



**Cabinet
Tuesday, 16 March 2021**

ADDENDA

**11. Statement of Intent A Commitment to Environmental Resilience
and Renewal (Pages 1 - 26)**

Report attached.

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Divisions Affected - ALL

CABINET - 16 MARCH 2021

**STATEMENT OF INTENT
A COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE AND
RENEWAL**

Report by Corporate Director, Communities

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to

- i. Acknowledge the breadth of County Council partnership activity for climate action, environmental resilience and renewal in Oxfordshire.
- ii. Support the establishment of an Environment Advisory Group of the Oxfordshire Growth Board and its Terms of Reference as set out at Appendix 1, subject to the outcome of the meeting of the Growth Board on 22 March.
- iii. Endorse the shared principles for protecting, restoring and enhancing the environment in the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, as set out at Appendix 2.
- iv. Support the development of an Arc Environment Strategy which will provide for how the principles can be delivered and delegate authority to the Corporate Director Environment and Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to take this forward.
- v. Note progress concerning the development of a Local Nature Partnership for Oxfordshire.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The County Council has a good track record of partnership working and is well placed to support the proposed Environment Advisory Group of the Oxfordshire Growth Board and the development of a Local Nature Partnership for Oxfordshire. Some examples of current partnership activity across three themes of climate action, namely action for **net zero** carbon emissions, **resilience** to climate change and **renewal** of the environment including biodiversity net gain are appended (Appendix 3).
- 1.2 As a strategic leader for climate action the County Council wishes to endorse the environment principles of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc and participate in the development of an Environment Strategy, in order to

progress this shared ambition for climate action, environmental resilience and renewal across the Arc. This commitment firmly positions the County Council as a strategic leader for climate action, including environmental resilience and renewal within Oxfordshire and the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.

2. Background

- 2.1. Oxfordshire County Council acknowledged a Climate Emergency in 2019 and launched the Climate Action Framework in October 2020 with a target of achieving net zero by 2030. Besides putting our own house in order, we have committed to work in partnership with a range of key stakeholders to achieve the fifth goal of the Climate Action Framework, to demonstrate leadership for enabling a net zero carbon Oxfordshire by 2050 in line with legal targets.
- 2.2. There are a number of drivers coming together currently to strengthen the potential for an Environment Advisory Group for Oxfordshire. These include:
 - Legislative drivers from central government, such as the DEFRA 25 Year Environment Plan, which sets out a comprehensive approach to protect, restore and enhance landscapes and habitats, and create new nature areas and natural capital assets through a policy of net environmental gain.
 - The collective ambition of local authority Leaders to take forward partnership action for climate change, including organisational commitments towards a net zero ambition for Oxfordshire through the development of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision. The County Council supports the development of this Vision, particularly the Oxfordshire Growth Board principles for “good growth” and will be considering a final draft of the Vision at the next meeting of Cabinet in April.
 - The recent announcement for an Oxford to Cambridge Arc spatial plan and the proposal of environmental principles to underpin delivery of their environment working group, set out in Appendix 2.
- 2.3. Oxfordshire County Council adopted a Climate Action Framework in October 2020, which specifically recognises the need to review and develop our partnerships including strengthening support to the Community Action Groups, the universities to shape world class research and support to Living Oxford to leverage Living Labs data and insights. Now, six months into the Climate Action programme it is timely to consider the proposal of an Oxfordshire Environment Advisory Group of the Growth Board and how that might add value to the County Council’s leadership role on climate action.

3. Local Nature Partnership

- 3.1. The Growth Board has previously indicated support for establishing a separate Local Nature Partnership for Oxfordshire to guide work on nature recovery in Oxfordshire and link in with wider regional discussions concerning

the natural environment. Oxfordshire is one of the few areas nationally not to have an LNP, and the only area within the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.

- 3.2 Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) provide a joined up and strategic forum to help manage the natural environment in an integrated way to produce multiple benefits for local people, the economy and the environment. They are designed to promote a more formalised, systematic and collaborative approach to the management and enhancement of the natural environment and encompass a broad range of local organisations and people who are committed to this aim.

4. Oxford-Cambridge Arc

- 4.1. The Oxford-Cambridge Arc (the Arc) is a globally significant area between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge. It is formed of five ceremonial counties: Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire.
- 4.2. Central government (MHCLG) has recently announced an intention to develop a Spatial Framework for the Arc, a long-term strategic plan to help co-ordinate new developments in the area together with the required strategic infrastructure, including green infrastructure. A key objective of the Spatial Framework will be to ensure the environment is protected and enhanced.
- 4.3. In October 2020 an economic prospectus for the Arc was published jointly by local authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnerships within the Arc. It outlines the following vision:

“By 2050, the Arc will be a world leading place for high-value growth, innovation and productivity. A global hub where ideas and companies are generated and thrive, home to exemplary models of 21st century development, with a high-quality environment and outstanding quality of life, and with a strong economic focus that drives inclusive clean growth.”

5. Arc Environment Principles

- 5.1 In 2020 the Arc Leadership Group Environment Working Group agreed to produce a set of Arc-wide Environment Principles to underpin the vision, set out above, and align with the government’s 25 Year Environment Plan. The principles set out in Appendix 2 are not formal policy but rather a shared statement of ambition for the Arc. They are intended to:
- support our position with respect to the environment policies emerging from the Arc Spatial Framework;
 - allow use of the Arc as a place for DEFRA to test and apply its 25-year plan and funding through pilots and projects;
 - support Local Planning Authorities with a frame of reference to further develop the principles through Local and Strategic Plans at a local and sub-regional level.

5.2 The regional principles are the result of a collaborative piece of work led by a range of partners and stakeholders and have been written and endorsed as a shared statement of ambition by the Arc's local partners and stakeholders including:

- Environmental NGOs (who drafted the first document)
- Local Nature Partnerships
- Local Government environment and planning policy representatives
- DEFRA
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- MHCLG (planning policy lead)
- University representative from the Universities' Environment Group
- A LEP representative
- Anglian Water
- An Energy Hub representative

5.3 There are five over-arching principles address which describe how the Arc will tackle some of the biggest challenges of our time:

- To work towards a target of net zero carbon at a pan-Arc level by 2040;
- To protect, restore, enhance and create new nature areas and natural capital assets, including nationally and locally designated wildlife sites and priority habitats through the implementation of the spatial planning mitigation hierarchy of avoid, mitigate, compensate and gain;
- To be an exemplar for environmentally sustainable development, in line with the ambitions set out in the government's 25-year plan. This will incorporate a systems-based and integrated assessment and implementation approach.
- To ensure that existing and new communities see real benefits from living in the Arc;
- To use natural resources wisely.

5.4 Each theme has several sub-principles which describe further the outcomes we aspire to. Some of the sub-principles may evolve further as thinking develops. It is hoped by having developed consensus and support for these principles, including direct engagement with Government, that these will be used to support emerging environmental policies within the emerging Arc Spatial Framework.

5.5 The agreed principles will be strengthened further after being publicly considered by every partner organisation. The Arc Leadership Group will develop an Arc Environment Strategy to provide the route map to delivering

against these ambitions, including trajectories for meeting ambitious future performance targets.

6. Role of the County Council with this agenda

- 6.1. Oxfordshire County Council has a commitment to deliver the Climate Action Framework, agreed at Cabinet in October 2020 and to work in partnership with other stakeholders to achieve a net zero ambition across Oxfordshire by 2050. This activity can be grouped under three pillars for climate action:
 - Net zero carbon - targets for our own estate by 2030 and to enable net zero Oxfordshire by 2050 we need to work in partnership.
 - Resilience - both in terms of responding to the impacts of climate change arising from extreme weather events as the Lead Local Flood Authority, for example mitigating flood risk through the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme and ensuring resilience in resource efficiency including security of energy supply and waste management, achieving 97% diversion of waste from landfill.
 - Renewal – renewing the natural capital and environmental assets of Oxfordshire for “good growth”, ensuring outcomes for environmental wellbeing are integrated into all decisions for social and economic wellbeing.
- 6.2. The County Council is already working in partnership with many stakeholders across a range of sectors and communities, some examples of current County Council activity across these three pillars are set out in Appendix 3.
- 6.3. Participation by the County Council in the Oxfordshire Growth Board Environment Advisory Group would strengthen the role of the County Council in partnership working for climate action, environmental resilience and renewal across Oxfordshire. Supporting the principles of the Arc Environment Working Group would strengthen the role of the County Council for climate action, environmental resilience and renewal within the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.

7. Timescales

- 7.1. Oxfordshire Growth Board 22nd March to consider recommendations 2 and 3 above.
- 7.2. An Environment Strategy for the Oxford to Cambridge Arc is expected to take 12-18 months to complete.

- 7.3. Cabinet will consider the Growth Board's recommendations for the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, including the Oxfordshire principles for "good growth" at its next meeting on the 20th April.

8. Next Steps

- 8.1. Pending the Growth Board decision on 22nd March more detail on the Oxfordshire Growth Board Environment Advisory Group is expected following the elections, possibly in June 2021.
- 8.2. Having been endorsed by the ARC Leaders Plenary, the Arc Environment Principles will be shared amongst a wider audience including the development community to gain support and buy-in. It is intended that each partner organisation will now proceed to take these through local decision-making processes to provide even more support for the shared principles.
- 8.3. The next piece of work for the Arc Environment Working Group is to develop an Environment Strategy which will set out a comprehensive plan for how the principles will be delivered in the Arc. It is likely that the strategy will take 12-18 months to complete.
- 8.4. The County Council will continue to work in partnership across a wide range of sectors and stakeholders in order to take forward its commitment to the Arc Environment Principles and climate action ambitions for net zero, environmental resilience and renewal.

9. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

Comments checked by: Rob Finlayson, Finance Business Partner

10. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications.

Comments checked by: Christian Smith, Principal Solicitor

11. Staff Implications

There are no additional staffing implications arising from this report.

12. Equality & Inclusion Implications

The recommendations support equality and inclusion.

13. Sustainability Implications

The proposals positively support objectives set out within the Climate Action Framework and promote inclusion and diversity in decision-making.

14. Risk Management

There are no specific risks to the Council resulting from this report.

JASON RUSSELL
Corporate Director Communities

Appendices:	Appendix 1: Oxfordshire Growth Board Environment Advisory Group Terms of Reference Appendix 2: Oxford to Cambridge Arc Environment Principles Appendix 3: Examples of County Council partnership activity for Climate Action
Background papers:	None
Other Documents:	None
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March 2021

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Oxfordshire Growth Board Environment Advisory Group Terms of Reference

1. Purpose and Objectives

- 1.1 The purpose of the Environment Advisory Group is to act in an advisory and consultative capacity to the Growth Board and provide strategic oversight in the development and delivery of key projects and programmes within its remit.
- 1.2 The Advisory Group will work on the principle of consensus in advising the Growth Board, whilst at the same time each member will act as the individual lead and conduit, both to and from the authority they represent.
- 1.3 The Advisory Group will operate within the remit set by the Growth Board. Their role is to:
 - 1.3.1 Broaden engagement and involvement of the constituent councils in key areas of the Growth Board's work and ownership of each constituent council's part in delivery of Growth Board programmes.
 - 1.3.2 Provide strategic oversight in the development and delivery of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal programmes and wider Growth Board programmes
 - 1.3.3 Provide a councillor forum in which to examine and discuss relevant issues in more detail.
 - 1.3.4 Inform development of the Growth Board's work and of opportunities for new areas of work to progress the Growth Board objectives
 - 1.3.5 To develop areas for joint work across the Growth Board partnership to address key growth challenges and inform policy development.
- 1.4 As an advisory body, the Group does not have decision making powers but will advise and make recommendations to the Growth Board on the areas outlined above.

2. Membership and appointments

- 2.1 The Advisory Group will comprise of at least one executive member from each of the partner authorities which has relevant responsibilities, plus a chair appointed by the Growth Board. The partner authorities are as follows:
 - Cherwell District Council
 - Oxfordshire County Council
 - Oxford City Council
 - South Oxfordshire District Council
 - Vale of White Horse District Council
 - West Oxfordshire District Council
- 2.2 The Chair of the Advisory Group will be drawn from the voting membership of the Growth Board.

- 2.3 Each partner authority shall appoint one executive substitute member for each Advisory Group, who can substitute for their member as required. The substitute member shall have the same rights as the member for whom the substitution is made.
- 2.4 Co-opted non-voting members may be appointed for specific items or a period of up to a year by the Advisory Groups with the agreement of the voting membership of the Growth Board.
- 2.5 Where the Chair is unable to attend a meeting, but still wishes for it to progress, the Advisory Group may elect a Chair for that meeting only.

3. Role of the Chair

- 3.1 The Chair must act in an independent and facilitative capacity to organise the Advisory Group's activities in support of the objectives of the Growth Board. At all times, the Chair must use their discretion to act in the interests of Oxfordshire and the Growth Board, and not of their own political group or local authority area.
- 3.2 The Chair will manage meetings in accordance with the Advisory Group's terms of reference and provide leadership and direction to the Advisory Group in an open and transparent manner.
- 3.3 The Chair will report directly into the Growth Board on the work of their Advisory Group as agreed. In reporting to the Growth Board, the Chair will present the views of their Advisory Group, and not necessarily their own views.
- 3.4 The Advisory Group is not a decision-making body, and the Chair should aim to reach a consensus on matters under discussion. Where a consensus cannot be reached, the Chair shall present the split views of the Advisory Group to the Growth Board.
- 3.5 The Advisory Group should be mindful of the work of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel and any other Advisory Groups to avoid any duplication of work. The Advisory Group should also be mindful of any work it may require of officers, and the impact this may have on existing priorities.

4 Role of Members

- 4.1 In addition to contributing to the overall role of the Advisory Group, members will be a proactive conduit between the work of the Advisory Group and their respective council. This might include, for example, providing regular updates to their own council on the work of the Advisory Group.

5 Meeting Arrangements

- 5.1 The Advisory Group will meet in accordance with a schedule of meetings that satisfies the requirements of the relevant programmes of work. The notes of a meeting will be drafted and included in the agenda for the next available Growth Board meeting.
- 5.2 Meetings may be rearranged, cancelled or additional meetings scheduled with the agreement of the Chair of the Advisory Group.

- 5.3 The quorum for a meeting shall be three members. Non-attendance of partner authorities shall not affect the legitimacy of an Advisory Group's conclusions. However, where the effect of a particular consideration would give rise to contractual or financial implications for a partner authority that is not in attendance, or if their views cannot be obtained, then this fact will be reported to the Growth Board.

6 Access to information

- 6.1 It is expected that the Advisory Group will have the right to see the same information as that of the Growth Board when advising on any given issue, in order that an informed view can be made.
- 6.2 The Advisory Group will meet in private and the meetings will not be subject to the provisions of s100 of the Local Government Act (LGA) 1972 as amended by The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. However, the conclusions of the Advisory Group shall be conveyed in public to the Growth Board at each of its meetings, except in circumstances where the matter under consideration contains exempt or confidential information, as set out in the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).
- 6.3 The Advisory Group's agendas and associated written reports will be circulated to the members of the Advisory Group, and the designated officer of the respective partner authorities, at least three clear working days before the meeting. Non-adherence to this principal however will not invalidate a meeting.
- 6.4 The work of the Advisory Group will not be subject to scrutiny by the Joint Scrutiny Panel, although their notes will be available to Scrutiny to comment on as published reports to the Growth Board.

7 Work Plan

- 7.1 The Advisory Group will establish a forward Work Plan of matters to consider, which will be reviewed at each meeting. The development and management of the Work Plan will be led by the Chair, having regard to the requirements of the Growth Board, the advice of the Housing and Growth Deal Programme Board and Executive Officer Group, and the wishes of the Advisory Group.
- 7.2 The Work Plan will set out the matters to be considered, and the date at which they are to be considered. The Advisory Group will have a specific role in:
- a) Horizon scanning, seeking to identifying opportunities for collaboration on joint projects and programmes which support the delivery of the Board's Vision, and specifically its environmental ambitions.
 - b) Providing advice concerning the delivery of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.
 - c) Acting as a sounding board in the development of Executive Officer Group proposals for the Growth Board
 - d) Providing advice to the Growth Board concerning forthcoming issues, acting in support of the objectives of the Growth Board, and considering any additional matters that the Growth Board requires of them.

8 General principles

- 8.1 Each partner authority agrees to support the purposes of the Group by ensuring that in their own decision making, they collaborate and cooperate with one another in an open and accountable manner in the interests of the whole of Oxfordshire, whilst acting in good faith.
- 8.2 The joint management of the Advisory Groups will be conducted in such a way that no authority's capacity to deliver day to day services is disadvantaged more so than another through their commitment to the Advisory Groups.
- 8.3 The normal rules as to declarations of interest will be applied to local authority members in accordance with the respective Council's Code of Conduct.
- 8.4 The Growth Board may amend these Terms of Reference or discontinue the work of the Advisory Group at any time.

Shared regional principles for protecting, restoring and enhancing the environment in the **Oxford-Cambridge Arc**





Contents	
Foreword	3
The joint declaration	4
The Arc vision	5
The Principles	7

Foreword

The days when we could take our environment for granted are long gone. We must now seek out every opportunity we can to protect and enhance what we have left and ensure that we do everything we can to ensure that the Oxford-Cambridge Arc is a place where we can all work and live truly sustainably.

Both the Arc Leadership Group’s OxCam Arc Economic Prospectus and the Government’s publication, planning for sustainable growth: introduction to the Arc Spatial Framework has given top billing jointly to the economy and the environment. It is now our job to ensure that the environment is at the centre of everything we do and every decision we take.

The work of the OxCam Arc Environment Working Group has been focused on putting forward this set of principles that will allow us to be outstandingly ambitious and aspirational for the OxCam Arc. If we can get this right then the world will look to our ‘Green Arc’ as an internationally significant exemplar for the very best in sustainable living and working, for practical ways to doubling nature, and innovative solutions to energy and water shortages as well as stimulating a green economy.

These principles will form the basis for the creation of an OxCam- wide Environmental Strategy that will embrace everything from green spaces, to housing standards, to sustainable transport, energy generation and transmission and water management and conservation.

It is vital, as we and government move forward with the OxCam Arc, that we take the people already living here with us. We can do this by committing to greener transport, by doubling the number of trees and acreage of accessible managed green spaces, by protecting our chalk streams and supporting local green energy production to name but a few.

If we are to double economic growth along the OxCam Arc then as a minimum we must be doubling nature and ensuring that the Arc leads the way in the zero carbon living and working of the future.

Councillor Bridget Smith,
Leader South Cambridgeshire District Council,
Chair Arc Environment Working Group

Left
Paragliding off the
Dunstable Downs Chiltern
Hills in Bedfordshire

In March 2019, Government and local partners set out their ambition for the Arc in a joint declaration¹:

“We want better places to live, which are beautiful and inspiring, to benefit the Arc’s residents today as well as tomorrow. The Government has already set out its intention for the Arc to embody England’s 25 Year Environment Plan, which we will work together to deliver, including through planning for local natural capital. We want new developments to use intelligent and sensitive design to create or enhance habitats and improve habitat connectivity, in situ and in the surrounding area. We also want to improve access to the environment for existing and new communities in order to improve health and wellbeing.”

“Conserving and enhancing the natural environment is at the heart of Government’s ambitions for the Arc. The 25 Year Environment Plan also sets out our comprehensive approach to improving landscapes and habitats, and

the aspiration to move to a policy of net environmental gain. We expect the policy for the wider Oxford-Cambridge corridor to embody this approach.”

An Environment Working Group (EWG) has been established to take forward the environmental pillar outlined within the joint declaration. The EWG will work with partners in the Arc, including those responsible for the other pillars, to ensure that the protection and enhancement of the environment is at the heart of decision-making and any actions are based on a clear and agreed evidence base.

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/799993/OxCam_Arc_Ambition.pdf

In October 2020 an economic prospectus for the Arc was published jointly by local authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnerships within the Arc. It outlines the following vision:

“By 2050, the Arc will be a world leading place for high-value growth, innovation and productivity. A global hub where ideas and companies are generated and thrive, home to exemplary models of 21st century development, with a high-quality environment and outstanding quality of life, and with a strong economic focus that drives inclusive clean growth.”

The environmental principles supporting this vision are set out in this document. They are ambitious and will require the collective effort of all partners in the Arc if they are to be delivered.

Above
Sunrise at Willen Lake in Milton Keynes.

Right
Elmsbrook eco-town - Bicester.





The principles address how we will tackle some of the biggest challenges of our time: achieving net zero carbon, climate resilience, biodiversity net gain, environmental net gain, doubling the area of land actively managed for nature, restoring, protecting and enhancing the natural environment and ensuring renewable natural capital (resources derived from living things that if properly managed can be replenished) remains available for future generations.

The principles

The regional principles have been written and agreed by the Arc's local partners and stakeholders. They are informed by Government policy. They are a clear statement of regional intent that will help to clarify the commitment to adopting an approach that results in environmentally sustainable economic growth. This includes the protection, restoration and enhancement of the environment (air, water, land, soil, biodiversity), net biodiversity and net environmental gain, net zero carbon, the sustainable use of resources.

The principles align with the government's 25 Year Environment Plan² and the commitment in the joint declaration to embody the 25 year plans goals and ambitions.

We will also take account of other appropriate government strategies, plans and guidance. Our aim is for the principles to inform and become an integral part of developing plans and statements in relation to the Arc, local plans, local council activities and the plans and activities of activities and delivery programs for all bodies operating in the Arc. It is also our ambition to see universities, private sector developers and third sector organisations adopt these principles.



Above
Cotswolds Hills Countryside
in the area of outstanding
natural beauty.

Right
Autumn view of the river
Nene Valley, near Castor
village, Cambridgeshire.

²A Green Future: Our 25
Year Plan to Improve the
Environmentfile/799993/
OxCam_Arc_Ambition.pdf

The Arc partners will seek to:

1.

Work towards a target of net zero carbon at an Arc level by 2040. This will include:

- a. Ensuring all **decisions about development and new infrastructure support this goal.**
- b. Working with Government to **enhance building regulations and planning policy to actively reduce the carbon footprint of, and energy consumption in, new buildings.**
- c. Pursuing a **major programme of transformation** in existing settlements and infrastructure to reduce energy intensity and carbon emissions.
- d. Construction, operational and transport activities.

2.

Protect, restore, enhance and create new nature areas and natural capital assets, including nationally and locally designated wildlife sites and priority habitats, and links between them. We will implement the spatial planning mitigation hierarchy of avoid, minimise, remediate, compensate and gain. This will include:

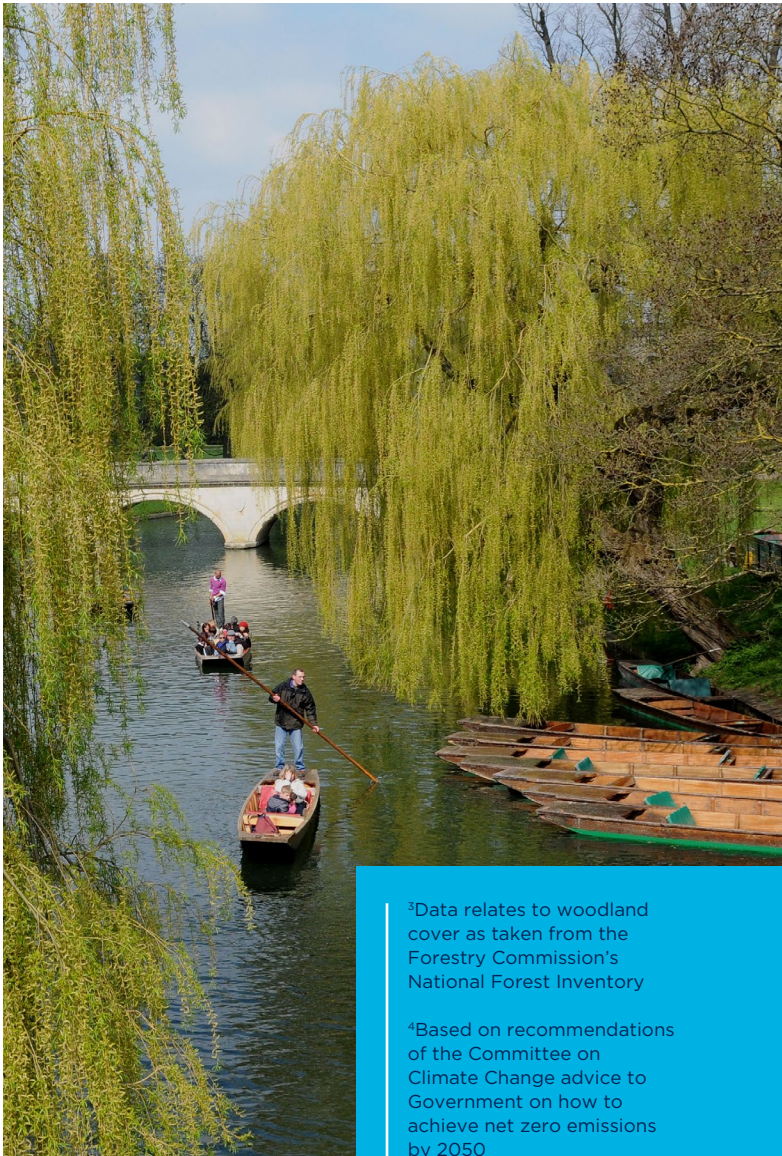
- a. Doubling the area of land managed primarily for nature in the Arc (**‘Doubling Nature’**). To contribute to Government’s commitment to protecting 30% of land for nature conservation by 2030. We will seek to maximise public, private and third sector funding opportunities **to protect, restore and enhance the natural environment** and maintain existing, and increase investment in, natural capital assets, working with partners including major landowners and our important agriculture sector across the Arc.



Above
Heron Valley, Rushmere
Country Park, Leighton
Buzzard.

Right
Punting on the River
Nene, Peterborough.

- b. Coordinating work on local nature recovery strategies and the Arc’s contribution to **the Nature Recovery Network for England** by creating more, bigger, better-connected places, in the required condition, for nature including landscape scale interventions.
- c. Delivering **biodiversity net gain for Town & Country Planning Act developments of 20%.** This is above the 10% Government mandated minimum to reflect the Arc’s world leading environmental ambitions.
- d. Delivering **biodiversity net gain for all developments of 20% with a minimum requirement of 10%** including Nationally Significant Infrastructure and projects brought forward outside of the Town & Country Planning Act. This is to reflect the Arc’s world leading environmental ambitions.
- e. **Working with Government to develop a suitable net environment gain metric that** incorporates biodiversity net gain and, once available, to set an ambitious target to reflect the Arc’s world leading environmental ambitions.
- f. Establishing **human and nature mobility corridors** across the Arc – using existing or new transport corridors for maximum environmental benefit/gain.
- g. **Increasing tree and woodland cover across the Arc from 7.4%³ to 19%⁴.** This is in recognition of the ability of trees and woodlands to deliver a wide range of environmental, health, social and economic benefits. We will ensure the right trees are planted in the right places.
- h. Protecting and enhancing protected landscapes. Enhancing landscape character areas, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the wider countryside.



³Data relates to woodland cover as taken from the Forestry Commission’s National Forest Inventory

⁴Based on recommendations of the Committee on Climate Change advice to Government on how to achieve net zero emissions by 2050

3.

Be an exemplar for environmentally sustainable development, in line with the ambitions set out in the government’s 25 year plan. This will incorporate a systems-based and integrated assessment and implementation approach and will fully recognise the associated health and wellbeing benefits. We will aim to go beyond the minimum legislated requirements for development. This will include:

- a. **All new settlements, urban extensions and infrastructure contributing to the achievement of delivering net biodiversity gain, net environmental gain, and net zero carbon** both in site and route selection and in the design of settlements and transport corridors. In addition, areas of tranquillity will be protected and measures taken to avoid light pollution and protect dark sky areas. Making cycling and walking more attractive ways to travel and investing in zero emission public transport of the future.

- b. **Understanding the impact of development on the natural environment**, including cumulative and indirect impacts (taking into account associated housing and other forms of development), so that these can be addressed in line with the mitigation hierarchy, and carrying out environmental and strategic assessments as appropriate for the type and scale of development programmes including options and proper community consultation.
- c. Understanding the Arc’s environmental capacity to accommodate different levels of growth and development in different locations and **ensuring that planned growth and development remains well within environmental capacity limits.**
- d. Working with Government to **enhance the building regulations and the role of planning policy so that they align with sustainability principles, and actively reduce the carbon footprint, water and energy consumption** in new and existing buildings. We will encourage Arc local partners to exceed the minimum standards required by building regulations.
- e. Promoting the switch to renewable and other sustainable energy supplies, improving travel choices, and supporting changing working practices. This will enable **improvements to the design and development of sustainable communities and the protection and enhancement of the natural environment.**

4.

Ensure that existing and new communities see real benefits from living in the Arc including through:

- a. **Maximising the health and wellbeing benefits of nature** by providing sector-leading areas of accessible nature-rich greenspace in, and accessible to, new settlements, urban extensions and commercial zones and increasing and enhancing greenspace, and access to it, for existing settlements in the Arc.
- b. **Promoting and increasing equality of sustainable access to nature and its benefits** by investing in, increasing and enhancing nature-rich greenspace in the places and communities where it is most lacking. We will improve access to greenspace and nature, ensuring Natural England’s Access to Natural Greenspace standards, and (once available) Green Infrastructure Standards, are maximised for existing housing and delivered for future developments.



Right
People walking in open spaces.

5.

Use natural resources wisely by:

- a. Working to address existing **water resource, water quality and flood management** issues and through an integrated approach across the water agenda ensure future issues and risks are managed, including in the context of climate change, with a focus on nature-based interventions.
- b. Ensuring that soil quality is properly protected and improved including within development, infrastructure and agricultural activities.
- c. Making **more efficient use and management of waste and resources**, working towards a circular economy with no net waste and promoting the use of sustainable building materials and construction guidelines.
- d. Working with local authorities to share best practice and coordinate action being taken on local **air quality management plans** including addressing emissions from agriculture and from installations regulated by the Environment Agency.
- e. Supporting the development of interventions that reduce the **impact of agriculture on the environment** and support productivity.
- f. Helping to build collaboration between farmers to generate catchment and landscape scale environmental improvement under the **Environmental Land Management Scheme**.
- g. Ensuring that the required mineral resources for the Arc are sourced in an environmentally sensitive manner and that mineral sites are restored in a coordinated manner to after-uses that benefit nature and people, as well as helping to provide ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and water management.

We will continue to work with the other Arc pillars to develop appropriate environmental principles for incorporation within these workstreams.

We will review and update the environmental principles in the light of developing policies, practices, evidence, experience, knowledge and governance arrangements.



Resourcing our ambitions

To achieve delivery of these principles we will need to work collaboratively across the public, private and third sectors. Some resources are already in place and there are many more that we will need. As a starting point we will:

- Build on the work of the Arc Local Natural Capital Plan and the associated work in the 5 counties to **make publicly available, agreed baseline maps for natural capital and ecosystem services across the Arc**. Resources will be required to maintain the data and make it accessible.
- Work with the statutory agencies and with local councils to ensure ready **access to the wide range of environmental data** currently collected by them.
- **Work with government to agree methodologies** for both net biodiversity gain and net environment gain for use within the Arc. We will establish a technical group(s) to assess net gain propositions on behalf of local planning authorities and provide planning committees with independent advice.
- **Support and promote a 5 yearly environmental census** across the Arc including promoting public engagement through citizen science approaches.
- Use **evidence on health, deprivation and ecosystem services demand** (e.g. for air quality improvement) to inform planning for greenspace, habitats and **natural capital assets**.
- Work with all those that fund nature improvement work across the Arc including the Defra Group, water companies, environmental Non-Governmental Organisations, local councils, catchment partnerships, housing and commercial property developers and infrastructure providers, together with those allocating Environment Land Management System funding, and private investors to **take a more efficient and effective systems based approach to natural capital and ecosystem systems based interventions**. We will seek to ensure that funding is used strategically and not in a piecemeal way.
- **Invest in projects that deliver natural capital and environmental benefits**, such as carbon sequestration, pollinator habitats, soil improvement, flood alleviation and water resource resilience, and establish Arc-wide and more local Natural Capital Investment Plans to inform and support the emerging Arc Spatial Framework.

Right
Sunlight shines through
beech trees in the bluebell
woods of Oxfordshire.

Monitoring

We will pursue our commitment as outlined within these principles and will work with government and local partners on the development of associated metrics and targets in line with the 25 Year Environment Plan, carbon reduction commitments and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Engagement

We will engage and consult with communities, residents and people working in the Arc, as well as businesses, other organisations and NGOs, on the vision and ambitions for sustainable environmental growth in the Arc.

This document is supported by the Arc Leadership Group, Arc Universities Environment Group, Arc Local Enterprise Partnerships, England’s Economic Heartland, and has been drafted with input from the Arc Local Nature Partnerships whose members include representatives from environment NGOs, local councils, LEPs, developers, businesses, business representation bodies, the Environment Agency, Natural England, and the Forestry Commission and important contributions from central government departments, other environment NGOs and businesses.





Below
Sunrise panorama at
the Campbell park in
Milton Keynes.

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Appendix 3 - Examples of County Council partnership activity for Climate Action

The county council has a long track record of success in partnership working around 3 pillars of climate action, set out as follows:

- **Zero Carbon,**
- **Resilience**
- **Renewal**

Zero Carbon		
Project	Aim	OCC involvement
Community Action Group	To help communities realise their own ambitions on sustainability issues and opportunities in the local areas.	OCC established the network in 2001 and has consistently funded the core functions of the support services. CAG launched as a Community Interest Company in 2019.
OxFutures1	An EU funded programme to drive renewable energy projects.	Partner in Oxfutures1
Project LEO	To put Oxfordshire at the forefront of the low carbon transition with a smart, clean local energy system.	Partner
Zero Carbon Oxford	Cross sector partnership enabling a zero carbon Oxford by 2040.	Steering Group Member
Clean Growth Sub-Group of LEP	The Clean Growth sub-group is concerned with developing the clean growth sector, economic growth using clean technology and promoting sustainable development. It has been formed to help delivery of the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy and the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy.	Board Member
Oxfordshire Greentech	Business network supporting the growth of the low-carbon sector in Oxfordshire.	Local Authority Innovation Partner
One Planet Oxfordshire	This project brings together the local authorities with a wide range of organisations, businesses, schools and community groups to collaboratively create a shared vision for a better, more sustainable future for the county.	Partner

Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (2050)	<p>Draft Plan Vision (currently out to consultation):</p> <p>“Our Local Transport Plan Vision is for a net-zero Oxfordshire transport system that enables the county to thrive as one of the world’s leading innovation economies, whilst supporting clean growth, protecting our rich and varied natural and historic environment and being better for health and wellbeing, social inclusivity and education.</p> <p>Our plan sets out to achieve this by reducing the need to travel, securing high quality gigabit connectivity, and by discouraging unnecessary individual private vehicle use through making active travel, public and shared transport the natural first choice.”</p>	Lead
Connecting Oxfordshire	A range of projects and activity to support this such as developing the Oxfordshire EV Charging Strategy, rolling out EV charge points and developing an active travel hub.	Lead
Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Strategy 2018-2023	Oxfordshire recycles 59% of all household waste, one of the highest rates in the country.	Lead
Cabinet Advisory Group on Climate Action	Oversees development of the Council's response to the Climate Emergency – includes Voice of Oxfordshire's Youth representatives and Community Action Group rep.	Lead
Reducing the impact of our own estate to be carbon neutral by 2030	<p>Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing policy to reduce the impact of our supply chain and more widely to accelerate the development of a low carbon economy in Oxfordshire. • Reducing our energy demand through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetlighting replacement • Property retrofit • Transferring to electric vehicles and agile working • Promoting active travel • Supporting schools to reduce emissions 	Lead
Climate Action Framework	Committed to work towards halving emissions by 2030 and zero carbon by 2050.	Lead
Oxford Zero Emission Zone	Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council are proposing to create a zero-emission zone (ZEZ) pilot in Oxford city centre. Oversight is through a joint City/ County Council member lead steering group. It is anticipated to start in August 2021. The ZEZ will be implemented through a road user charging scheme, with the aim of creating a cleaner, safer and higher quality Oxford City Centre.	Partnership
Connecting Oxford	Is a joint Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council project, with oversight through a joint City/ County Council member lead steering group. It focuses on the transformation of how people travel to and within Oxford, as part of OCC's plan to create a less congested, less polluted city and wider county, tackling issues that occur with the both the commute and during the day, in particularly the city's eastern arc.	Partnership

Resilience

Project	Aim	OCC involvement
Evenlode Catchment Partnership:	ECP shortly to agree to be one of three Thames Water Smarter Water Catchments delivering multiple environmental benefits	Chair in role of LLFA
Surface Water Management programme	Partnership with TW, Vale and CDC Vale to deliver £3m of improvements in surface water flooding issues.	Lead as LLFA
Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme	One of the largest environmental partnership schemes in the county's history, led jointly with the EA with LEP funding, to alleviate flooding in Oxford.	Partnership
Use of Satellite Data to inform landfill and waste monitoring	To determine if free to use satellite data can be used to monitor change in landfill and waste disposal schemes	Initiator
Waste Recycling, Reuse and Composting	As the Oxfordshire Waste Disposal Authority, we are members of the Oxfordshire Resources & Waste Partnership. All constituent authorities are signed up to the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy & Action Plan and jointly fund the Waste Partnership Manager; achieving 59% recycling rates and 97% diversion of waste from landfill.	Lead role as Waste Disposal Authority

Renewal		
Project	Aim	OCC involvement
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Work with and support Chilterns and Cotswolds Conservation Boards and North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and increase the understanding and enjoyment of Oxfordshire's designated, exceptional landscapes.	Partnership / Co-funder
Natural Capital and Ecosystem Service Map of Oxfordshire	Nationally pioneering work that has underpinned development of natural capital and ecosystem service map for Oxfordshire, the OxCam Arc and is informing OP2050.	Partnership with the University of Oxford
Oxfordshire Participatory Tree Mapping Project	To develop a natural capital-based map of tree planting potential.	Partnership / co-funder
OxCam Local Natural Capital Plan – Pilot	A pilot natural capital programme for the OxCam Arc to underpin spatial strategy.	Partnership
National Trails	Long standing OCC hosting of Thames Path and Ridgeway national trails.	Partnership
Sustrans	To deliver access improvements on strategic routes	Partnership

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum	Statutory Advisory Body administered by OCC that brings landowners, users and other interests together to advise on improving access to Oxfordshire countryside and public rights of way. Produces guidance for communities and helps OCC deliver its access functions.	Lead
Access path volunteers	Various partnerships with volunteer groups to monitor and maintain rights of way across county, to support core work.	Partnership
HS2 Woodland Fund	Involved on the Independent Panel overseeing the distribution of £5m of funding via HS2 to support new woodland creation and restoration of ancient woodland in HS2 corridor.	Partnership Advisor
Local Wildlife Sites	To oversee the Local Wildlife Sites programme that is run by TVERC and the local wildlife trust.	Partnership
Biodiversity Advisory Group	Provide an oversight on biodiversity action, policy and planning in the county. Has been highly influential e.g. in overseeing Conservation Target Areas and more recently the emerging Nature Recovery Network.	Partnership
OxCam Local Nature Partnership	OCC represent Oxon LA interests on an informal partnership of LNPs and others to inform the development of strategic nature conservation opportunities in the OxCam Arc.	Partnership
Cotswold Voluntary Wardens	Informal partnership that provides volunteer support to Centenary Wood and other OCC sites in West Oxon.	Partnership
Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment	Long-term partnership that supports wide range of access and environmental projects in county. Cllr Constance on TOE board.	Partnership