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**Agenda Item:** Biodiversity report

**Meeting Date:** 19/05/2026

**Contact Officer:** Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer

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The purpose of this report is to outline what the council has been doing to improve biodiversity across the council holdings.

### Background

The Lake and Country Park provide a diverse range of varied and interesting habitats, and they will always have scope for improvement, and the aim of the Council will be to identify and develop opportunities to increase biodiversity.

### Current Situation

- Reptile, bird, and plant monitoring is taking place assisted by U3A (University of the Third Age) and BBOWT are currently carrying out a Water Vole survey
- Officers are supporting work by SSE who are replacing High Voltage Cabling across the lake
- A new Community Orchard comprising of 32 trees has been planted on the old railway line by Mill Meadow. Officers visited, photographed and gave refreshments to Lower Windrush Valley volunteers who assisted in the planting of the trees.
- The Council are progressing their application for Green Flag status and hope to put an application soon
- X4 new bird boxes have been installed along the A40 strip
- The Council are maintaining a program of cutting butterfly “scallops” to increase “edge” habitat
- The Council have re-furbished the tern raft for the Spring/Summer
- Roundabouts are being managed for biodiversity wherever possible, and sponsorship is still a possibility but has yet to be pursued fully
- There has been no more updates on the roadside verge nature reserves

## **Corporate Strategy**

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

### **7. A Green & Resilient Town**

#### **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.

#### **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**

- The cost of applying for Green Flag will be around £500.

### **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report.