- Windrush in Witney – a project with many stakeholders that own land along the River Windrush coming together to manage the riverbanks and floodplain meadows for wildlife and people
- Species surveys – commissioning species surveys from ecological consultants or , to build up a better idea of what can be found on our sites and how we can improve their management in the future
- Community engagement – working with local volunteer groups and residents to hold events that get the local community involved and excited about the natural world around them such as BioBlitzs, wildlife walks and talks, and habitat management sessions