

Oxfordshire Environment Board

Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan 5

Response from Oxfordshire Environment Board - May 2020

Climate Emergency & Air Quality: Green Infrastructure Topic Paper

The Oxfordshire Environment Board (www.oxeb.org.uk) was founded in 2018 as an alliance of environmental organisations across the county. We are working in partnership to ensure a strong and united voice exists for Oxfordshire's natural environment.

1. The Board welcomes this topic paper on Green Infrastructure and its content, and strongly endorses the vital role that transport and connectivity have to play in Oxfordshire's Nature Recovery Network (NRN).
2. The Council will be aware of the mapping work now emerging in support of the NRN, comprising three zones:
 - **Core zone** - the most important sites for biodiversity in Oxfordshire - including all nationally and locally designated sites, nature reserves, priority habitats and ancient woodland.
 - **Recovery zone** - comprising Conservation Target Areas, Important Freshwater Areas and additional areas added to provide better habitat connectivity.
 - **Wider Landscape zone** - covering the rest of the county, recognising the important contribution that agricultural and urban landscapes beyond the Recovery zone can make to nature's recovery
3. This spatial element of the NRN will be of particular importance in identifying the strategic green routes for additional investment.
4. However, it should also be embedded in decision making on transport & connectivity, for example when assessing the harms/benefits of locating new infrastructure and also in helping to guide investment to where it can maximise benefit to the natural environment (for example, through traffic reduction measures).
5. In line with the recommendation that has emerged from work on the NRN, the Oxfordshire Environment Board supports the principle of a minimum of 20% biodiversity net gain to be achieved by developments across all three nature recovery zones. This commitment should be included within LTCP5.

6. The Topic Paper is largely focused on the environmental benefits of the physical infrastructure of the existing transport network, such as roadside verges. We think it should give much stronger acknowledgement to the role that transport has to play in facilitating people's access to green space and countryside. Such access is vital to both mental health and physical well-being, as the current pandemic has highlighted all too clearly. However, the countryside cannot cope with a large-scale invasion of cars! Local green space, accessible via public transport or active travel (walking/cycling), is critical. Assessment of gaps in provision should be an essential part of the LTCP5 evidence base and help inform decisions on future investment.

Jayne Manley, Chief Executive Officer
Earth Trust
E: Jayne.Manley@earthtrust.org.uk
T: 01865 409417

Prue Addison, Conservation Strategy Director
Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust
E: prueaddison@bbowt.org.uk
T: 01865 775476 Ext 214

Elaine King, Chief Officer
Chilterns Conservation Board
E: elaineking@chilternsaonb.org
T: 01844 355500

Andy Parsons, Director
Cotswolds Conservation Board
E: andy.parsons@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk
T: 01451 862000

Helen Marshall, Director
CPRE Oxfordshire
E: director@cprexon.org.uk
T: 01491 612079

Henry Oliver, Director
**North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding
Natural Beauty Partnership**
E: Henry.Oliver@northwessexdowns.org.uk
T: 01488 680454

Steve Wilkes, Director
Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre
E: steve.wilkes@oxfordshire.gov.uk
T: 01865 815 418

Karen Woolley, Chairman
Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment
E: Karen.Woolley@the-farthings.com
T: 01491 681571

Camilla Burrow, Director
Wild Oxfordshire
E: camilla@wildoxfordshire.co.uk
T: 01865 390067



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Buckinghamshire
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