



Report to Town Council

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| Subject: | Land and Nature Group |
| From: | Geoffrey Griffiths |
| Date: | 4 Dec 23 |
| For information only | |
| Summary of decisions or actions requested (including timing): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• None | |
| Financial implications: None | |
| Communications: see below | |

Town Council Managed/owned land.

1. Mill Field restoration: grant funding received (with thanks) from Sustainable Charlbury. First stage of project completed – cut & collect and harrowing by contractor, followed by 3 volunteer sessions to sow yellow rattle seed from Southill Solar. Further cut and collect planned in Spring and Summer, followed by volunteer sowing of flood plain meadow seed. Long term management of the meadow will be more financially viable if vehicle access is improved for mowing, baling with possible installation of Pound Hill bridge (see section below).
2. Pound Hill bridge: possible construction of permanent bridge from Pound Hill triangle to the Mill Field, to improve access for walkers and maintenance, contingent on grant funding. The bridge would facilitate meadow restoration and construction of the proposed fish pass. The LNG supports the aims of the bridge to improve access for walkers and for maintenance of the Mill Field, recognising that it would facilitate meadow restoration and construction of a fish pass. However, the LNG requests that safeguards be put in place to prevent possible increased access for large vehicles leading to overuse or damage to the ecology of the Mill Field in the future, for example by drawing up a covenant specifying the use of the land for both nature and people.
3. Mill Field riverbank management: a proposal for limited clearance of riverside trees and shrubs to increase light to the river has been developed by Mill Field representatives and LNG and was approved at October Town Council meeting. Quotes are currently being obtained for this work. There is a wish for a more holistic long-term plan to include management of willow trees along the river. Frances Mortimer has requested advice from Wild Oxfordshire, who have responded this week and are arranging a site visit from ecologist, Craig Blackwell, in the New Year, to advise on a long-term management plan for the meadow and river. Following receipt of EA recommendation on fish pass and ecologist recommendations on holistic management of the meadow and river, it was agreed that LNG

should facilitate engagement with other groups, including anglers and canoe club, to inform a long-term plan.

4. Bowls Club car-park: first working party was a success on 19 November, second one planned when saplings arrive from TCV.
5. Roadside verges: contractor did not follow plan in 2023 but has agreed to do so in 2024; TC agreed in October that small meadow area to be retained on Ticknell Piece mound following consultation with residents – local wildflower seed to be sown. Garden Society will plant more bulbs and will avoid wildflower area of Pound Hill Triangle.

Nature Recovery Plan.

1. Draft plan has been written and is under review by members of the LNG. Prue Addison (BBOWT) indicated at a recent FoE meeting in Oxford (attended by 4x members of LNG), that parish contributions towards the county-led Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) to be ready for submission in the early part of 2024.
2. HLF funding application. It was agreed that we would go ahead with this bid. If not successful, we will have a fully developed and costed proposal to apply for funds in the future. The bid will fund a coordinator (ambassador for nature recovery) with responsibility for coordinating activity (meetings, species/habitat surveys, public engagement/citizen science/promotion etc) across three localities: Charlbury, Upper Windrush and Mid-Cherwell. The intention is to demonstrate the potential of parish led nature recovery as a county exemplar that can be followed by other parishes, both within the county and nationally.
3. Nature Recovery Networks. Marcus Simmons has funding from Natural England until end March 2024 with the opportunity to contribute towards LNG activities, especially the development of the NRP. Marcus will organise a series of workshops (some in Charlbury) into the New Year on nature recovery networks.

Meetings & Publicity.

Meetings:

- Blenheim Meeting (25 Oct 23). A useful and informative meeting at Blenheim estate, with kind thanks to David Green and Rachel Furness-Smith. Topics discussed were data collection (esp. new technology for aerial imagery, air/water quality monitoring), funding and future direction of nature recovery within the context of large estates.
- North east Cotswold Farm Cluster (NECFC) meeting with Caroline Greenwood (Finstock, 14 Oct 23). Caroline described the work of the NECFC and the potential interaction between parish groups and the nature recovery work of the NECFC, esp. the need for community engagement and improved public understanding of nature recovery.