



Report to Town Council From Land & Nature Group

Subject:	Nature Recovery Plan Proposal
From:	Geoff Griffiths, FM, PK
Date:	14 October 2022
For decision	
Summary of decisions or actions requested (including timing):	
<p>The Council is invited to resolve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To develop a local Nature Recovery Plan (NRP) based on local knowledge, data and engagement with landowners, land managers and residents, to expand, improve and connect wildlife-rich habitats.• To write to neighbouring parishes in Fawler, Finstock and Cornbury inviting them to join in developing the NRP such that it covers all four parishes• To take a leadership role in developing the NRP, including in coordination, liaison with partner organisations and obtaining necessary resources• To invest some resource in coordination, technical expertise and engagement with the local community and landowners <p>The current expectation is that a draft NRP can be available for public consultation during the second half of 2023 but as this cannot be a firm commitment as the partnership approach will mean that the town council will not have sole control of the process.</p> <p>Financial implications: [please explain any costs associated with decisions or actions, and whether these have already been budgeted for]</p> <p>Budget requirements for the year 2023/24 associated with this proposal have been included in the LNG submission for consideration during the budget setting process. Specific requirements will be brought to the council at the appropriate times</p>	

Background

Nature does not recognise administrative boundaries and many ecological processes operate at landscape scales (10s x square kilometres). The process of nature recovery planning is generally done therefore, at the scale of clusters of landholdings *or parishes*. The Land and Working Group (LNG) of the Town Council is proposing that Charlbury leads a partnership of the four contiguous parishes of Charlbury, Cornbury, Fawler and Finstock to facilitate the development and implementation of a landscape scale Nature Recovery Plan (NRP). Whilst the present proposal relates to these four parishes, there may be circumstances in which other surrounding parishes could be included in the partnership (e.g., Leafield, Chilson, Spelsbury, Chadlington, Stonesfield).

Some further details are included in an earlier LNG paper “Parish Nature Recovery Plan proposal_v9_22July22.docx” available on Basecamp.

There are many examples of successful parish partnerships in England (see Commission for Rural Communities:

http://www.calc.org.uk/Images/Clustering%20by%20parish%20and%20town%20councils_tcm131-143747.pdf), established for a host of reasons beyond nature recovery: for example, sustainable journeys, developing food networks. A local example in Oxfordshire is East & West Challow near Grove.

Nature Recovery Plan objectives:

Nature recovery planning is integral to the Defra initiative to develop and implement Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), a new mandatory system of spatial strategies for nature established by the Environment Act 2021 to be implemented at county level. Parishes will make a significant contribution to the development of the county-wide LNRS (for Oxfordshire), facilitated by clusters of parishes working together to:

- restore and connect habitats on council-owned and -managed land for the benefit of wildlife and to encourage landowners to do the same on their own land;
- improve the sequestration/storage of carbon to reduce dangerous emissions of greenhouse gases.

Proposal:

The Council is invited to resolve:

- To develop a local Nature Recovery Plan (NRP) based on local knowledge, data and engagement with landowners, land managers and residents, to expand, improve and connect wildlife-rich habitats.
- To write to neighbouring parishes in Fawler, Finstock and Cornbury inviting them to join in developing the NRP such that it covers all four parishes
- To take a leadership role in developing the NRP, including in coordination, liaison with partner organisations and obtaining necessary resources
- To invest some resource in coordination, technical expertise and engagement with the local community and landowners

Process:

It is proposed that a collaborative “parishes together” approach is consistent with the Town Council’s commitment to act on the climate and ecological emergency by preparing for a zero carbon, biodiverse and sustainable future. This will be enhanced by:

- sharing resources and expertise across the four parishes;
- working across parish boundaries to correspond with ecological principles and to ensure a more ecologically ‘joined-up’ approach as part of a county-wide network;
- engaging all four communities by providing appropriate leadership, governance and inspiration in an open and transparent way.

Support from, for example, OCC & WODC as well as local partner organisations such as Wild Oxfordshire, OTP, Wychwood Forest Trust, Evenlode Catchment Partnership, is likely to be more forthcoming to a group of parishes working together in a coordinated way.

It is anticipated that a draft NRP for the four parishes for public consultation can be prepared by the middle of 2023, although this cannot be a firm commitment at this stage as Charlbury TC will not be in sole control of the process. Early consultations with the parish meetings of Fawler and Cornbury and with Finstock Parish Council. It is proposed that Charlbury should take a leadership role in the partnership

Resources:

We will make the most of existing resources (e.g. LNG volunteers, town clerk, partnership offered by Treescapes, Wild Oxfordshire, TVERC) and propose a TC contribution to matched funding for additional resource. Although smaller communities may not be able to put in the same amount of funding, their participation could help to unlock funds and support from other agencies.

Impact:

Working at the landscape scale is an opportunity to develop partnerships with landowners and involve residents, as a testbed for nature recovery planning that could act as an exemplar for other parishes in the county and beyond. Working with neighbouring communities will help to achieve the scale of impact needed, while remaining small enough to be locally-led.