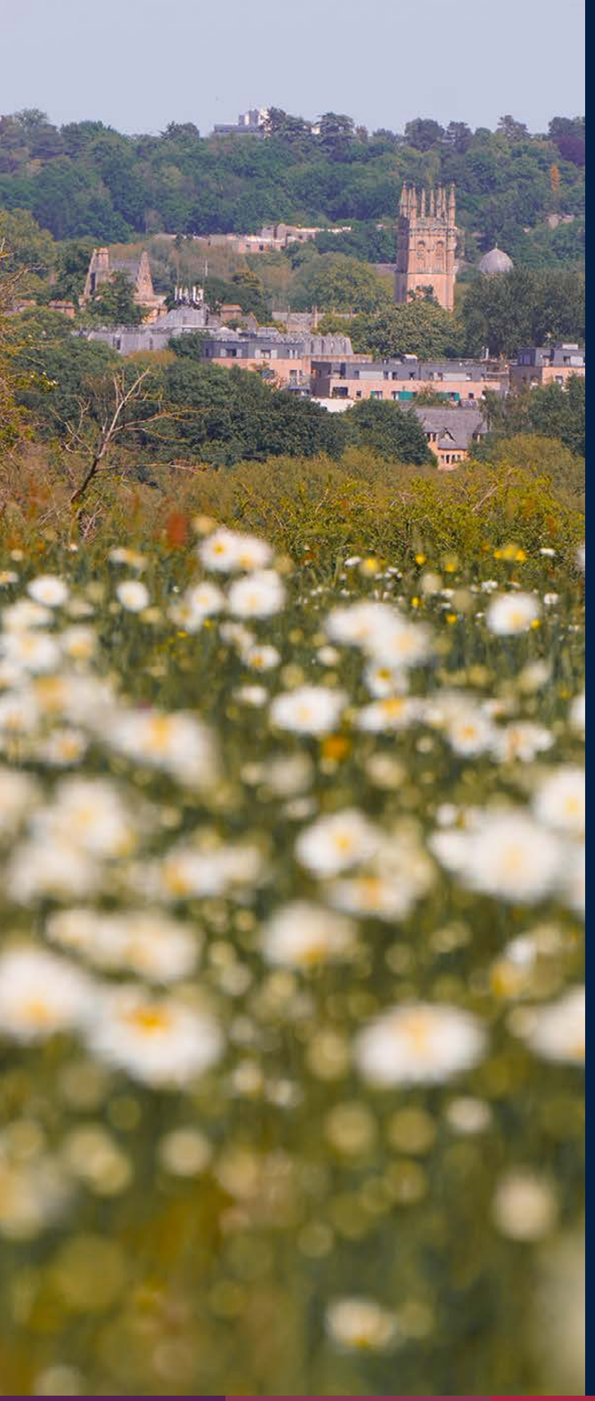


University of Oxford

Biodiversity Action Plan



Version 1
September 2026

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Nature positive at the University of Oxford

In the Environmental Sustainability Strategy, updated in 2026, the University of Oxford committed to meeting its nature positive targets by 2035. The nature positive targets focus on two areas of the University's nature impact – on the University estate and in the University's supply chain. Nature impacts on the estate are those that the University has most control over, but those in the supply chain are the largest.

We are working with and are verified by Nature Positive Universities to ensure that what we are doing is in line with best practice across the sector. Nature Positive Universities is a global community of higher education institutions, co-founded with UNEP, setting targets and acting to prioritise nature on their campuses and through their supply chains. This document sets out the nature positive target for the University's estate. Future documents will be released describing the University's nature positive targets for its supply chain.



Nature or biodiversity?

Often the terms nature and biodiversity are used interchangeably. While the two terms are related, they mean different things.

Nature refers to the systems that make up our natural world, and biodiversity refers to the living part of that. So, by committing to be nature positive, the University is committing to reducing its impact on 'nature' generally, which might include reducing pollution, land use change, or carbon emissions, all designed to make our impact on the natural world less severe. Reducing these impacts on nature should in turn promote biodiversity, which is defined as the variety of living organisms.

On the estate, where the University has control of what occurs, we can take direct action to improve biodiversity, which is what this Biodiversity Action Plan describes. This largely involves habitat creation and management specifically for the benefit of biodiversity.

About this document

This Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is an extension of the University's Environmental Sustainability Strategy. The BAP sets out a vision for biodiversity improvements on the Oxford University estate and describes how these improvements will contribute towards a nature positive target.

The Biodiversity Action Plan is the first time an estate-wide approach for managing biodiversity has been described. The Biodiversity Action Plan builds on decades of management across the estate and provides a structured approach for biodiversity projects going forward.

This BAP identifies clear 'focus' areas for biodiversity improvements and sets out monitoring plans for those areas. This gives the University a clear approach to implementing and monitoring biodiversity improvements over time.

This document sets direction for the spend of the biodiversity allocation of the Oxford Sustainability Fund, by the Environmental Sustainability Team. Other teams within the Estates Services, such as the Oxford Green Estate, University Parks and Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum, are vital to delivering the projects. The Oxford Green Estate strategies for Research, Education and Outreach and Ecosystem Services are being written in alignment with this BAP.

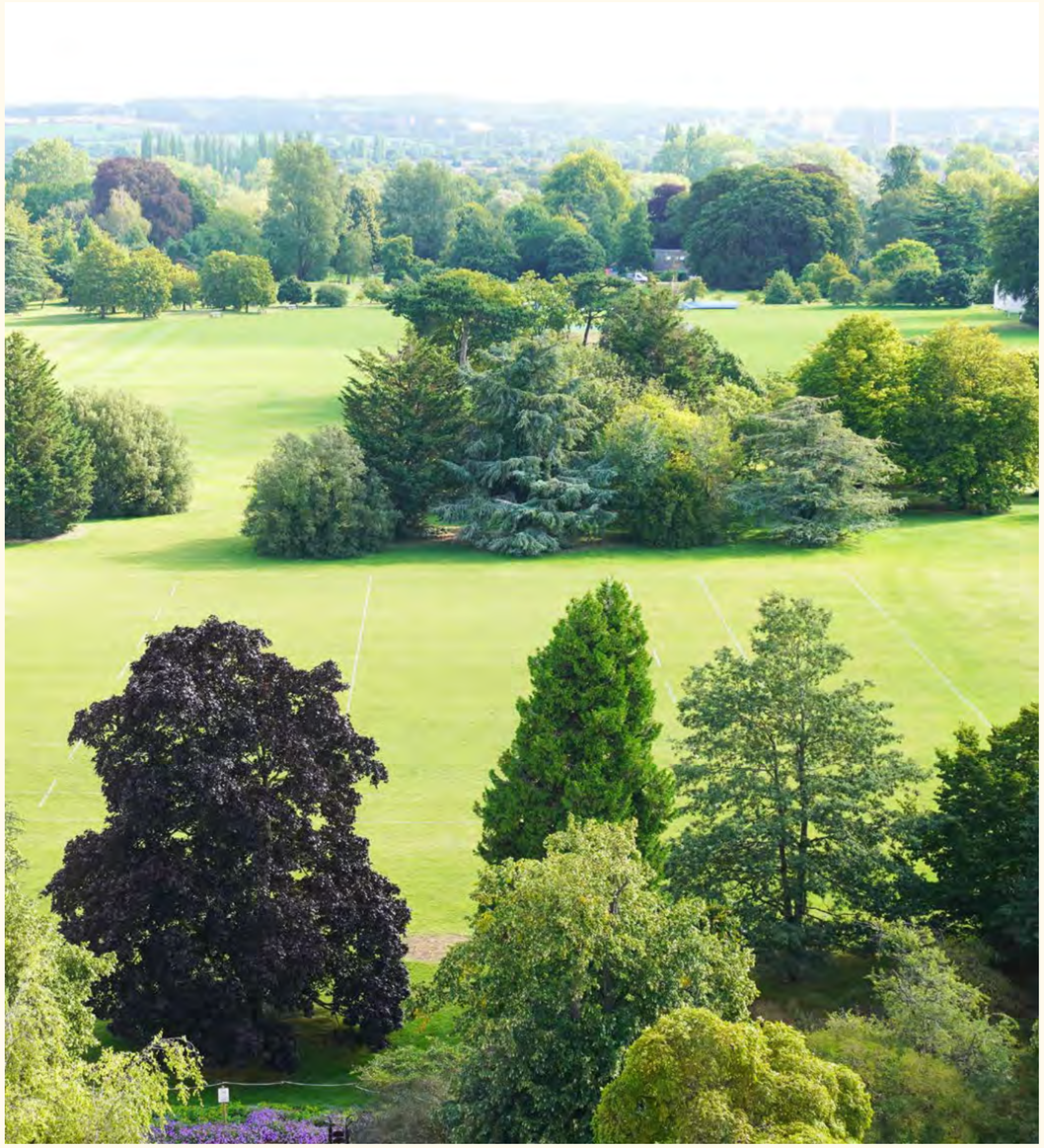
This document is to be reviewed in 2030 and 2035.

Our Estate

The University's estate includes many green spaces, which are collectively referred to as the 'Oxford Green Estate'. The Oxford Green Estate is comprised of over twenty green spaces totalling ~3,365 acres (1,360 hectares). The estate contains a variety of habitat types, including semi-ancient woodland, other deciduous woodland, wildflower hay meadows, freshwater habitats and urban green spaces.

The BAP focuses on the more rural areas of the Oxford Green Estate for biodiversity improvements, as they offer the best opportunity for biodiversity benefit relative to input. However, biodiversity improvements can also be made on other areas of the estate, on and around the ~260 buildings used for teaching and research, if suitable opportunities are identified. Guidance on improvements to building standards for biodiversity are found in the Sustainability Design Guide.

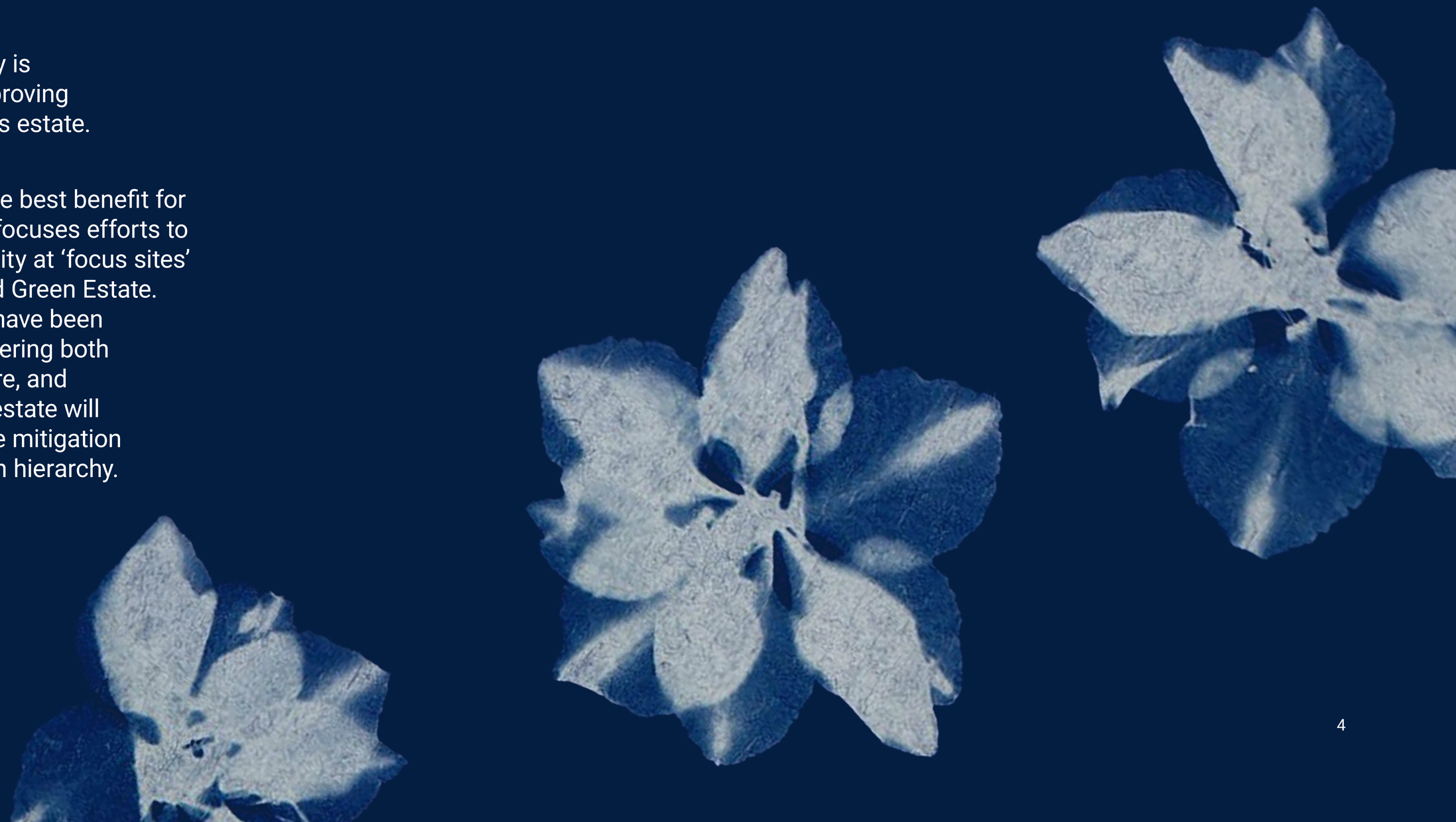
Oxford University's land holdings currently managed by the Oxford University Endowment Fund (OUEM) and the land owned by colleges associated with Oxford University are not included in this BAP.



Our approach

Oxford University is dedicated to improving biodiversity on its estate.

In order to get the best benefit for nature, the BAP focuses efforts to restore biodiversity at ‘focus sites’ within the Oxford Green Estate. The focus sites have been identified considering both people and nature, and projects on our estate will always follow the mitigation and conservation hierarchy.



Benefits for nature

The BAP prioritises areas of the estate that have the highest current or potential ecological value for nature, with consideration given to:

- Biodiversity hotspots, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or Local Nature Sites, because they are the highest-value ecological asset on the estate and carry statutory obligations
- Degraded sites or those in an unfavourable condition, with significant room for improvement
- Enhancing connectivity and resilience across the estate, including the creation of corridors between and buffers around important sites
- The role of the estate in the wider landscape, such as Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

At our focus sites, and across its wider estate and operations, the University commits to implementing the mitigation hierarchy.



Benefits for people

Oxford University wants people inside and outside of the University to benefit from the green spaces that are under its care. The selection of focus sites considered this, specifically:

- Sites which benefit people (e.g. through public access or education)
- Opportunities for scientific research
- Opportunities for wellbeing, education and outreach

The University already works to ensure that a large amount of its green space is open to the public. This includes:

- Court Place Gardens
- Harcourt Arboretum
- Oxford Botanic Garden
- Park Farm
- University Parks
- Wellington Square Garden
- Wytham Woods

Mitigation and conservation hierarchy

The mitigation and conservation hierarchy describes actions to address biodiversity loss in order of impact:

Refrain from actions that damage biodiversity

Reduce the damage incurred by our remaining actions

Restore biodiversity that has been damaged

Renew and enhance nature

Actions to refrain and reduce impact on biodiversity exist as internal best practice and policies. These include:

- Biodiversity considerations and improvements being embedded in the practice of the Oxford Green Estate and University Parks teams. This includes the use of a pesticide policy which advocates for using pesticides only when necessary, doing so sparingly and in a way that minimises impact on non-target nature.
- Any building developments must be taken through consultation with the sustainability team to ensure unnecessary damage is not being done, and that the Sustainability Design Guide is followed.
- Training is given to those making purchases in the University to take environmental consequences into consideration in purchasing.

Biodiversity net gain

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) legislation in the UK requires that, unless exempt, developments must show 10% BNG post-development.

As an ambitious addition to this statutory requirement, Oxford University has a target for its developments submitted for planning after 12 February 2024 to meet 20% BNG post-development, unless exempt as per statutory BNG guidance.

Oxford University is currently creating its BNG strategy, including its approach to the statutory 10% gain and its additional 10% gain target. The BNG strategy, and how it interacts with this BAP, will be published in the future. The strategy might include the creation of habitat banks in some locations, which could be used to provide both statutory units and the additional Oxford University unit requirement. This would require investment in both legal registration and robust ecological delivery.

The BNG metric, however, will not be used to measure wider change in biodiversity across the entire estate. Instead, ecological surveys will be used, as described in ***section 6. Our target*** and ***section 8. Baselining and Monitoring.*** This is because, while the BNG metric has its benefits, it can sometimes be too blunt a tool to measure certain changes in biodiversity. For example, some of our grassland sites might already be considered 'good' according to the BNG metric because of their floristic diversity, but we know that they could be improved further. If the BNG metric alone was used to track changes, such gains would not be measurable. Furthermore, investing in some of the harder-to-enhance, but more ecologically significant, ecosystem types is disincentivised[1] under the BNG metric. Finally, the BNG metric does not measure changes in the presence, abundance or diversity of species, and this means that opportunities to support protected species, or to ensure impacts on particular species are mitigated, are not considered[2].



[1] Miles, N., Duffus, N.E., Bull, J.W. and zu Ermgassen, S.S.O.S.E. (2025) 'An influential biodiversity market may not direct investment toward habitats of national importance', Conservation Science and Practice, 7(12), e70199. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.70199.

[2] Duffus, N.E., Atkins, T.B., zu Ermgassen, S.O.S.E., Grenyer, R., Bull, J.W., Castell, D.A., Stone, B., Tooher, N., Milner-Gulland, E.J. and Lewis, O.T. (2025) 'A globally influential area-condition metric is a poor proxy for invertebrate biodiversity', Journal of Applied Ecology, 62, pp. 2529–2540. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.70166.

Our target

Our overarching target for this BAP is as follows:

To demonstrate an increase in biodiversity at focus sites between 2026 and 2035.

This target, combined with our target for all developments submitted for planning after 12 February 2024 to meet 20% BNG post development (unless otherwise exempt), and our other internal policies to minimise harm on other areas of the estate, will constitute our path to reaching nature positive on our estate by 2035.



Measuring our target

In order to track change, surveying regimes have been established for our focus sites. Full details can be found in ***section 8. Baselining and Monitoring.***

In summary, we have chosen a selection of indicator surveys (vegetation, butterfly, carabid beetle, pollinator and deadwood for terrestrial habitats and great crested newt for freshwater habitats) to represent progress in focus sites. We commit to repeating these surveys in the same locations, with consistent methods, in order to identify how the indicator groups may be changing over time.

We have chosen to use indicator groups as this is a proven method of understanding biodiversity change over time for large estates where studies of a wider array of species are not feasible. We commit to tracking how species numbers, and abundance where possible, changes over time for these sites, as our measure of 'biodiversity', and believe that our actions will make these numbers increase.

A demonstration of this being a SMART target can be found below:

Specific – An increase in biodiversity must be seen across our focus sites

Measurable – Biodiversity will be measured using indicator surveys carried out on a regular basis

Achievable – All sites we believe can either increase in biodiversity or can be maintained at the current biodiversity value

Relevant – This is a nature positive target

Time-bound – We must report on this target in 2035

We commit to reporting on the numeric data that we collect from monitoring the sites with the indicator surveys. Surveys will be completed by trained ecologists and funded by the Oxford Sustainability Fund. We will supplement this formal survey data with other information if available (for example, anecdotal and photographic evidence, as well as data from student research projects or citizen science activities).

There is a risk that events outside of our control hinder us from reaching this target. For example, climatic changes might result in decreasing habitat quality, or new diseases might wipe out species which are currently abundant, significantly reducing the biodiversity of an area. The impact of such events will be assessed in line with the reporting schedule listed in the section below. An annual assessment of such impact will allow opportunity for adaptive management where possible.

Reporting on our target

We commit to the following reporting towards this target:

Annually: At the end of each financial year a minimum of a descriptive update will be provided, providing detail on the biodiversity projects being carried out at each of the focus sites, and others across the estate.

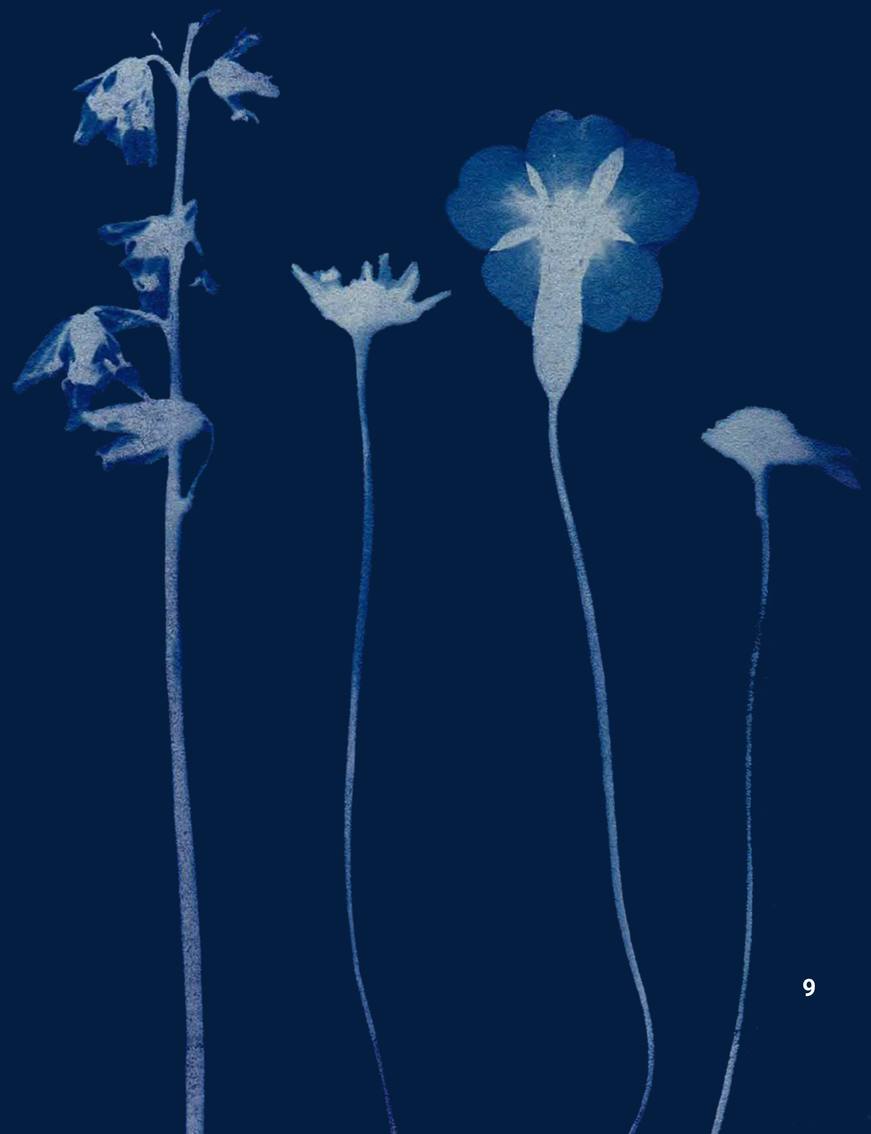
In 2030: This BAP will be reviewed, and survey results so far will be published.

In 2035: This BAP will be reviewed, and survey results will be published, disclosing if we meet our target.





Focus sites

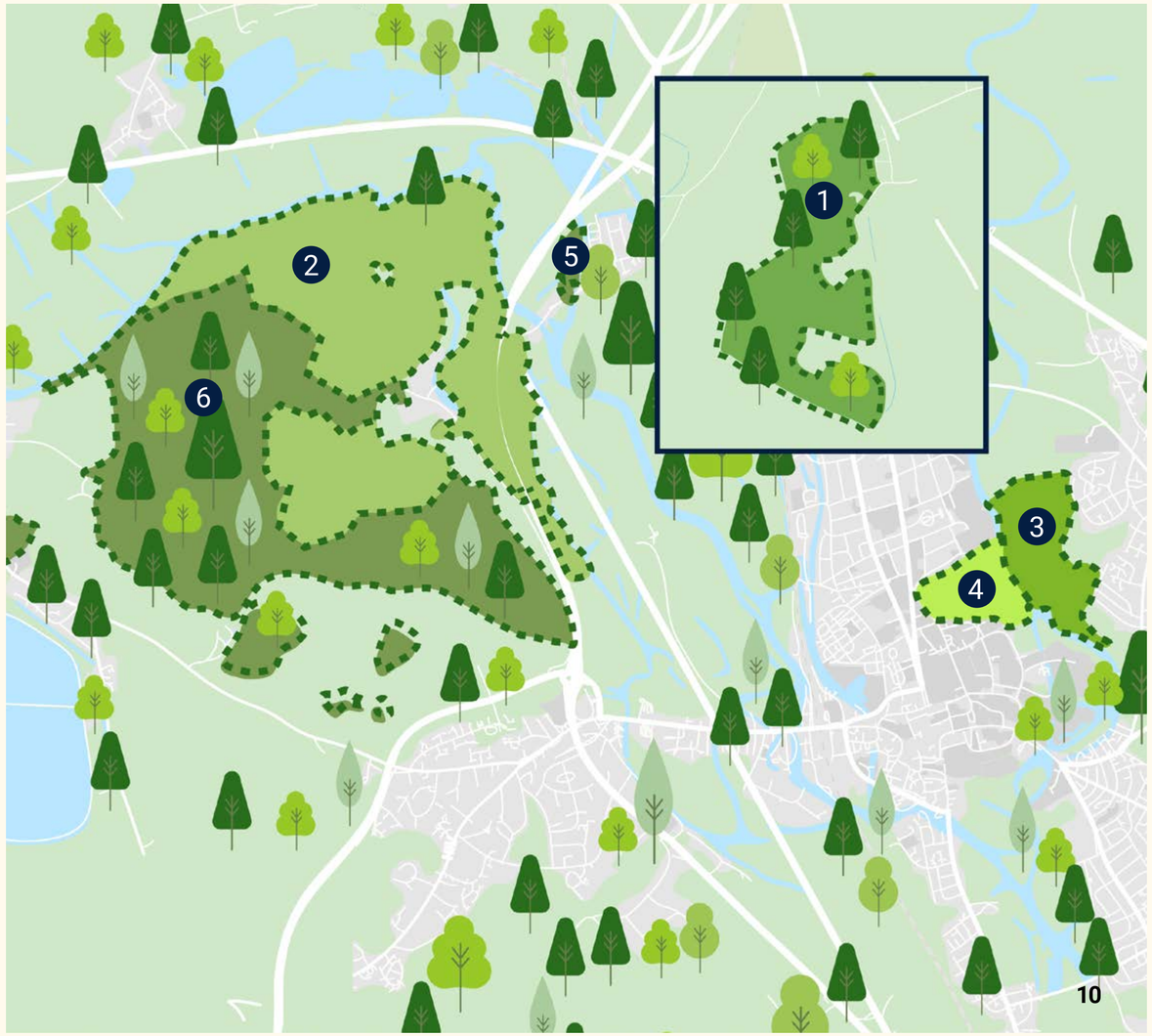


Focus sites

The focus sites that have been selected can be seen in the table below.

No.	Site name	Approx site (ha)	Description
1	Harcourt meadows	32	Species rich semi-natural grassland
2	Northfield Farm	480	Fens and ditches, arable fields, Wytham Park, floodplain meadow
3	Park Farm	45	Floodplain meadow and pasture
4	University Parks	30	Green space in the City Centre, including spaces managed for nature and for people
5	Wolvercote meadows	5	Floodplain meadow
6	Wytham Woods	424	Ancient semi-ancient woodland, secondary woodland, plantations, limestone meadows, fens and ponds

These areas total more than 1,000 ha and cover a wide range of different habitats. A map showing these areas can be seen to the right. In addition to this BAP, each of these sites will have its own management plan.

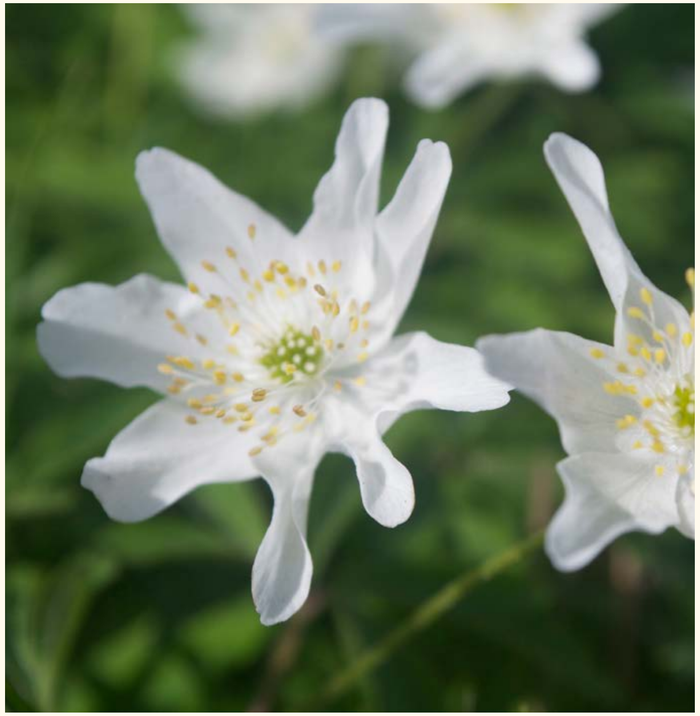


Linking up with Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

All of the BAP's focus sites are included in Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Many of our sites are classed as areas of existing particular importance to biodiversity or as recovery areas that could become particularly important for biodiversity and therefore should be prioritised for biodiversity restoration.

Wytham Woods











Wytham Woods

About:

Wytham Woods is a mosaic of ancient woodland, wood pasture and old limestone grassland on a variety of soils. The site is under a SSSI designation. It has a well-documented history dating back to at least 1544 when it formed part of the lands of Abingdon Abbey.

The ancient woodland copses are undoubtedly of greater age and were probably present in Saxon times. The site has an exceptionally rich flora and fauna. Over 500 species of vascular plants have been recorded. Many aspects of the bird, mammal and invertebrate fauna have been studied by Oxford University and have provided Wytham Woods with a volume of data probably unparalleled in this country.

Habitat types:

- **Ancient semi-natural woodland**
- **Plantation woodland**
- **Calcareous grassland**
- **Calcareous fens**
- **Spring-fed ponds**
- **Veteran trees**

Current condition:

The University has been managing Wytham actively for decades, and therefore a lot of the site is in good condition, but there are some areas for improvement. This includes large areas of plantation woodland, some areas of woodland which have experienced severe canopy loss due to ash dieback, and some small areas of fen within the woods that are in poor condition. There is also ongoing management required to ensure that the areas already in good condition stay that way.

Projects to date:

Wytham Woods is under ongoing management as part of its specific management plan, and has been for decades. In addition to the work carried out under this plan, funding has been provided by the Environmental Sustainability team for fencing around a new area of woodland now known as Bear Wood, and a fen restoration programme has been initiated.



Aims	Actions
Maintain areas of ancient semi-natural woodland in good condition	Deer management to keep populations to a sustainable level
Remove conifer plantations from ancient semi-natural sites	Felling programme of non-native species
Continue with limestone grassland restoration programmes	Re-fencing and grazing programme
Restore fen areas	Tree felling, scrub removal and regular mowing

Park Farm









Park Farm

About:

Park Farm is a series of agriculturally unimproved meadows on the flood plain of the River Cherwell. The majority of the site is under the New Marston Meadows SSSI designation, protected because of the rare floodplain meadow habitat at the site.
This site is incredibly special, as the predominant grassland occurring on the site is National Vegetation Classification (NVC) type MG4 *Alopecurus pratensis-Sanguisorba officinalis.* This grassland type is very rare in the UK, and it is estimated to cover less than 1,500 ha in total. Eleven plants on the Rare Plants Register for Oxfordshire are found in the meadows.

Habitat types:

- **Lowland hay meadows and pasture (NVC type MG4)**
- **Wetland habitat (ditches, ponds, swamp)**

Current condition:

The MG4 grassland species that the site is protected for have declined since the site was designated as a SSSI, which was shown in a botanical survey conducted in 2024. Therefore, this site is considered as currently being in poor condition.

To improve the condition of the grassland, urgent restoration of the hay cutting and aftermath grazing is required. Further measures required include replacement of fences to allow livestock grazing, and restoration of the ditches which are important for managing water levels at the site, but are currently filled in and overgrown with willow. As well as managing the site for the grassland itself, there are opportunities to manage the site for specific features that will benefit fauna that tend to do well in grassland habitat, including invertebrates such as butterflies and other pollinators, and larger animals such as reptiles and amphibians. Due to its floodplain location, there is also opportunity to improve wetland habitat at the site, including ponds and swamps.

Projects to date:

Work to restore this site has been ongoing over the past few years, after it came back under management of the University. This has included a baseline vegetation survey for one field in 2024. Over the winter of 2024/25, following advice sought from the Freshwater Habitats Trust, a historic pond was re-instated. This pond will be monitored over time.

We have also been monitoring the Brown Hairstreak Butterfly at Park Farm. This winter we recorded 381 eggs across 202 locations which is more than double the previous winter survey's total of 170 eggs in 123 locations. Eggs are generally found on new-growth blackthorn, and as a result we have submitted a management plan to Natural England for rotational cutting of the blackthorn, to encourage new growth and therefore Hairstreak Butterflies. We will continue to monitor the population going forward.

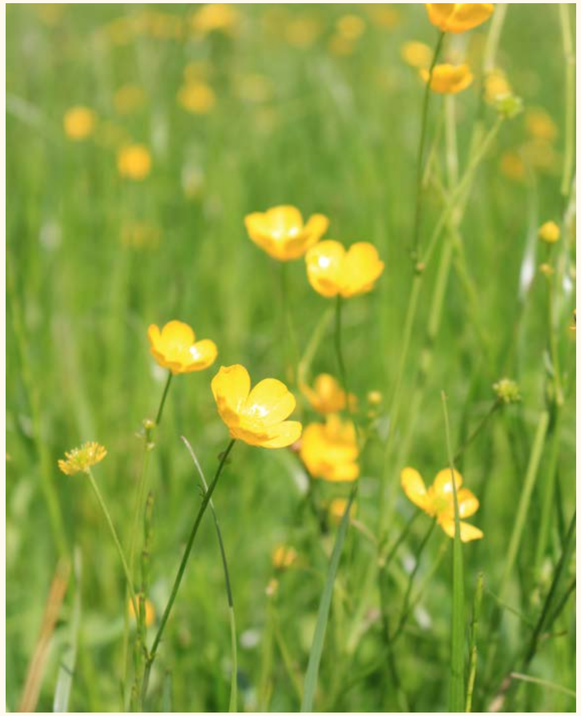
We have carried out an extensive programme of fencing replacement and ditch management over the past couple of years. This work allows grazing of the fields and effective flood management. We have also installed water troughs for grazing animals and have carried out removal of encroaching scrub where grazing levels had previously been too low. Now we can carry out aftermath grazing, where cattle graze fields into autumn after the hay is cut in late summer. This improves the diversity in the meadows by disturbing the soil, making areas for seeds to germinate, and removing nutrients from the field.

Five Chronolog posts have been installed to help us document broader changes over time and to monitor the flooding levels at the site. Public participation through adding visitor photographs is strongly encouraged. Finally, in a collaboration with University Parks, the Botanic Garden and the Natural History Museum, a 'Natural History Walk' has been created. This is a self-guided walk, taking people through University Parks and into Park Farm, describing the history and biodiversity of these important sites.



Aims	Actions
Restore sustainable grazing regimes	Fencing of fields and ensure annual hay cut and aftermath grazing
Re-instate a functioning ditch drainage system	Clearance of ditches
To enhance existing wetland habitats	Creation of new habitat (e.g. ponds)
To enhance habitat for reptile population	Creation of new habitat (e.g. hibernacula)
To enhance habitat for Hairstreak butterfly populations	Blackthorn management – cyclical removal to promote new growth
Removal of invasive species	Removal of Himalayan balsam which has been noted at the site
Share the biodiversity benefit of this site with the local community	Host free sessions for the public annually at this site

Wolvercote Meadows









Wolvercote Meadows

About:

Wolvercote Meadows border the River Thames and consist of unimproved and semi-improved neutral grassland. Three meadows make up Wolvercote Meadows SSSI. Oxford University owns one of the SSSI meadows, Great Baynham's, and a smaller meadow to the south of this which is not part of the SSSI. The University is also landowner of a small area of scrubland to the north of the meadow.

The meadows are managed traditionally for hay and pasture and support a rich flora. Situated on alluvial soils that the Thames has deposited on top of chalky gravels, these meadows share many of the characteristics of the ancient meadowland of Pixey Mead, which borders the site to the north west.

Habitat types:

- **Neutral grassland**
- **Riparian habitat**

Current condition:

The site is generally in moderate to good condition, but for further improvements a consistent traditional hay cutting with an aftermath grazing regime should be implemented going forward.

Projects to date:

In 2023 a line of poplar trees was removed from the eastern boundary of Baynham's Meadow with Natural England and Forestry Commission consent. Removal was required due to the negative impact the trees were having on the SSSI through shading and leaf litter. In 2024, a survey was undertaken at the meadow to serve as a baseline against which any changes in the plant community as a result of the tree felling can be measured. In the near future, the fence on the western boundary of the meadow will be replaced to allow aftermath grazing to occur.



Aims	Actions
Restore sustainable hay cutting and aftermath grazing regimes	Fencing of fields Ensure annual hay cut and grazing
Removal of invasive species	Removal of Himalayan balsam

Harcourt Meadows







Harcourt Meadows

About:

Harcourt Arboretum has over 30 ha of semi-neutral grassland which is managed as a species-rich meadow. About a third of this site is known as Palmer's Leys Meadow, and the remaining area is known as Pylon Meadow. Pylon Meadow is an established semi-natural grassland. Palmer's Leys Meadow was purchased by the Botanic Garden in 2006 as a former arable field. Since then the land has been restored into a species-rich hay meadow with careful management. This involved initial ploughing of commercial seed mixes and seeds from Pylon Meadow, and subsequent grazing and cutting over the past two decades.

Habitat types:

Semi-neutral grassland

Current condition:

This site is already of high biodiversity value and is managed in an appropriate way, which should continue to promote biodiversity. We might expect to see continued biodiversity improvement at this site over time, as the soil loses fertility over the next decade, but this cannot be guaranteed. As the site is already managed appropriately by the Botanic Garden and Arboretum, we will ensure that botanical surveys are undertaken to understand the species mix in the meadows.

Projects to date:

This site has been in active restoration since 2006, including seed ploughing, cutting and aftermath grazing.



Aims	Actions
Enhance grassland communities	Continued cutting and aftermath grazing of meadow
Share the biodiversity benefits of this site with the local community	Host free sessions for the public annually at this site

Northfield Farm







Northfield Farm

About:

Northfield Farm is made up of various landscape types. These include arable fields, grazing marsh, floodplain meadows, Wytham Ditches and Flushes SSSI, and an area of parkland called Wytham Park.

Wytham Ditches and Flushes SSSI supports a species-rich aquatic and fen flora, examples of which are rare in the county following widespread drainage, pollution and fertiliser enrichment. They contain flowering plants which are now uncommon in central southern England, at least one species of which is found nowhere else in Oxfordshire.

Alongside the same stretch of the Thames as Wytham Ditches and Flushes, there are extensive areas of semi-improved floodplain meadows and grazing marsh. These habitats are now nationally scarce due to agricultural intensification. They are rich with unusual floral communities, and are important for the management of the Evenlode catchment.

Wytham Park is an area of grassland and parkland close to the centre of the Wytham block. Parkland is a rare habitat in the UK, and is characterised as a mosaic habitat of grazed grassland dotted with ancient or veteran trees. Wytham Park is nationally important for deadwood invertebrates.

Habitat types:

- **Semi improved floodplain meadow**
- **Grazing marsh**
- **Parkland**
- **Ditches and Flushes**

Current condition:

These sites have seen different levels of appropriate management by tenant farmers over the past few decades. There is large potential for improvement within all habitat types.



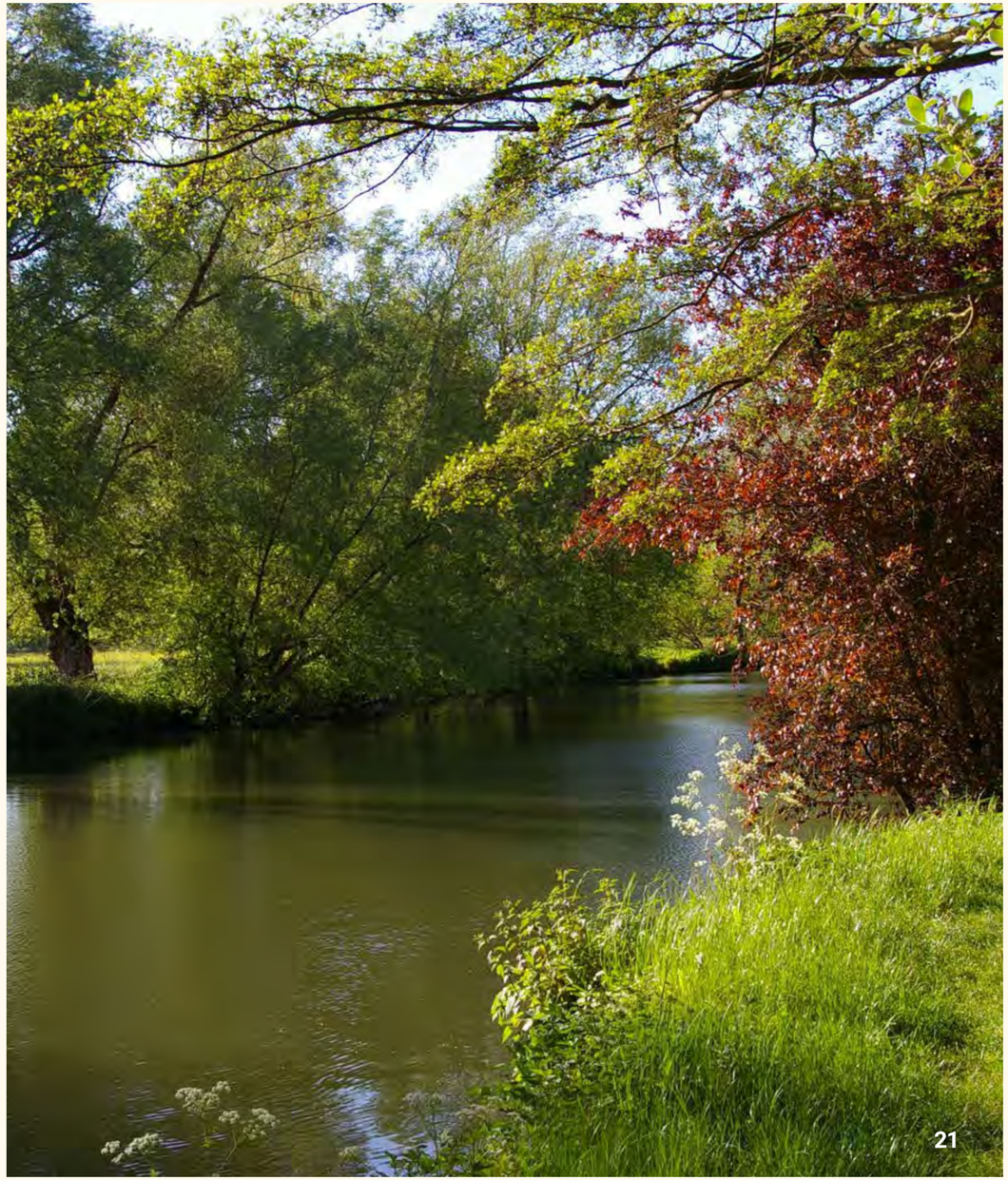
Aims	Actions
Restore floodplain and grazing marsh habitats	Improve effectiveness of cutting and grazing regimes
Enhance parkland habitat	Replace lost veteran trees through tree planting regime
Enhance SSSI condition	Grazing and cyclical ditch management in Wytham Fen area

As the site is only coming back into management by the University in late 2026, it will take some time to understand what exact actions can be taken there.

University Parks







University Parks

About:

University Parks is Grade II listed as a Historic Park and Garden. The primary purpose of the site is for public use, and it is used recreationally by members of the University and city residents. It contains a variety of landscapes. This includes curated areas such as sports pitches and flower beds, but also slightly more rugged areas, such as the riparian habitat along the River Cherwell and some areas which are managed more similarly to meadow habitat. The site is also home to over 1,600 trees and a pond. It provides a valuable habitat in the middle of the city, for insects and birds, and small mammals. The important balance between different uses in the Park, and how this is maintained, is described further in the Parks Management Plan.

Habitat types:

- **Sports pitches**
- **Horticultural borders and shrubs**
- **Amenity grassland**
- **Meadow**
- **Parkland**
- **Woodland**
- **Riparian and freshwater**

Current condition:

The site is carefully managed and maintained by the Parks team and already has a high biodiversity value.

Projects to date:

A new meadow has been created at University Parks, through seed spreading and plug planting, which is now being traditionally managed to improve plant biodiversity. Works have been funded to restore an eroding section of riverbank with a willow revetment, and plans to improve the biodiversity value of the pond are being developed. In addition, as mentioned in the Park Farm section, signage has been introduced for a self-guided ‘Natural History Walk’. The walk links many of the University’s most interesting walks, parks and gardens from the Oxford Botanic Garden to the Natural History Museum. The route includes Mesopotamia Walk, Parsons Pleasure, the Park Farm Site of Special Scientific Interest, the University Parks, the Genetic Garden and the University Herbaria at the new Life and Mind Building (LaMB). It highlights a range of important biological and historical features.



Commitment for the site:

The site is managed in line with the approved long-term strategic Landscape Succession Plan, which supports Environmental Sustainability Strategy targets. Our focus is on maintaining its existing biodiversity value, while making improvements as opportunities arise – as with our current plans to enhance the pond. Because the Parks’ main purpose is recreational use by people, we have chosen not to be prescriptive about future projects there. As reactive improvements take place, we will record and report on them.

Other important sites

These focus sites are not the only green spaces in the Oxford University estate important for biodiversity, and other areas of land will still be considered for biodiversity improvement projects.

Examples include the Oxford Botanic Garden and other areas of Harcourt Arboretum. These sites are historically valuable, with the first being the UK's oldest botanic garden. Both sites contain excellent and rare specimens of plants from all over the world, creating a variety of habitats for birds, invertebrates and other animals. These sites are managed primarily for their plant collections, research and for opportunities to engage with the public.

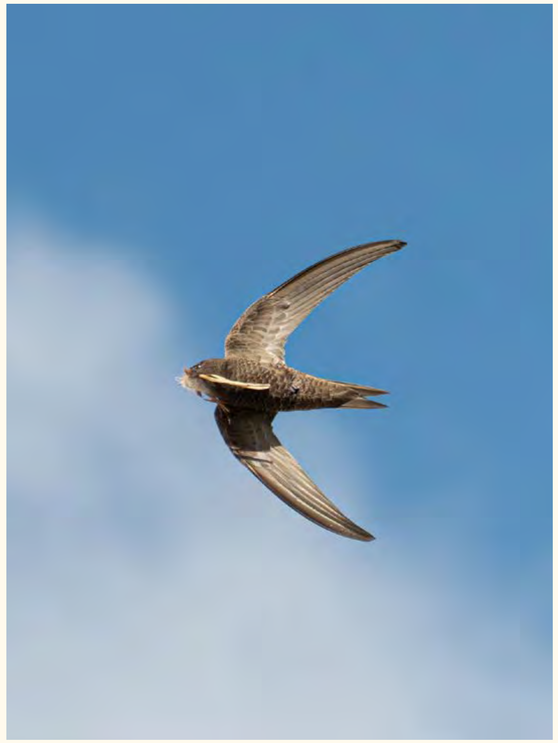
Buildings can be incredibly valuable too. For example, the Natural History Museum tower is home every year to a thriving swift colony, which has been studied by researchers in one of the longest continuous studies of a single bird species in the world. We will continue to look for other areas on the estate where swift boxes can be installed.

Projects to date:

Court Place Gardens is a small woodland on the edge of the River Thames, north of Iffley Lock on the Eastern bank. The site also borders Rivermead Nature Park. The woodland is now under a 10-year management plan and signage has been installed describing the history and the importance of the site.

Tilbury Farm's track leading up to its farm cottages is under management by the University and tree planting has been completed along the stretch of road. A diverse mix of native trees were planted in 2023 in collaboration with the Woodland Trust. Lost trees have been replaced in the following years. In addition, a pond has been re-instated at the top of the track.

After swifts were seen prospecting the Oxford University Boat House in Wallingford for nesting sites, swift and house martin boxes were installed at the site in 2024. This has provided 41 potential new nesting sites on the building.



Supporting our tenants

Some of Oxford University's land is tenanted to other groups which are responsible for its management. The University will seek to support its tenants to manage the land in a responsible way, and for the benefit of biodiversity. On a case-by-case basis, support will be offered to improve biodiversity in line with tenant management obligations. Opportunities to improve biodiversity may also arise through tenancy changes.

Projects to date:

Hill End meadows is an area of old limestone grassland, otherwise known as lowland calcareous grassland, which is also included under the Wytham Woods SSSI designation. This type of grassland is famous for its floristic richness. Following the agricultural revolution and the introduction of fertiliser on farms in the UK, many limestone grasslands were ploughed up to grow crops, making this type of grassland rare in the UK.

The site is currently managed by Hill End Outdoor Education Centre, as a tenant of the land. Hill End Outdoor Education Centre uses the site to offer unique outdoor learning experiences for local schools and organised groups. In winter 2025/26, the SSSI was re-fenced to allow for continued grazing of the meadow. This included re-fencing around the dormitories located in the SSSI and around the perimeter. The OSF has also committed to supporting Hill End to create its new "Habitat Explorer Trail", a self-guided trail taking visitors around the different habitat types at the site.



Baselining and Monitoring

Surveys of varying types have been undertaken across these focus sites in previous years, which have been of high quality and have provided useful insight about the site condition and presence of species.

However, in order to track and record change in biodiversity over time, a consistent surveying approach must be taken, including the measurement of a baseline. As part of this BAP, we commit to baselining and carrying out regular indicator surveys across our focus sites.

We have selected the following survey types for this regime:

- Vegetation
- Deadwood
- Butterfly
- Pollinator
- Carabid beetle
- Great Crested Newt

As our focus sites vary in size and in habitat type, a consistent but bespoke surveying method will be used for each.

For each of these surveys, permanent transects or sampling sites will be set up and recorded, to ensure that survey locations are consistent over time. Surveys will be carried out by trained ecologists and will be funded by the Oxford Sustainability Fund. Surveys will be carried out in line with Environmental Change Network (ECN) Monitoring Protocols, which have been designed to build long-term datasets tracking environmental change over time. The exception is the GCN surveys, for which we carry out blanket surveys as described by Froglife Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook.

In addition to these surveys, we commit to collecting photographic and anecdotal evidence of our actions which is often vital in tracking changes in habitat over time. We will also report on other data, for example from citizen science or student surveys, when it is available.



Engagement and outreach

Engaging people with nature is vital for the future of our planet, and the University of Oxford commits to contributing to this.

Some of our focus sites are already accessible to the public. University Parks is a green space dedicated to public access. Park Farm, opposite University Parks, has public access routes through it and is popular with runners and dog walkers alike. Wytham Woods is open to members of the public who sign up to a free permit, and is a popular walking spot for those in Oxfordshire. Hill End Outdoor Education Centre, which is a tenant of University land, carries out vital outdoor education for local children. This is something that the land was set aside for under the ffennell agreement.

As well as promoting the general public use of these sites, we commit to hosting biodiversity outreach and engagement events for the local community. Events will differ from year to year but might include events such as wildlife walks focusing on a particular group of flora and fauna, habitat, or topic.

Focus sites Wytham, Park Farm and Harcourt Arboretum have been called out specifically to host events. Where possible, events should be hosted at additional focus sites.
Events hosted should be recorded, including details such as attendance, and reported on.

Aims	Actions
To host events showcasing the biodiversity at our sites, open to all, on an annual basis	To arrange free events (e.g. walks or talks) with local experts at appropriate sites
To host events showcasing biodiversity at our sites, for University affiliates, on an annual basis	To arrange free events (e.g. walks or talks) with local experts at appropriate sites
To support other biodiversity related outreach and engagement events in the local community, on an annual basis	To support other biodiversity related events organised in the local community by providing space, expertise and financial support

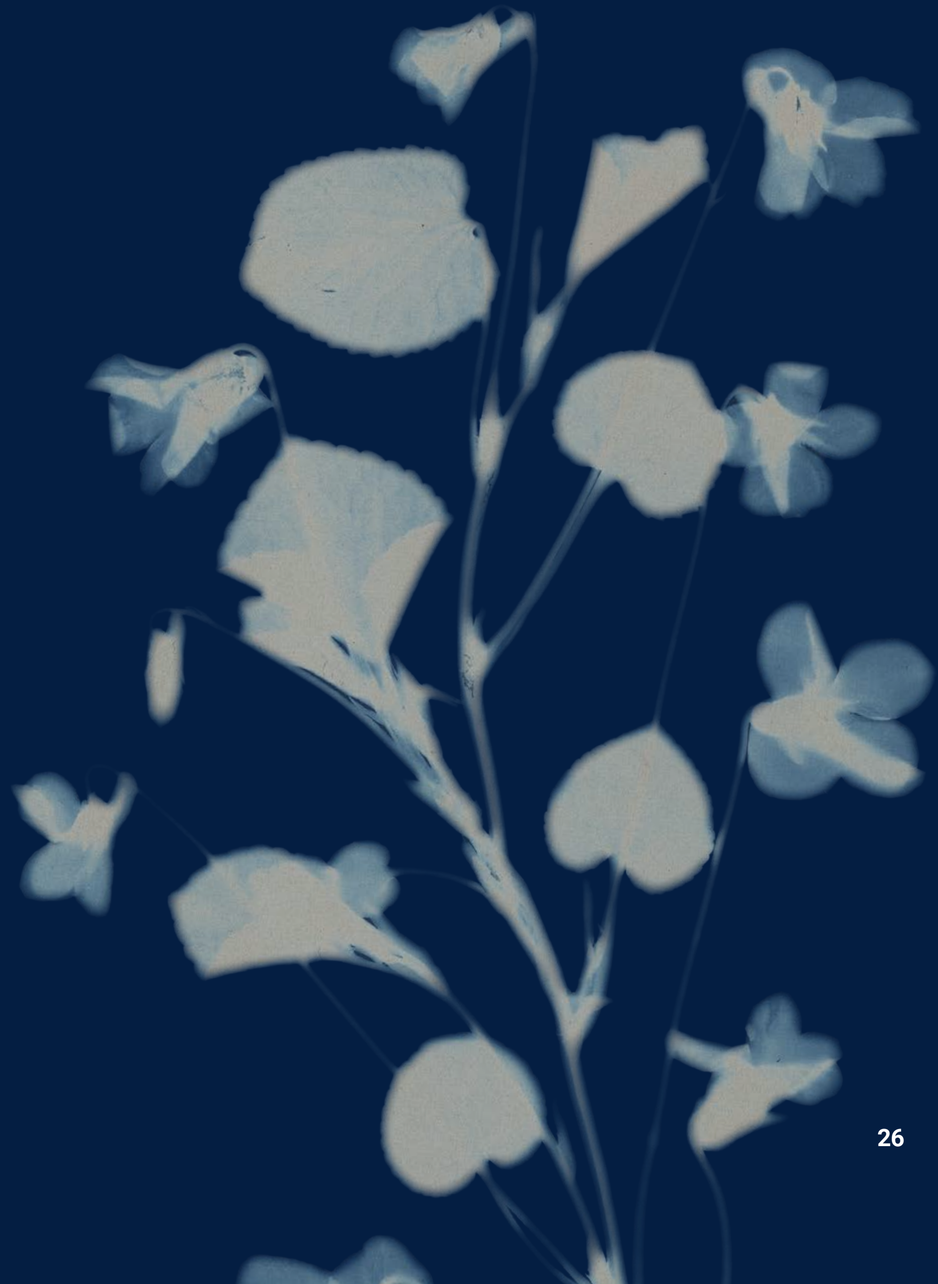
Research and education

The focus sites listed above, and the rest of the Oxford Green Estate, pose an amazing opportunity for research. This opportunity has already been realised at sites such as Wytham Woods, which is generally regarded as one of the most researched woodlands in the world, and in turn hosts the Wytham Tit Project, one of the longest running ecological studies in the world.

We want to promote the continued use of these sites for research. This includes Wytham, which is already heavily used for research, but also includes additional sites. In particular Northfield Farm, which offers a new research opportunity for agricultural research trials, and Park Farm, which offers an opportunity to research hay meadows within extremely close proximity to the Life and Mind Building – the home to the Department of Biology. In turn, we can use these research and teaching opportunities to assist with data collection for these sites, helping us to improve our knowledge on the biodiversity found on the estate.

Aims	Actions
Support research at focus sites	To engage with students to support data collection at focus sites (e.g. through BioBlitz or sampling events)
Work with the Oxford Green Estate team to facilitate and support research	Work with the Biological Sciences course to integrate species monitoring as an annual teaching opportunity

Appendix



Roles and responsibilities

Document control and review

Role	Responsibility	Owner
Document Owner	Creates content, responsible for document review and updates, responsible for document control	Biodiversity Manager
Contributors	Contribute to document content and subsequent reviews	Conservator of the Oxford Green Estate
Reviewers	Review document content	Head of the Oxford Green Estate, Associate Director of Sustainability, Head of Environment, Senior Environment Officer, Superintendent and Head of University Parks, Arboretum Curator OBGAA, Arboricultural Manager of University Parks
Approvers	Final document approval	Biodiversity Subgroup, Environmental Sustainability Sub Committee

Document implementation

Role	Responsibility	Owner
Target tracking	Tracks progress towards targets set out in this document	Biodiversity Manager
Site management	Ensures the on the ground delivery of targets set out in this document	Biodiversity Manager, Conservator of the Oxford Green Estate, Head of the Oxford Green Estate, Superintendent and Head of University Parks, Arboretum Curator OBGAA



Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

Oxford University owns land covered by six SSSI designations. A list of those SSSIs and their designations can be seen below:

SSSI Name	Pixey and Yarnton Meads	Wolvercote Meadows	Wytham Woods (includes Hill End meadow)	Wytham Ditches and Flushes	New Marston Meadows	Brasenose Wood and Shotover Hill
SSSI Description (from NE documentation)	Part of Oxford Meadows SAC. Comprises unimproved floodplain meadows on alluvium over calcareous gravel that are amongst the best remaining examples of neutral grassland in lowland England.	Part of Oxford Meadows SAC. Comprises meadows bordering the River Thames with a mix of unimproved and semi-improved neutral grassland, which continues to be managed traditionally, supporting a rich flora.	Comprises a complex of ancient woodland, wood pasture, common land and old limestone grassland on a variety of soils. Over 500 species of vascular plants have been recorded and there is a rich ornithological and invertebrate diversity.	Ditches support a species-rich eutrophic aquatic and fen flora, examples of which are rare in the county. Contains flowering plants which are now uncommon in central southern England, at least one species of which has its sole Oxfordshire locality at the site.	A series of agriculturally unimproved neutral meadows on the floodplain of the River Cherwell. The meadows are traditionally managed as summer-grazed pasture and fen, or for hay. This management creates variations in plant communities. Subtle changes in topography also creates conditions which support a range of swamp and grassland types of national importance.	Woodland managed by traditional coppicing, including an ancient remnant of Shotover Forest. The flora is exceptionally rich with 221 recorded vascular plant species including 46 which are characteristic of ancient woodland. Shotover Hill provides one of the few extensive examples of unimproved grassland and heath in Oxfordshire, and supports a good diversity of invertebrates.
Oxford University's management approach	The majority of this SSSI is owned by other landowner(s). Oxford University owns a small strip of woodland and scrub between Wolvercote Millstream and Kingsbridge Brook. Although this land falls within the SSSI boundary, it is not part of the designated features (floodplain meadow) and represents only a tiny portion of the site. The University will manage it appropriately, but its small size and inaccessibility make it unsuitable as a focus site for this BAP.	See main body of BAP.	See main body of BAP.	See main body of BAP (Northfield Farm).	See main body of BAP (Park Farm).	Oxford University is the landowner of a portion of this SSSI, amounting to between a third and a quarter of the total SSSI area. However, this SSSI is managed by the Council under an agreement with the University, and therefore is not part of the University's BAP.

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