
Agenda Item:	Lake and Country Park Report
Meeting Date:	8th September 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 within the 10-year management plan. <https://www.witney-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/aaaaaManagement-plan-summary.docx>

Current Situation

The latest update on projects completed are:

- Interpretation boards at two main entrances of Country Park: they have been installed/sited and are well received by users of the country park
- 2 additional benches have been installed around the lake
- The Council have been approached to instal a memorial bench (paid for by the member of public) and will be seeing if the council can accommodate this request when the necessary information is available
- SSE have requested to do a drone survey of their power lines, and this will be completed in the next month
- Green Flag application is almost ready to be applied for and should be so by this meeting
- We will soon be designing a sign for the Railway Orchard at the end of Mill Meadow and making use of information on the old Witney branch line to provide context to the naming of this new orchard
- The Council has taken delivery of the palisade gate to be installed on the lake peninsula and will make use of the works team to install in near future

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:

- 5. A Beautiful Witney

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
- The sign for the Railway orchard will make use of re-cycled signage and the skills of the “Witney Shed” and only the interpretation panel will need to be bought at around £70.00 based on A2 on an aluminium back board
- We have also secured £2500 from Freshwater Habitats Trust and Lower Windrush Valley Project and £2000 from Oxford County Council towards the design and purchase of the new interpretation boards and Two recycled plastic benches

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the actions in this report and approve the works planned