

Biodiversity Action Report 2024

Oxfordshire County Council



The Biodiversity Action Report 2024 ('the Report') has been prepared to report on the actions undertaken by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to fulfil the 'strengthened' biodiversity duty under the Environment Act 2021. The actions referred to in this report were initially identified and outlined in the Biodiversity Duty Initial Considerations Report.

This report includes:

- a summary of the action OCC have taken to comply with the biodiversity duty;
- how OCC plan to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period;
- the actions OCC have carried out to meet biodiversity net gain obligations;
- details of biodiversity net gains resulting from biodiversity gain plans OCC have approved in 2024; and
- how OCC plan to meet biodiversity net gain obligations in the next reporting period.

Highlights in 2024

- Oxfordshire County Council have continued to support and fund their projects and partners;



Oxfordshire Wildlife Sites Project

- A total of 20 new Road Verge Nature Reserves (RVNRs) have been designated in 2024 and a new online form has been launched to allow the proposal of new RVNR sites and other actions to improve the biodiversity value of verges in Oxfordshire. More information can be found here: [Taking action for the environment | Oxfordshire County Council](#)



- A total of 45 biodiversity volunteers were recruited in 2024, providing over 80 hours of volunteer time. Further information about this role and how to apply can be found at: [Become a biodiversity volunteer | Climate Action Oxfordshire](#)
- A draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has been produced and consulted on. Further information can be found at: [Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\) | Oxfordshire County Council](#)



- Two natural flood management schemes were implemented with input from local community groups.

Headline Indicators

These headline indicators have been developed in support of the Biodiversity Action Framework and were not in place during the reporting period. Where the information is available, data for these indicators has been included to inform the baseline and monitoring of trends. In future reports we will gather data against all these indicators.

Nature Positive Council		
Council skills, tools and culture	Number of volunteers hours working on biodiversity action for OCC	80
	Number of staff with up to date biodiversity training	Not measured in 2024
	Number of FTE biodiversity and green infrastructure staff employed at end of 2024	4.7
Managing land to improve biodiversity	Area of OCC landholding under nature conservation-led management (ha)	Not measured in 2024
	Number of occasions pesticides or herbicides used	Not measured in 2024
	Number of occasions peat, or peat-grown plants, purchased	Not measured in 2024
All Planning Applications – reported at point of discharge of BNG condition	%(non-exempt) permissions delivering 10% BNG	1
	% BNG onsite	100%
	% BNG offsite in Oxfordshire	0
	% BNG offsite outside Oxfordshire	0
	% BNG from statutory credits	0
	Total areas/lengths of habitats created in Oxfordshire	3.73ha habitat, 0.33km hedgerow 0.6km watercourses
	Total areas/lengths of habitats enhanced in Oxfordshire	0.1km hedgerow
	% BNG delivering LNRS actions	Not measured in 2024
	Area of irreplaceable habitat lost	0
Our own planning applications – reported at point of discharge of BNG condition (and projects coming forward outside of the planning system)	% Reg 3 planning applications delivering 20% BNG	0
	% BNG onsite	0
	% BNG offsite in Oxfordshire	0
	% BNG offsite outside Oxfordshire	0
	% BNG from statutory credits	0
	Total areas/lengths of habitats created in Oxfordshire	
	Total areas/lengths of habitats enhanced in Oxfordshire	0
	% BNG delivering LNRS actions	Not measured in 2024
Area of irreplaceable habitat lost	0	
A Natural Capital Approach	% changes in land-use informed by natural capital assessment	Not measured in 2024
	Amount invested in nature-based solutions	Not measured in 2024
	% OCC developments where EBNT or other natural capital assessment undertaken	Not measured in 2024

Oxfordshire-wide Nature Recovery		
(LNRS monitoring and reporting will be developed separately)	Amount invested in organisations who enable nature recovery in Oxfordshire	£87,148
	% Local Wildlife Sites in Oxfordshire in positive management	45%
Biodiversity Awareness		
	Number of visits to OCC natural environment webpages	Not measured in 2024
Access to Nature for All		
	Area of publicly accessible greenspace on Council landholdings	Not measured in 2024
	Area of publicly accessible greenspace on Council landholdings meeting Green Flag criteria and/or designated as a Local Nature Reserve or Local Wildlife Site.	Not measured in 2024

Actions undertaken and the progress made in 2024 including the next steps to be undertaken

Action	Action progress (complete, in progress, not yet actioned)	Description of progress and impact	Next steps
Collaboration and partnerships			
Continue to fund and support the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre	Complete	Further information regarding the functions supported of the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre can be found at Welcome Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (tverc.org) . TVERC collated 204,576 new records, processed 555 data search enquiries, surveyed 39 local wildlife sites, organised 94 volunteer days and organised a local recorders conference in 2024.	Continue to fund and support the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre
Ensure up-to-date environmental data is integrated appropriately into systems and applications of all OCC service areas	In progress	Data is available organisation wide and most service team systems and applications but not yet integrated into all	Continue to work with service teams to increase awareness of the importance of achieving this objective
Continue to fund and support the Oxfordshire Wildlife Sites Project	Complete	Further information regarding the functions supported of the Oxfordshire Wildlife Sites Project can be found at Local Wildlife Sites Berks Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (bbowt.org.uk)	Continue to fund and support the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust to undertake LWS Project work.
Provide longer-term funding commitments to the Oxfordshire Wildlife Sites Project	In progress	A small amount of additional funding has been provided to TVERC/BBOWT this year to support a review of the project to support a bid for further funding in 26/27. Further information regarding the functions supported of the Oxfordshire Wildlife Sites	Continue discussions on appropriate aims and funding to inform budget setting for 26/27.

Action	Action progress (complete, in progress, not yet actioned)	Description of progress and impact	Next steps
Ensure all Local Wildlife Sites in Oxfordshire are in positive conservation management	In progress	Project can be found at Local Wildlife Sites Berks Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (bbowt.org.uk) . Longer-term funding commitments could help achieve against the aims of this project	Continue discussions with the Oxfordshire Wildlife Sites Project regarding appropriate aims and funding
Produce updated Lower Windrush Valley Project strategy	In progress	An updated project strategy could help achieve against the aims of this project. Further information can be found at Lower Windrush Valley Project - What we do Oxfordshire County Council	A Lower Windrush Valley Project manager was recruited in September 2024 who will take this action forward
Fund and support the Oxford/Bernwood/Ray Project	Not yet actioned	Further information regarding this project can be found at Bernwood Forest and Ray Valley Living Landscape Berks Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (bbowt.org.uk)	BBOWT to take this action forward
Continue to fund, support and engage with the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership	Complete	Further information regarding the functions supported of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership can be found at Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership (OLNP) . The funding provided by OCC has been integral to all functions of the OLNP which in 2024 has broadly covered; readying the environment sector to accept private money for nature recovery, ensuring nature is accessible and inclusive, particularly to those who need it most and supporting delivery of the LNRS.	Continue to fund, support and engage with the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership. Embed climate action into LNP groups (action 16 from Climate Adaptation Route map)

Action	Action progress (complete, in progress, not yet actioned)	Description of progress and impact	Next steps
Provide longer-term funding commitments to the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership	Not yet actioned	Discussions to be started with the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership regarding providing longer-term funding commitments	Initiate internal discussions within OCC regarding providing longer-term funding commitments
Continue to support Community Action Groups across Oxfordshire	Complete	Multiple Community Action Groups engaged with directly regarding aspects such as site management and indirectly through advice to Parish Councils and organisations such as Wild Oxfordshire	Continue to support Community Action Groups across Oxfordshire
Continue to engage with Community Action Groups across Oxfordshire regarding the LNRS	Complete	Community Action Groups were invited to engage on the formation of the LNRS and have been directly involved particularly the communication and engagement working group	Engage with Community Action Groups in co-ordination of delivery of LNRS measures
Land management			
Carry out baseline habitat surveys of all land parcels owned by OCC suitable for BNG	In progress	OCC is currently at the BNG demand analysis stage, required to determine which sites will be bought forwards for survey	Carry out baseline habitat surveys of all land parcels owned by OCC suitable for BNG once site selection has been completed
Create and obtain approval for business case for a habitat banking vehicle designed to deliver BNG using OCC owned sites	In progress	An initial business case has been approved to provide funding for a feasibility assessment of a habitat banking vehicle	Undertake the feasibility input assessment
Design and implement habitat management and monitoring plans to deliver BNG on suitable sites	In progress	OCC is currently at the BNG demand analysis stage, required to determine which sites will be bought forwards for survey	Carry out baseline habitat surveys of all land parcels owned by OCC suitable for BNG once site selection has been completed in order to inform habitat management and monitoring plans
Sell BNG credits generated by management of OCC owned sites	In progress	OCC is currently at the BNG demand analysis stage, required to determine which sites will be bought forwards for survey	Sell BNG credits generated by management of OCC owned sites once the habitat banking vehicle has been set up

Action	Action progress (complete, in progress, not yet actioned)	Description of progress and impact	Next steps
Carry out baseline habitat surveys of all statutory and non-statutory designated wildlife sites owned by OCC	In progress	All sites surveyed which are designated for ecological features with the exceptions of Carterton grassland LWS, Milhamford field and quad LWS and RVNRs 44 and 45.	Carry out surveys of Carterton grassland LWS, Milhamford field and quad LWS and RVNRs 44 and 45 and RVNRs 5, 8, 20, 25 and 41 requiring update surveys in 2025
Implement habitat management and monitoring plans to ensure all statutory and non-statutory designed wildlife sites owned by OCC are in positive conservation management	In progress	Habitat management and monitoring plans have been designed for all RVNRs and sites will be included in active management at an inclusion rate of 6 sites per year. Currently 10 RVNRs are in active management. Stratfield Brake DWS has been confirmed as in positive conservation management through the Woodland Trust. All other sites are under consideration for inclusion in the habitat banking vehicle with the exception of Stratton Audley Quarry LWS.	Continue to monitor the RVNRs and increase the number of sites in active management by 6 annually Continue to support the Woodland Trust in the management of Stratfield Brake DWS Continue to consider the inclusion of all other sites within the habitat banking vehicle Search for alternative actions to include Stratton Audley Quarry LWS and those sites not bought into the habitat banking vehicle (if any) into positive conservation management
Ensure project management guidance is provided to all OCC service areas regarding legally protected habitats, species, designated sites and responsibilities for biodiversity enhancement including voluntary BNG	In progress	Discussions held with OCC service teams regarding impact pathways to legally protected species, legally controlled invasive species, designated wildlife sites, priority habitats and ecological enhancements	Continue to work with service teams to increase awareness of the importance of achieving this objective
Create and implement an online form to allow external proposals regarding road verge management and road verge nature reserves	Complete	The online form can be found here Road verge management - Oxfordshire County Council . This form allows individuals or organisations to submit verge management proposals, requesting the required information to make a decision for approval regarding biodiversity and safety.	Continue to engage with and implement submissions received from the online form

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Produce updated RVNR report	Complete	Submissions are saved in one location to increase efficiency of recording The updated report can be found here Road Verge Nature Reserves in Oxfordshire . The report is available online to inform the locations of RVNRs, why they are designated and management requirements	Continue to update the RVNR report with monitoring survey data
All road verge nature reserves will be resurveyed to ensure all survey data is no less than 5 years old and site specific management plans and designation adjusted accordingly	In progress	All RVNRs surveyed in 2024 with survey data older than 5 years with the exceptions of RVNRs 44 and 45	Survey RVNRs 44 and 45 and RVNRs 5, 8, 20, 25 and 41 requiring update surveys in 2025
At least 6 sites designated sites will be put into full appropriate management regimes each calendar year until all road verge nature reserve sites are included	In progress	A schedule has been designed and agreed with OCC highways verge management team	Monitor the implementation of the agreed schedule
Proposed road verge areas that do not meet RVNR designation criteria will be sign posted and placed under approved management plans	Complete	Signage has been deployed at proposed road verge areas that do not meet RVNR designation criteria and management agreed with appropriate individuals and organisations	Continue to update signage as needed
Produce guidance for areas of paved walkways, pavement, rooftops and walls under OCC responsibility that could be replaced with alternatives that increase their urban greening factor	Not yet actioned	Discussions to be started with the OCC highways and public rights of way teams to understand current approaches and opportunities for ecological enhancements	Engage with OCC highways and public rights of way teams
Update the tree policy to maximise biodiversity as far as possible	Not yet actioned	Consultation on an update for OCC's tree policy is scheduled for 2025	Engage with the tree policy consultation

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Use of pesticides, herbicides, peat and other chemicals will be removed from all methodologies undertaken by OCC, including a phasing out of use by external partners	In progress	OCC service teams engaged to understand uses of pesticides, herbicides, peat and other chemicals directly and indirectly	Continue discussions with OCC service teams to fully understand current usage
Implement guidance on streetlighting and the lighting of OCC buildings	Complete	Confirmed that the OCC lighting teams follow guidance regarding biodiversity issued by the Institute of Lighting Professionals	Engage with OCC Highways Team to incorporate biodiversity and landscape considerations into Part Night Lighting schemes under Dark Sky initiatives
Education			
A communication plan will be implemented including both internal and external communications	In progress	Discussions started with OCC communications team	Continue discussions with OCC communications team and climate action team to decide most appropriate model for a communication plan regarding biodiversity
At least one biodiversity champion will be designated within each of OCC's service areas	In progress	Biodiversity champion role description completed with introductory presentation and reporting template. OCC team members consulted to gauge interest	Engage with interested OCC team members to build champions network
The biodiversity officer and/or biodiversity team leader will attend at least one team meeting in each of OCC's service areas per year	In progress	OCC service team specific presentations created and designed to raise of biodiversity with particular focus on impacts to legally protected species, legally controlled invasive species, designated wildlife sites, priority habitats and ecological enhancements	Engage with OCC service teams with an offer to attend their team meeting
At least one volunteer will be recruited to support the functions of the biodiversity team	Complete	A total of 45 volunteers recruited and over 80 hours of volunteering logged	Continue to recruit volunteers and hold volunteering sessions
Internal policies and process			

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Develop a biodiversity footprint for OCC	In progress	Discussions with Oxford University and OCC's Sustainable Supply Chain Lead have been held to inform potential methods of measurement of the Council's biodiversity footprint	Seek an Oxford Brookes Student Placement for a project on biodiversity and Life Cycle Assessment to define the Council's biodiversity impact on a quantitative scale and test new LCA methods being pioneered by Oxford University
Develop a 'Biodiversity Strategy' including relevant policies	In progress	A Biodiversity Action Framework has been drafted	Run an internal consultation on the draft Biodiversity Action Framework and take to cabinet for adoption.
Integrate biodiversity conservation and enhancement assessment alongside, or as part of, the Climate Impact Assessment tool	In progress	The Doughnut Economics Collective is working on a wider assessment tool, which would incorporate biodiversity assessment	Engage with the Doughnut Economics Collective to review how biodiversity conservation and enhancement is reflected in the assessment tool
Input biodiversity guidance into the climate vulnerability assessment	Complete	The Landscape and Nature Recovery team have provided input into the climate vulnerability assessment which includes a chapter on natural environment assets. The assessment has been used to inform the LNRS and the Climate Adaptation Route map	The climate adaptation route map has identified 13 actions relating to the Natural Environment and Assets. - where appropriate these will be incorporated into the Biodiversity Action Plan 2025
Develop a biodiversity climate impact assessment	Not yet actioned	The need for this piece of work is listed as VH priority in the Climate Adaptation Route Map	Work with climate team to take this action forward in 2025
Incorporate OCC's data on climate vulnerability and adaptation into the LNRS	Complete	OCC's data on climate vulnerability and adaptation incorporated into the LNRS to help inform appropriate mapping of priority areas in relation to climate change	Ensure that the wider environmental benefits of measures (including climate mitigation and adaptation) identified in the LNRS are clearly identified on the Local Habitat Map

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Input biodiversity guidance into circular economy documents	In progress	The Landscape and Nature Recovery Team has engaged with the Circular Economy Strategy development to ensure biodiversity is appropriately reflected	Landscape and Nature Recovery Team to continue to engage and review the Circular Economy Strategy to ensure biodiversity is appropriately incorporated
Develop guidance on supply chains and procurement contracts to identify areas where biodiversity impacts and waste can be minimised and ensure procurement is sustainable	In progress	The Sustainable Supply Chains Officer has reviewed the Ethical Procurement Policy and identified the potential for further links to biodiversity to be made	Sustainable Supply Chain Officer to seek to refresh the Ethical Procurement Policy including inclusion of further links to biodiversity, informed by Life Cycle Assessment work
Develop guidance on property strategy	Not yet actioned	Discussions to be held with OCC's property strategy team to determine how biodiversity can be considered	Engage with the OCC property strategy team
Implement KPIs across all service areas of OCC	In progress	Discussions held to determine appropriate KPIs to take forward for implementation	Continue discussions and implement feasible KPIs
Planning: Local Planning Authority role			
Complete a quantitative assessment of levels of change in biodiversity that restoration of minerals sites in Oxfordshire has secured in the past	In progress	The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre have been commissioned to undertake this study	Support the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre and analyse the results and conclusions once complete to inform appropriate actions
Implement an updated Minerals and Waste Local Plan policy in the context of mandatory BNG	Not yet actioned	Dependant on timetable for Minerals and Waste Local Plan	Plan resources accordingly once further information is received regarding an expected timeline for consultation
Publish common standards guidance for the application of biodiversity net gain in Oxfordshire	In progress	Initial discussions held with district level biodiversity officers and LNP BNG working group	Conclude discussions with district biodiversity officers and draft guidance document
Develop detailed guidance on biodiversity in minerals and waste sites	Not yet actioned	To be actioned now that mandatory BNG guidance has been received and to be informed by a	Begin to draft detailed guidance on biodiversity in minerals and waste sites

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		quantitative assessment of levels of change in biodiversity that restoration of minerals sites in Oxfordshire	
Complete an update of Local Validation Requirements in relation to BNG	Complete	Response provided to consultation on Local Validation Requirements in relation to BNG	Continue to review and update as appropriate
Produce design guidelines for infrastructure and schools projects to ensure good design of BNG	In progress	Draft guidance completed pending input from OCC's school projects team	Amend guidance as appropriate pending feedback and publish once complete
Collect and report on data relating to BNG secured through the planning process (statutory requirement) at point of discharge of BNG conditions	Complete	<p>During the period 01 Jan 2024 – 01 Jan 2025 x conditions that secured biodiversity net gain were discharged. These were all relating to pre-mandatory BNG. No permissions in this time period were subject to mandatory BNG.</p> <p>Castle Barn Quarry <u>MW.0131/23:</u> Onsite BNG 2.45 cereal crops 0.22ha Arable field Margins Tussocky 0.57ha Lowland calcareous grassland Pond (non-priority habitat) 0.17ha Tall herb communities 0.01ha Lowland mixed deciduous woodland 0.23ha Other inland rock and scree 0.06ha Bioswale 0.02ha</p> <p>30% BNG area habitats 394% BNG hedgerow habitats 100% BNG watercourses</p> <p>9.69 habitat units 4.53 hedgerow units 3.02 river units</p>	Continue to collect and report on data relating to BNG secured through the planning process for the next reporting period

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Sutton Wick – condition 7 MW.0052/23			
Succeed in hiring an individual to the 'Ecology Planner' role	Not yet actioned	No individual was hired to this role and instead a new biodiversity officer will be hired	Continue the process to hire a biodiversity officer
Planning: Statutory Consultee Role			
Update the 'Biodiversity and Planning in Oxfordshire' document and the biodiversity and planning information on the OCC website to reflect new requirements under the Environment Act 2021	Not yet actioned	To be actioned now that mandatory BNG guidance has been received	Begin to update the 'Biodiversity and Planning in Oxfordshire' document and the biodiversity and planning information on the OCC website. Include Climate Adaptation Route Map action 18 around climate change and BNG
Send the updated 'Biodiversity and Planning in Oxfordshire' document to the district planning teams and the Local Nature Partnership	Not yet actioned	To be actioned once this document has been updated	Begin to update the 'Biodiversity and Planning in Oxfordshire' document and the biodiversity and planning information on the OCC website
Update planning advice templates	Complete	Planning advice templates updated to reflect the requirements of mandatory BNG	Continue to review and update as appropriate
Update the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy to include opportunities to provide biodiversity and surface water run-off water quality enhancements through statutory planning consultations on drainage, and through SuDS Approval Body approvals	In progress	Biodiversity input provided to the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, amendments made to include reference to the LNRS	Continue discussions and provide input into the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy
Natural capital			
Support a partner organisation to fund and deliver at least one Natural Flood Management scheme	Complete	Two Natural Flood Management schemes implemented in Oxfordshire at Littleworth and Sunningwell. Flooding has been reduced in	Engage with the OCC's flood team and partner organisations to identify further opportunities

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		vulnerable areas while new features for biodiversity have been created. Community groups have also been engaged in maintenance of the schemes, increasing awareness and education.	
Incorporate OCC's flood risk data and knowledge into the LNRS	Complete	OCC's data on flood risk incorporated into the LNRS to help inform appropriate mapping of priority areas in relation to flooding	Update the LNRS with updated flood risk data as appropriate in the next LNRS review period
Incorporate data on air quality into the LNRS	Complete	OCC's data on air quality incorporated into the LNRS to help inform understanding of the pressures on biodiversity and opportunities for wider ecosystem services through nature recovery	Update the LNRS with updated air quality data as appropriate in the next LNRS review period
Complete natural capital opportunity mapping for Oxfordshire through collaboration with Oxford University	Complete	Mapping completed by Oxford University	Work with Oxford University to identify actions building on the outcomes of the mapping exercise
Produce a report in collaboration with the LNP to identify barriers and how they can be reduced regarding access to nature for improved health and wellbeing, including through collaboration across health and environment sectors to support participation in nature-based activities for those with the greatest needs	Complete	Through the development process of this report it was determined that the most appropriate action would be to first identify the differing access to green space within Oxfordshire. It was identified that the areas with the greatest deprivation also has the lowest access to green space. This is an important first step in developing actions and understanding to increase access to green space and biodiversity for these areas	Use the findings and recommendations made within the report to develop actions to increase access to greenspace and biodiversity
Develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the County	In progress	A review of previous green infrastructure strategies has been undertaken and green infrastructure metric is in development . Internal	Continue development of a green infrastructure metric and begin to draft a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the County (shared action

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		<p>liaison across OCC teams has begun to understand best ways to collaborate, and the need for a strategy. An EOI to the Nature Towns and Cities HLF fund has been made.</p>	<p>with Climate Adaptation Route Map 21). a</p>