
Agenda Item: Lake and Country Park Report

Meeting Date: Monday 13 January 2026

Contact Officer: Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer

The purpose of this report is to update members on the works carried out on the Lake, Country Park by the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer and the Park Ranger.

Background

The Lake and Country Park continue to be managed for recreation and conservation, and we continue to work to align with the 10-year management plan which includes actions and progress.

<https://www.witney-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/aaaaaManagement-plan-summary.docx>

Current Situation

There have been projects carried out such as:

- The council continues to move forward with the “branding of the country park by removing and replacing old and broken benches and signage with more suitable ones (such as a new recycled bench and picnic table)
- There has been an increase in ASB and the Green Spaces team deals with things such as graffiti and removal of life rings as a top priority
- The council continue to carry out water tests of the lake, the dragonfly area, and in the winter the newly created scrapes on Snipe Meadow, the results of which will be provided in a future separate report
- The Council has designed and installed some new signs around the country Park and is at present designing a new interpretation sign for the Mill Meadow and Avenue 2 entrances
- Flooding has been at an all-time high around the lake and the river Windrush has risen in places, so much so it has overtapped the new path we built up, that is 9 inches higher than this time last year
- 75m of path around the lake has been raised and widened in a carefully selected area of which has received a number of positive comments from the public
- The Council have had one confirmed case of Avian bird flu and have taken all measures that were appropriate to maintain biosecurity
- Officers have removed several trees that have been blocking the water flow along both arms of the river Windrush
- Officers have carried out work to improve sightlines and safety around the Country Park
- Officers have begun the re-furnishement of the Tern raft for re-siting in Spring

- Officers have applied for an £87,000 grant for path improvements around the lake that will complete the planned works identified to create an inclusive access for all pathway

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) Crime & Disorder –Green spaces such as Lakes and Parks can contribute to reducing urban crime by making spaces more inviting and safer for residents.
- c) 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.
- d) All aspects of this report are to action our responsibilities to this situation

The Lake and Country Park and the facilities it provides the following

- Benefits to the local community at all levels giving users a resource to enjoy and experience nature and all it provides
- Benefits to the economy, employment, a free natural resource and support to local contractors
- Benefits to the environment, increasing species levels and creating new habitats for rare and endangered species (Water Voles)

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.

Social Value

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

Financial implications

There is an agreed budget for the management of the Country Park but as it grows and the usage increases, then a regular review of financial requirements will be needed

We have also secured £2,500 from Freshwater Habitats Trust and Lower Windrush Valley Project towards the design and purchase of the new interpretation boards

If the council is unsuccessful with the grant application to RSS, then a review will be required to clarify the cost of on-going works to prevent flooding and provide a safe and usable access around the lake

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and

1. Consider the ongoing costs and timeframes to maintain a viable and accessible route for all users around the lake