
Agenda Item:	Biodiversity Update
Meeting Date:	Tuesday, 9 September 2025
Contact Officer:	Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer

The purpose of this report is to show what has been done to create, improve and maintain biodiversity within the Lake and Country Park.

Background

There have been 9 surveys of flora and fauna, covering the whole of the environments that make up the country park over the last 3 years.

Current Situation

Having just had a phase 1 survey of the remaining areas within the country park that have not yet been surveyed, officers now have a baseline to review and improve the country park where needed, to increase biodiversity and support works needed to create new habitats if suitable and required around the country park.

The Council has also:

- Registered the Country Park as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- The Council has re-seeded Five Ways roundabout with native perennial wildflower seed so that there will be annual re-seeding and a spread of the existing area. They have also seeded an area on the lakeside and that has proved very popular, this area will be extended annually, and it is hoped to have a ½ hectare of new meadow over the next three to five years. Curbridge Road roundabout was not planted due to the ground containing too many roots to rotavate (this would need a 360 excavator to lift existing roots and then the area could be prepared for planting) – see recommendations.
- Officers are continuing to work closely with the Witney Shed to make bird, bat and owl boxes as well as signage for the country Park
- The Council are working closely with the following partners to support the development of the country park
 - Chilterns River Trust
 - Lower Windrush Valley Project
 - Environment Agency
 - Natural England
 - Freshwater Habitats Trust
 - Smith's Aggregates
 - WODC
 - Woodland Trust

- The Council continues to commission and carry out with the in-house team, surveys to monitor, support, and develop biodiversity across the councils' holdings (recently a Phase 1 survey by a consultant and a reptile survey by the Park Ranger)
- In Mill Meadow the "green hay" seeding has resulted in Seven new species of plant found to be growing on the meadow.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Equality in biodiversity in green spaces refers to the idea that all species regardless of their size, role, or ecological status should have the opportunity to thrive and be represented within urban and natural green spaces. Achieving equality in biodiversity involves not just conserving a wide variety of species but also ensuring that ecological systems are designed and managed in ways that support diverse species' needs. This can be applied to urban parks, nature reserves, forests, and other green spaces, aiming for a balance where no group of species is disproportionately favoured over others.
- b) Biodiversity – covered in the report.
- c) Crime & Disorder – Green spaces such as Lakes and Parks can contribute to reducing urban crime by making spaces more inviting and safer for residents.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – This is deeply intertwined with both the protection of biodiversity and the fight against climate change. Both challenges require urgent and comprehensive action, as they not only affect the country's natural systems but also its economy, society, and future well-being.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

There are no risks identified in the report.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

Financial Implications

- There is an existing budget to maintain and improve the Lake and Country Park and the Council are actively looking for further grant funding to supplement the existing ones the Council have secured.
- The works team have an excavator, but the access would need to be assessed for safety and the cost of officer time taken into account to complete the work (Est: Three staff for Two days)

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

- Would members like to see the Curbridge roundabout as a wildflower area.